


CONG DRAMA CONTINUES

Instead of introspecting and focusing on reasons behind Congress' debacle which to a large extent known to one and all, the drama in the oldest party of the country continues with High Command seeking resignations from the Congress Presidents in Punjab, UP, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa, where the party suffered setback in recently concluded Assembly polls. Sonia Gandhi cracking whip has asked for the resignations of the aforesaid to enable reorganisation of the party. Now the big question is whether it was the role of these scapegoats that led to the rout of the Congress Party or whether the problem lies somewhere else. Without going into the age old drama of the Congress party's High Command which is habitual of blaming others for the shipwreck and never shoulders the responsibility. Under the changed circumstances, this play will no longer save the face of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi or Priyanka Gandhi because the stance of G-23 constituents of the Congress is becoming stronger and stronger with each passing election and keeping a bold face under such dwindling condition has become difficult for the Gandhi trio and very soon some steps will have to be taken to revive Congress and give the nation a strong political opposition as presently there is no significant entity which can act as a healthy opposition. In the meantime, state unit chiefs Navjot Singh Sidhu (Punjab), Ganesh Godiyal (Uttarakhand), Girish Chodankar (Goa), Ajay Kumar Lallu (UP) and Nameirakpam Loken Singh (Manipur) has resigned from their posts. Amid political drama and gimmicks of Congress leaders, a crucial meeting of G-23 leaders held at the residence of senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad wherein they said that the only way forward is for the Congress to adopt the model of collective and inclusive leadership and decision-making at all levels. The ball is now in the court of the Gandhis and people have kept their fingers crossed in anticipation of what will happen next. The need of the hour as far as Congress' fate is concerned is that Gandhis' should pave the way for others to try their hands but historically this is not going to happen and the aforesaid family will continue to stick to the top chairs in the party.

TEJSVI NAVDHITMASTU

It is always the prime duty of local police and other supporting agencies of a particular area to maintain law and order situation properly but whenever, need of some extra support or force is felt to tackle emerging situations effectively, the paramilitary forces are deployed by the Government as per the need and the requirement to assist the local agencies in maintaining normalcy besides tackling anti-social elements effectively. Among various para-military forces of the country, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is one of the major forces deployed across the country as per the requirement and demand by the respective state Governments. Working under the direct control of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India CRPF is the largest manned paramilitary force in the country with 246 battalions and over 3.15 lakh personnel. Pertinent to mention here that before independence, the force was established as the Crown Representative Police on July 27, 1939 but after enactment of CRPF Act on December 28, 1949, it became Central Reserve Police Force. Further, in 1960 many state reserve police battalions were merged with the CRPF. Working with a motto 'Tejsvi Navdhitmastu' which means 'Let Brilliance Emerge out of our Endeavours', besides playing a crucial role in supporting local police and Army in maintaining law and order situation in various sensitive states like J&K, North east etc, CRPF has always proved as a front runner in every sector. Moreover, before the constitution of the Border Security Force in 1965, CRPF was also responsible for guarding the Indo-Pak border. Not only in India but the services of force have also been provided in foreign countries like Sri Lanka, Haiti, Namibia, Somalia and Maldives for various UN missions as peace-keeping force. It will be worth mentioning here that the force is celebrating its 83rd Raising Day on March 19, 2022 in Jammu, for the first time outside its usual venue of Delhi-NCR, where the Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be the Chief Guest. As per sources, CRPF during 2021-22 eliminated 162 terrorists and Maoists besides arresting 1500 others and forcing 750 to surrender. It is only due to such forces dedicated towards the cause of the nation that a common man can sleep peacefully in the comforts of his house.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Let's Make Our Holi Holy And Every Day A Holi

Bhagavatam reveal the answer to us. We are spiritual beings engaged in bodies made of matter, says the Gita, 2:18. Our real happiness lies in our loving relationship with God. This relationship exists on a spiritual plane, unaffected by bodily and worldly limitations. It is an eternal and ever-increasing relationship of love. God is great because he is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. He is great because He is all-loving and omni-benevolent. Freedom is the bedrock of love. Being all-loving, God gives us the choice to love Him or not. We, more or less, choose not to love God, and therefore, are in the current predicament of duality and limitation. The loving relationship with God can be revived by the practice of Bhakti Yog. In order to develop a relationship with a person, we try to know him, think about him and serve him. We can know about the all-attractive God, Krishn, from the Bhakti texts – the Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam. We can also associate with experienced Bhakti practitioners for regular inspiration. And the art of directing our worldly engagements as a loving offering to Krishn – this too can be learnt. Spiritual happiness thus derived can never be deterred by worldly impediments or circumstances.

