

SPORTS FOR EXCELLENCE

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), located in the northernmost region of India, has long been associated with picturesque landscapes and cultural richness. However, in recent years, the region has also emerged as an important hub for sports excellence.

One of the key pillars of fostering sports excellence in J&K has been the focus on improving sports infrastructure. The region has witnessed substantial investments in sports facilities, including the development of state-of-the-art stadiums, training centers, and indoor arenas. Notable projects include the Sher-i-Kashmir Stadium in Srinagar, which is an important venue for football and cricket matches. The construction of multi-sport complexes and sports academies, like the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council's initiatives, has provided athletes with the resources they need to train and perform at the highest level.

Sports excellence in J&K is also linked to the growing emphasis on talent identification and grassroots development. Various state-run and private initiatives aim to discover young sporting talents in schools, villages, and urban areas. These initiatives are often focused on a wide variety of sports, ranging from traditional sports like Polo and Wrestling to modern games like football, cricket, basketball, and athletics.

For example, the Khelo India initiative, launched by the Indian government, has seen significant participation from J&K's youth. The program offers a platform for young athletes to showcase their abilities and receive coaching, scholarships, and sponsorships. This has led to a notable rise in the participation of local athletes in national-level competitions. Furthermore, the state has witnessed a rise in sports academies, which provide specialized training in various disciplines, further nurturing the state's sports potential.

J&K's sporting scene has also produced several success stories that inspire and encourage young athletes. In disciplines such as archery, football, cricket, and athletics, J&K has produced exceptional talents who have gone on to represent India at the national and international levels.

One of the standout examples is the success of the region's football teams. Kashmir, in particular, has produced a number of talented football players who have gone on to represent prestigious clubs and even the Indian national team. Similarly, in cricket, J&K's budding players have begun to gain recognition at the Ranji Trophy and IPL levels, showcasing their potential on the national stage.

In addition, archery has been a sport in which J&K has excelled. The state has produced some of India's best archers, such as Komalika Bari, who has won numerous accolades and medals at national and international competitions. These athletes serve as role models, motivating younger generations to pursue their sporting dreams.

The Government of Jammu & Kashmir has played a crucial role in promoting sports and encouraging youth participation. Government programs such as the J&K Sports Policy focus on improving the overall sports ecosystem, including the creation of new sports facilities, provision of grants, and enhancing support for athletes at the grassroots level.

Further efforts have been made through partnerships with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Sports Authority of India (SAI), which have seen the launch of specialized training centers and regular sports events to create a competitive environment for athletes. The government's focus on promoting winter sports, such as skiing and ice hockey, is another example of how J&K is diversifying its sporting profile.

GONGUL: 10th SKUAST-K Agri-Tech Mela

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

GONGUL i.e onset of sowing and out of curiosity, as I wanted to learn more about the word on internet, I found the word also finds mention in the poetry of Hazrat Sheikh Aalam Sheikh Noorudin, the most revered saint of Kashmir and known as Alamar-e-Kashmir also. His poetic collections are best known for creating awareness about natural resources, our flora and fauna, our forests and ecology and their conservation. He used the word Gongul in his poetry for a kind of inaugural function of the sowing season when on the first day of sowing, dry fruits and Tehri was distributed. In one of his works, Gongal-nama, he likens the people who toil the land as the chosen people of God. The poem draws on the daily lives of peasant classes of Kashmir and elevates practices associated with farming to the status of religious rituals.

So, I feel that there could have been no better word to describe 10th Agri-Tech Mela of SKUAST-Kashmir scheduled for Feb. 22-23 with the theme 'Prosperity through Secondary and Sustainable Agriculture'. SKUAST-K under the leadership of Prof. Nazir A Ganai would have been on the toes, 24*7 for last so many months to make this grand annual event a grand success. I was recently listening to him on Kashmir images where he spoke briefly on various aspects of the upcoming event. In his open appeal to all, farming community which comes from diverse rural settings; he also called masses from urban areas to participate pro-actively to see how SKUAST-K is shifting agriculture in this region from subsistence to commercial and sustainable one. Prof. Ganai further told that among the major attractions will be display of technologies developed by SKUAST-K, display and sale of seeds and high quality planting material, innovative entrepreneurs showcasing their prototypes/products, champion farmers nurtured by university, startups developed under the mentorship of university faculty, patented technologies, industry exhibit, Organic & Natural Farming, FPO's show where in different Self Help groups/Farmer Producer Companies and Farmer Producer Organizations will also participate with various kinds of niche products. There will be about 300 stalls with an expected footfall of about 2 lakhs, said Prof. Ganai.