Rachanath Swami

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

India is a country of diverse cultures, traditions, customs, rituals and festivals and in different parts of the country different festivals are celebrated with pomp and show. Holi is one such festival and is rightly called as the festival of colors but is celebrated although in different ways across the length and breadth of India, however sprinkling of the colors is common to all parts of the country. The festival of Holi fosters the unity and togetherness among the people of the country and therefore this festival of colors has got special importance for national cohesion and unity. The festival of Holi is celebrated to bade goodbye to winter and to welcome the season of spring and thus the Holi symbolizes positivity in life and is celebrated to encourage and have the feeling of positivity which is so important for life of the individual. This festival is celebrated to discourage and shun all negativity in lives of the people. The question is as why do the people celebrate festival of Holi and different legends stand woven around the celebration of the festival. In fact as already said Holi is celebrated in honor of the arrival of spring, the end of winter, the blossoming of love and for many it is the festive day to meet others, play, laugh, forget and forgive and above all to repair broken relationships. The festival also celebrates the beginning of a good spring harvest season. Generally it lasts for a night and a day, starting on the evening of the Purnima-full moon day falling in the Hindu calendar month of Phalguna, which falls around the middle of March in the Gregorian calendar. The first evening is known as Holika Dahan, marking burning of demoness Holika or Chhoti Holi, followed by Holi. The Holi festival in India is a celebration of the victory of good over evil, the destruction of the demoness Holika. It is said that Harenyakashap, a cruel king was asking all to worship him as he proclaimed to be the one and all, the God

and even wanted his son Prahlad who was the Vishnu bagaht also to worship him. But Prahlad did not accede to it and so Harenyakashyap ordered that his son to be burned along with his own sister Holika who was resistant to fire due to some blessings. So it was conspired that Prahlad would be burnt in lap of his aunt. But a miracle happened that no harm was caused to Prahlad, however his aunt Holika got burnt and was reduced to ashes. Thus to commemorate victory of good over the evil the Holi is celebrated. Holi is an important Hindu festival but it is celebrated by the Sikhs, Jains and communities across the spectrum and it fosters the spirit of oneness and mutual brotherhood and gives strength to tolerance and secularism. In fact all the important festivals are celebrated jointly by all the communities and this is the beauty of this land and of the principle and practice of unity in diversity which is the principle characteristic of India. The festival of Holi is celebrated in different forms and ways in different states but the sprinkling of the color is common in all states of India. Thus most Indian states have their own way of celebrating Holi. In UP, men and women sing popular songs and shout chants to Radha and Krishna. In Kanpur, Holi lasts for seven days and on last day, a grand fair called Ganga Mela or Holi Mela is organised. In Gorakhpur, Holi begins with a special Pooja and through the day brotherhood is celebrated among people. In Barsana village, Lathmar Holi is celebrated. According to myths, Holi began in Barsana region of India, which includes Vrindavan, Mathura, Nandgaon and Barsana, the festival is celebrated with not just colors but with Lathis. It is said that children of Mathura annoyed child Krishna by repeatedly asking why is he of black complexion and on this, Youshodha called child Krishna to sprinkle colors on children and therefore Krishna did the same and sprinkled colors on children and Gopies.

Thus it became a practice in Barsana that females beat males with Lathis, which is known as Lathmar Holi and this practice is present even today. With great gusto and anticipation, the people of India welcome Holi the festival of colors. But did you imagine there could be so many incredibly different ways this festival is celebrated in different places of India. Holi at Mathura and Vrindavan is celebrated with great gusto for many days for these were the places where Krishna spent most of his childhood. Situated in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, the celebrations there span over a week or so. Each major temple housing the idol of Krishna and Radha celebrate Holi on a different day. People throng the temples to get drenched in colored waters and make merry and joy and sing songs in praise of Krishna and Radha. In Punjab, a ritual called Hola Mohalla was initiated by the Sikh Gurn, Guru Gobind Singh where Holi is celebrated by demonstrating physical agility by indulging in martial arts. Punjab celebrates Hola Mohalla which looks, sounds and feels like Holi for warriors. It is celebrated a day before Holi. The day starts early on day of Holi, people get dressed to play and stock up on the colors and sweets to welcome their friends to play and enjoy. The Holi celebrations in Punjab bring with it a riot of colors, songs, dancing and scrumptious treats all to welcome spring. Traditionally Hola Mohalla is the way Holi is celebrated in Punjab but the typical tradition of playing with color and water, continues to be the integral part of the festivities. In Punjab the Holi is the occasion to mingle with friends and family. It is the occasion to forgive and forget and embrace one and all as the colors signify the binding and mixing with all. In some parts of the Uttar Pradesh the idols of Holika are burnt to remember the victory of good over the evil. It is said that on the next day of the burning of Holika the ashes of the demoness were thrown on friends and rela-

tives and this changed into sprinkling of the colors on the people. Thus the festival of Holi is celebrated in different ways in different parts of the country but the sprinkling of the colored water is common to all the Holi celebrations. On the occasion of Holi people sprinkle colors on the friends and on the passersby and dance to the beats of the drums and enjoy and make merry. In Maharashtra the festival of Holi is celebrated as the Rang-Panchmi with gaiety and colors are sprinkled on the friends and relatives. The festival of Holi fosters the mutual brotherhood and strengthens the spirit of unity and cohesion and thus this festival helps in strengthening the bonds of communal harmony and mutual brotherhood. Therefore this festival gives strength the pluralism and secularism which is badly needed for the flourishing of the secular democracy. Thus the festival of colors unites the people of different religions though it is a Hindu festival. In Gorakhpur people visit their friends and sprinkle colored water and sing songs in praise of Krishna and Radha and it unites the people. Thus the spirit of oneness is fostered by celebrating this festival jointly by the different communities. The people throw colored water upon their friends and relatives and visit the houses of their friends and relatives and sing songs, enjoy and make merry. People of India wait impatiently for the arrival of the Holi festival and embrace the festival with open arms and use different colors and sprinkle it on the friends and relatives and even on the passers-by. It is good if the eco-friendly Holi is celebrated by the people with the use of natural colors so that there is no harm to anyone and to environment. Thus, festival of Holi fosters the unique characteristic of the unity in diversity and strengthens this trait and theme of India. Let us all celebrate the festival of colors with great enthusiasm and fervor and may this festival be a harbinger of mutual brotherhood and peace!

(The author is a Columnist and Social Activist).

RSETI transforms life of Shopian's Afroza

Hailing from a nearby village Hajipora Herman, located at a distance of 15 Km from District headquarter Shopian, Afroza Jan could not continue her studies after secondary school due to some economic constraints. Afroza had a desire to support her family financially to overcome the economic crisis that her family was going through and in this process she came to know about Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) Shopian, run by the J&K Bank, through Print and Social Media.

Without wasting time she immediately got herself enrolled for Women Tailoring Training programme in the year 2018 with an objective to learn the skills of tailoring.

After completing the training course successfully from RSETI Shopian, Afroza hired a room on rent basis and established a Cutting and Tailoring Unit in Hajipora Herman Market with an initial investment of Rs 2 lakh in the said business.

Though her financial position was not so strong to invest the money from her own sources, but, to make her dreams come true, she borrowed the requisite amount from her friends and relatives for procurement of machinery etc. On observing the potentiality of her ideas, and the demand of the trade, her friends and relatives vividly

► Success Story ◄

encouraged her and extended all possible support including financial assistance to enable her to achieve her goal.