From the last nine years, this has been a routine annual activity of SKUAST-K reaffirming its commitment for betterment of farming community of the region. It also is an opportunity for the farm varsity to engage itself pro-actively with different stakeholders with the ultimate aim of disseminating vari-

ous technologies and interventions to the ultimate end users. Different constituent units of SKUAST-Kashmir including the front level extension institutes at the district level i.e the Krishi Vigyan Kendras will also be the backbone of this mela. With the SKUAST-K going global, participation from across the globe is also expected in the mela.

'Gongul' this year being celebrated with the theme 'Prosperity through Secondary & Sustainable Agriculture' will focus on:

Sustainable Agriculture through Natural Farming: With an outlay of more than 2,480 crores, GoI has started National Mission for Natural Farming (NMNF) to promote NF practices for providing safe and nutritious food for all. NMNF is launched as a shift to scientifically revive and strengthen agriculture practices towards sustainability, climate resilience and healthy food for farmer families and consumers. In the next two years, NMNF will be implemented in 15,000 clusters in Gram Panchayats, which are willing, & reach 1 crore farmers and initiate Natural Farming (NF) in 7.5 lakh Ha area. Preference will be given to areas having prevalence of practicing NF farmers, SRLM / PACS / FPOs, etc. Further, need-based 10,000 Bio-input Resource Centres (BRCs) will be set-up to provide easy availability and accessibility to ready-to-use NF inputs for farmers. SKUAST-K will also contribute to this mission with a special focus on technologies demonstrating microbial preparations like Jeevamrita, Beejamrita, Agniasttra, and Brahmastra, inputs like Bio fertilizers, Bio-control agents, bio organic nutrient management, and organic waste treatment. There will be eleven stalls on Natural Farming in this Mela, as told by Director Extension of the University.

Sale of inputs/products: The mela is decided at a date when the sowing/planting season is all set to begin. As such, farming community needs different kinds of inputs like hybrid and HYV of seeds, fertilizers, organic manures, plant protection chemicals, high quality planting material and farm implements. The mela will have all kinds of inputs and farm implements which can be purchased by all. Many input dealers and private agencies will be there displaying their products and inputs.

Empowered Farmers: Empowered farmers will be another attraction of the two days event. Farmers of the region including farm women and youths who by dint of their hard work and intellect have proved themselves and to others that agriculture is still a remunerative enterprise. They will be there in the mela depicting and showcasing their innovative technologies and products.

Fruit/Vegetable/Flower/Seed shows: All such type of shows will enable the farming community of the region to come with their unique produce/products and display them for all others to see and get motivated. University will also reward the farmers for their innovative products and produce.

HADP Exhibition: The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has started a Holistic Agriculture Development Plan (HADP) for development of agriculture and allied sectors and empowerment of farming communities. Various achievements of the university as well as of the farmers under HADP will also be at display in this two days event.

Processed Products show: Food processing is referred to as the sunrise sector in India. Unfortunately, the level of food processing and value addition in the country is very low. One of the reasons for this low level is lack of awareness. This Mela will specially focus on this aspect wherein various ethnic value added food products made from different traditional crops will be at display. As the focus now is largely on promotion of millets also called as nutri-cereals, the Mela comes with a unique opportunity to raise awareness about the nutritional and health benefits of these nutri-cereals.

Startup and Tech Show & Industry Exhibition: Various Startups in agriculture sector nurtured and mentored by SKUAST-K have caught the attention of global community due to their immense potential in income and employment generation opportunities. Gongul will also give an opportunity to those young entrepreneurs to depict their business models and technology. Similarly, an Industrial Exhibition will also be a win-win situation for both industry as well as farming community. It will give an opportunity to farming community to promote their products for further procurement by industrial houses and also provide opportunity to the industrial houses to demonstrate their products for purchase by the farming community.

Children's Amusement Fest: The educational institutes of the valley will also be attending the mela wherein the students will learn more about agriculture and various farming practices. This mela besides an Amusement Fest for them will definitely attract them and inspire them to try their fortunes in agriculture.

Medicinal & Aromatic Plants (MAPs) and Mushroom show: The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is also endowed with a wide range of useful plants. The medicinal and aromatic plants constitute an important part of the flora. It contains a wide variety of trees, medicinal plants and herbs. Besides,

Mushrooms are a highly valued source of nutrients for us, but most of us do not know their health benefits. A special show aimed at awareness of the masses regarding various useful MAPs & the products made from them and mushrooms' so that the farmers get motivated and start cultivating them will also be there.