In 2018, she formally started her Business Unit in the name and style of Shah Tailors at Hajipora Herman Market.

During these past 3 years, Afroza has earned a name in tailoring and cutting and has generated a good number of customers because of her satisfactory work.

She has a customer base not only in Hajipora but also in other surrounding villages and is now earning her livelihood comfortably. With

the help of this business unit, Afroza not only supports her own family but also the families of two other co-workers.

Her parents are feeling proud of their daughter. Her monthly earning has touched over Rs 20,000. After deduction of her input cost, she is saving a good amount and comfortably meeting her household expenses.

Now, she has become a job provider rather than job seeker by providing employment to two other unemployed educated persons, who are also earning their daily livelihoods at her Unit. Her endeavours are a lesson for the new generation, especially for those educated youth, who are running after the Government jobs and wasting their precious time rather than opening their eyes and see how many opportunities are waiting around them in which they can go and earn their livelihood.

They also can become job providers rather than job seekers, provided they see their future from a different angle.

Winds of change becoming evident in J&K

The unprecedented increase in developmental activity in J&K, riding on an ongoing cross cutting reform push, has placed J&K in the enviable company of best performing states/UTs in the country. There is not only a buzz within, but also outside the J&K, and this image makeover is resulting in positive spinoffs. Investors' confidence and willingness to invest in J&K is a telltale sign of the confidence that the ongoing reforms are inspiring amongst those who have capital and are looking for a place to invest. Investors come calling only when they trust that systems in a state/UT to respond to their concerns and needs on a real time basis.

Public institutions are now responsive, and J&K has suddenly become a beacon of hope. It would not be possible without a rule based order, which places premium on transparency, equity and accountability. Unprecedented development that has taken place all around in J&K is giving a lie to the long propagated notion in J&K that for accelerating development, systems need to be junked and that adherence to the laws can choke and throttle growth. It is becoming increasingly evident that such notion was largely propagated for self interest.

Nothing can be farther from the truth. J&K is witnessing unprecedented development in all spheres. Many development works, even those languishing for want of funds or for some other reasons, are being executed or have rather found a new lease of life and are being completed in record time. And this is being done without cutting corners; infact all regulatory requirements are being met in each case. Tendering has always been a bug-

bear; there has been an unwillingness to touch it even with a barge-pole, so to speak.

Today, e-tendering is the new buzzword; it resonates in every district, block and Panchayat. It has brought transparency, what's more equity, in the work execution; all works are being e-tendered. The days of doling out contracts to select few cronies on nomination are becoming a matter of past. Equity, transparency and fairness are the new Mantras. Today, no work is undertaken without administrative and technical approvals. Despite strict fiscal discipline, greater number of works is being completed in record time.

According to the government's statistics, the number of works completed during 2021-22 has shown a monumental jump as compared to the past years. In the year 2018-19, 3293 works were completed under district capex in J&K. In the following year, this figure was 1165 while in 2020-21, 1676 works were completed. In contrast, 18,651 works already completed on February, 2022 end and 36572 works are likely to be completed by the end of the fiscal year. If 36572 works are completed in 2021-22, this would represent nearly 22-fold increase over the works completed in the preceding year. Compare the number of works completed in 2020-21 with those in 2019-20 and the increase is minuscule 1.43 times.

The uptick in work execution achieved in or likely to be achieved in 2021-22 is nothing less than spectacular; if one considers that all these works have been executed after following a process of competitive bidding.

Even the representatives of the people have seen the efficacy of the

new fiscal order.

Block Development Council Chairman, Marheen, District Kathua, Karan Attri has this to say, "Development works are going on at a good pace and around 80 percent works have already been completed in my area." He goes on to say, "People have high expectations from us and we are trying our best to complete all the ongoing works on time." DDC, Chairperson, Reasi, Saraf Singh, puts it down to the transformation in financial system carried out during the last two years. "This is a fallacy that allotment on nomination basis quickens the pace of works. If anything, it only brings arbitrariness and discretion in the system. More works will be completed in Reasi District this year compared to the previous year: e-tendering has not been a drag on the process of development," he said.