KVK Excellence show: KVKs are the face of university extension system. They are the ones entrusted with the task of taking technology to the fields and also ensure that the farmers adopt that technology. The KVK Excellence show will be a platform for these KVKs to demonstrate the results of the intervention and technologies disseminated by them from the farmers' fields. Mega Farmers-Scientist interaction: Another feature of the mela will be the Farmers Scientist interaction where the farming community can interact with concerned experts for on spot redressal of the problems faced by them.

Agri art & Craft show: Stalls depicting agribased art and craft like paper mache, wood art will add to the attraction of GONGUL. These stalls will give a boost to the creativity of local artisans.

Pet & Animal Show: The mela will also have a Pet & Animal show. Different Pets and Hybrid and high yielding livestock including cattles, goats and sheep will also be star attraction of mela. Different Poultry breeds will be demonstrated in the two days event. The poultry will also be available for sale.

Mela will also promote Digitalisation by stressing on smart agriculture technologies, precision farming, agricultural drones and different mobile apps. It has been observed that most of the programmes and schemes of the government as well as other agencies do not reach the ultimate beneficiaries due to the lack of awareness and knowledge. To make them aware and guide them regarding various programmes and schemes different development departments as well as financial institutions like J&K Bank, SBI, ICICI, NABARD, HDFC and many other organizations will be there to guide and aware all. Prof. Raihana H Kant who has recently taken over as Director Extension also highlighted the role of GONGUL in fostering knowledge exchange between researchers, farmers' and industry besides dissemination of technologies relevant for the farming community.

I wish Hon'ble Vice Chancellor SKUAST-K, Prof. N. A. Ganai and his team all the best for the coming event and join Hon'ble Vice chancellor in his appeal to all through this article to participate in this two days event.

(The author writes on agriculture and social issues)

Integrating Social Media and Ed-Tech to form a Digital Learning Ecosystem

■ DR. DUSHYANT PRADEEP



In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, digital learning ecosystems have emerged as a transformative force. These ecosystems integrate various digital tools and platforms to create a seamless and interactive learning environment.

Among these tools, social media has gained prominence for its potential to enhance educational experiences. A digital learning ecosystem is a comprehensive framework that encompasses digital tools for system and institutional management, teaching, learning, and assessment. It also includes the human elements that bring these tools to life and

make them meaningful. The goal of a digital learning ecosystem is to create an interconnected and cohesive environment that supports the educational process.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, have become integral components of digital learning ecosystems. These platforms offer numerous benefits for both educators and students:

► Enhanced Communication and Collaboration Social media facilitates real-time communication and collaboration among students, teachers, and parents. It allows for instant feedback, discussions, and sharing of resources, thereby fostering a collaborative learning environment.

► Access to Diverse Learning Resources Social media provides access to a vast array of education-

al content, including videos, articles, podcasts, and interactive materials. This wealth of resources can supplement traditional classroom learning and provide students with additional opportunities to explore and understand complex topics.

► Building Professional Networks Educators can use social media to connect with peers, share best practices, and stay updated on the latest developments in their field. Platforms like LinkedIn enable educators to build professional networks and participate in discussions related to their areas of expertise.

The effectiveness of the digital learning ecosystems can be enhanced by the integration of social media with educational technology. Some of the ways to achieve this integration are:

1. Blended Learning Models Blended learning combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning activities. Social media can be used to facilitate online discussions, share resources, and provide additional support to students outside of the classroom. It can provide a hybrid teaching learning environment.
2. Flipped Classrooms In a flipped classroom model, students access instructional content online before coming to class. Social media platforms can be used to share videos, articles, and other materials, allowing students to engage with the content at their own pace. Class time can then be used for interactive activities and discussions.
3. Gamification Gamification involves incorporating game elements into the learning process to increase engagement and motiva-

tion. Social media platforms can be used to create and share gamified learning activities, such as quizzes, challenges, and competitions.

While the integration of social media and educational technology offers numerous benefits, it also presents certain challenges:

► Privacy and Security Ensuring the privacy and security of students' personal information is a significant concern when using social media in education. Educators must implement strict guidelines and use secure platforms to protect students' data.

► Digital Literacy Both educators and students need to develop digital literacy skills to effectively use social media and educational technology. This includes understanding how to navigate digital platforms, evaluate online content, and use digital tools responsibly.

► Managing Distractions Social media can be a source of distraction for students. Educators must find a balance between leveraging the benefits of social media and minimizing its potential to distract students from their studies.

Digital learning ecosystems, with the integration of social media and educational technology, have the potential to revolutionize education. By enhancing communication, providing access to diverse resources, and fostering collaboration, these ecosystems can create a more engaging and effective learning environment. However, it is essential to address the challenges and ensure that both educators and students are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate this digital landscape successfully.