Saraf, a retired JKAS officer, who has worked in the Accounts and Treasuries Organisation, understands the virtues of transparency and financial discipline, said, "There are some teething problems, but they will get resolved going forward as the new system deepens." He said that increase in the completion of the development works was also due to the increased monitoring by the PRIs. He also hailed the 'Janbhagidari Empowerment' portal, saying that, "it has provided easy and ready access to the general public and they can see the works being done in their areas by simply pressing a button on their smart phones." He said that 'stricter financial regime and mobile enabled oversight are the two most important reforms in J&K in the recent history. And they have put the real power in the hands of the people and their representatives.'

Transforming J&K

Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana: One-stop support for empowering rural women

Women empowerment is a process that leads women to claim their rights to have access to equal opportunities in economic, cultural, social and political spheres of life and realize their full potential. This progress has to be accompanied by their freedom in decision making both within and outside their home with the ability to influence the direction of social change. The Government of India, in its commitment towards empowering women socially, economically and politically, announced establishment of 'Mahila Shakti Kendra' in 2017-18 to provide one stop convergent support services for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition.

Accordingly, a new sub-scheme namely Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) under the umbrella Scheme Pradhan Mantri Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (PMMSY) had been approved for implementation. The scheme will provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and for empowering them through awareness generation, training and capacity building. The scheme MSK is envisaged to work at various levels. While, National level (domain based knowledge support) and State level (State Resource Centre for Women) structures will provide technical support to the respective governments on issues related to women, the District and Block level Centres will provide support to MSK and also give a foothold to women empowerment schemes.

Jammu and Kashmir government has launched a slew of initiatives towards women emancipation ensuring their complete safety and protection and implementation of Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme in the UT was one such initiatives. Under this unique initiative, Mahila Shakti Kendras have been established in all districts of the UT along with One Stop Center (OSCs) connected with helpline 181.

Talking about J&K, MSK provides single window for all activities related to women. The established OSCs have been provided with one police official who has access to CTNS for direct registration of FIRs from the centre itself. Besides, video conferencing facilities have been connected with District Legal Service Authorities and the facilities for recording statements and appearing in courts through video conference and all kinds of legal aid is being provided. Also, the OSCs have also been provided with medical examination facilities. The MSKs have been connected with all the departments in the district which work on the principles of synergy and collaboration. Besides, short stay facilities through women homes and skilling and financial inclusion through MSKs to those in need are also being provided. The OSCs are also being acquainted with various schemes meant for women and deal specifically with complaints and violence related domestic issues of women. Likewise, 10 special cells have also been set up in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences and supported by National Women's Commission also function in coordination with MSKs and OSCs. The administration, in an effort to further these pro-women measures, will be establishing District Level Centres for Women (DLCW) at district level to create relevant and updated information bank on government schemes, programmes and services with all details like the eligibility criteria, documentation requirement, processing time, benefits, facilitating delivery, tracking status of applications etc. The DLCW will serve as a link between block/village and state level in implementation of PMMSK scheme. It will identify problems faced by women while applying for various government schemes, document the cases and will report to relevant for including DCs office/PRIs to resolve the same. Besides, meetings will be organized where issues affecting convergence efforts at various levels including inter departmental convergence would be addressed and other social, economic factors affecting women's empowerment can also be brought to the forum. The DLCW will prepare a district level plan incorporating the deliverables based on the objectives of the programmes and schemes of Ministry of Women and Child Development within a fixed timeframe for implementation and local context. It will also be responsible for monitoring of schemes and training of functionaries etc. Each of the Mahila Shakti Kendras provide an interface to the rural women so that they can approach the government so as to avail their entitlements through training and capacity building at four levels, national, state, district and block levels. A woman is a full circle, within her is the power to create, nurture and transform. Nari Shakti is a concept that has existed in Indian culture since time immemorial. Road to development cannot be travelled without the empowerment of women who form almost 50 per cent per cent of the Indian population. A multidirectional organized approach to women empowerment is sure to take the country way beyond this path.