(The author is Ph.D. (Physics), B.Ed)

The World of Mushrooms

■ G.L. KHAJURIA

The mushrooms are as varied and countless as are or flowering plants, herbs and shrub from lowest strata to higher one. These are both palatable and non-palatable, poisonous, and non-poisonous fungi mostly manifesting their wild existence. These mostly subsist on dead, dying and diseases(3D'S) trees both in standing and felled from of logs, the forest. These as well exhibit their growth in a multipored form at various sites in and around the forest areas. Some of the palatable mushrooms exists on coniferous trees such as kail and chir in the form of beehive and most of them are palatable.

In rainy season, some forms of fungi emerge out from ground, and around termite mounds when there is lightning with thunders which are spoken as 'khumbaan' in dogri parlance. This variety of fungi is most serving as well multincinal properties in form or the other. These exists both multi-medicine both in the wild and around, habitation in rural areas, The tribal people are expert in identifying both the palatable and non-palatable mushrooms and they mostly have such mushrooms as their most favored and delicious dishes they subsist on this type of mushrooms.

Around 2,000 species of mushrooms have been identified out of which as many as 25 have been classified as edible. In delicacy, mushrooms are difficult to resist and that is why this variety forms the predominant part amongst other dishes displayed during important functions, particularly marriages menoes. Its delicacy is peerless and non-resistible. These form the prominent part for the vegetarian in breakfast, not lunch or



dinner and is evergreen dish which in a way is not ignorable.

Mushrooms are of delicious taste and can be taken in a variety of ways: Mushroom with tea, coffee, in toasts with sauce.

The significance and awareness regarding nutritive value of mushrooms still remains obscure and unidentified. These are warrant their awakening promotion, propagation encourage their cultivation, and this is not only by the farmers alone, but any person which is having an inclination towards gardening, floriculture, and horticulture etc.

Modern field in home gardening within and

around home is of course, much ahead never people of all ages are keenly enthusiastic in raising multihued variety of ornamental plants (Flowering-cum-vegetationfoliage), them what hinders for mushroom culture which invigorate and makes one possessed us with garden-oriented.

Globally, mushroom cultivation took its initiation far back around 17th century in France. Now it has become a leading industry in many other countries like US, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Britain, Australia, Italy, Canada, Korea, China, Taiwan, and Japan and so many other coun-

tries. In a sense, mushroom cultivation has taken a worldwide phenomenon across the globe. Apart from vast, interest in its cultivation, it improves the economy in a bigger way this yielding hefty dividends for professional cultivators.

In our country, the full potential of mushrooms cultivation remains to be tapped as yet. In many parts of your country mushroom cultivation is viable due to the ideal atmospheric condition us for example in Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, mushrooms can very conveniently be cultivated in nine months of the year under natural conditions. The availability of technical know-how has however made the mushroom growers to cultivate not only in their backyards but indoors under proper climate conditions.

In the recent times, the technology of mushroom cultivation has been considering improved and diversified to cover a wide range of species suited to different geographical areas of the country.

At present, three varieties of edible mushrooms are being cultivated on commercial basis. These varieties ate European mushroom (Agaricusbisporus), oyster mushroom (Pleurotus spp) and the paddy straw mushroom (Poluarellspp). The scientific know-how for their cultivation on commercial basis have however, been for its initiation. The temperate valley of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, W.Bengal, Tamil Nadu are ideally suitable around the world.

In winter, mushrooms can conveniently be grown in the plains of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu.

In order to ensure good cultivation of mushrooms, complete darkness is no pre-

requisite as the mushrooms don't need sunlight at any stage in their cultivation. Manure is oftenly used in wooden trays which should be carefully kept on cemented floors with overhead roof and water availability nearby.

As stated earlier, many mushrooms have been founded perched upon Kail and other coniferous trees in the forest. These are exhibited on decaying/decayed stumps which are of umbrella- shape and come under a wide range fungi which corm a distinct type such as load stools, buff balls and these are found associated with lichens and ferns, microscopic yeast and are non-flowering being evolved much earlier than flowering plants.

Owing to the fact that there are lacking chlorophyll, these subsist on decayed matter which is abundantly found on ground of forest areas.

Mushrooms are meat-eaters too. Bio logistics have found that mushrooms trap microorganisms and others whom they can capture/trap and conveniently consumed by the mushrooms. This is the magic of nature alone well understands. How a vegetarian becomes non-vegetarian and vice-versa which is much beyond human imagination like us and other bio-forms, the meat-eating mushrooms have of course, been provided by nature certain enzymes which help in the digestion and assimilation of their intakes. That way these mushrooms act as scavengers in the wide varied biodiversity and the mushrooms have their role to play with in a broader spectrum in balancing the ecosystem and the worldwide sustainability.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator of Forests, J&K)

