

PRIORITIZING PEOPLE's ASPIRATIONS

Interests and aspirations of people always remained top priority for the ruling dispensation right from the day one of its assuming the charge of office and it leaves no stone unturned in meeting the same. It has been proved by the Government several times in the past by taking numerous people-friendly decisions which were almost impossible for its predecessors. Recently, the repeal of controversial farm laws, which were framed by the Government after following proper legal procedure in the Parliament keeping the interest of the farming committee in mind, is quite enough to prove that when people reject something, the Government even not hesitates to revoke its own decisions without any hesitation. After the bifurcation of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories viz Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, to ensure equitable political representation besides eliminating the decades old discrimination faced by people of Jammu region, a Delimitation Commission led by Retired Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai was assigned the herculean task of redrawing the boundaries of assembly constituencies besides establishing several new constituencies to ensure equitable representation to every area in assembly. After detailed study and series of interactions, when a draft report was submitted to the associate members of Commission for raising objections and providing suggestions, few suggestions made in the report were not accepted by some sections of people who accordingly approached their representatives for raising objections on their behalf so that necessary changes can be made in the draft. As per the latest news, the Delimitation Commission has accepted some suggestions made by its associate members and after making necessary corrections, the draft report has once again sent to them so that it can be made public for their information at the earliest. Pertinent to mention here that the Delimitation Commission, whose tenure was expiring on March 6 has been granted a second extension of two months by the Law Ministry so that it can complete the assigned job meticulously. The reports regarding changes in the draft report of the commission proves that for it also people's aspirations are of prime importance and no stone will be left unturned in achieving the same.

SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Carrying forward the noble mission of the ruling dispensation led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure empowerment of womenfolk besides taking them ahead in every sphere of life to make them equal with their male counterparts, the UT administration has always been working for the betterment of womenfolk across J&K. There is no doubt that before the formation of the Union Territory, the condition of women in J&K was not so good as they have to face numerous problems both inside as well as outside the homes. But, soon after the formation of Union Territory where on one hand a mega-developmental spree was initiated for equitable development of J&K special stress was accorded towards all those sections, which were earlier ignored by the successive governments. To improve the socio-economic status of women, especially those living in rural areas, several women welfare schemes were implemented in J&K so that the benefits of the same can be provided to them without any obstruction. Where on one side, schemes like UJWALLA helped a lot in improving the health conditions of women, on the other hand TEJASWANI and UDAAN schemes provided adequate platform to talented girls and women to excel in various fields of their choice. The Centre Government also paid a focused attention for ensuring basic education of girl child by holding special awareness camps for rural populace to inspire them for sending their girls to schools. Furthering the initiatives regarding welfare of women in J&K, in a recent decision, the administration has decided to reserve a full industrial estate for women entrepreneurs in J&K so that they can set up their units without any problem. In a first of its kind decision, the Government has reserved an Industrial Estate at Seen Thakran, Udhampur for women with an aim to attract more and more women towards entrepreneurship. As per the decision, any enterprise or unit having a minimum of 50 per cent stake held by a woman entrepreneur, will be eligible to qualify for allotment in the reserved estate. Further to ensure other necessary assistance to aspiring women entrepreneurs, the administration has decided to provide them suitable chunks of land, in a transparent and fair manner. These female-oriented initiatives will not only help in achieving self-dependency for women across J&K but will also lead to women empowerment in true sense.

OFF 'D' CUFF

The master suggested he sweep the floor, wash the dishes, and dust the house.

The student wondered loudly how such an unusual advice could be a wise practice.

The master replied, "When you sweep the floor, your body might be sweeping, but your mind is usually miles away. In the same way, when you wash the dishes or dust the house, your mind is miles away from your actions. Learning to integrate your mind, heart, and actions is a wise practice. So, try performing the tasks with complete focus."

Have you observed this in your daily life as well? You will notice that you are physically at office and doing some work, but your mind is wandering everywhere. When you work or do anything from such a space, your action is not backed by your mind or heart, and you end up feeling incomplete.

When we experience incompleteness at work or home, we usually think the reason is the situation in hand. But this is not so. Lack of integration of mind and heart is usually the reason we feel like that. We get stressed at work,

Har Gaon Haryali: Remarkable step for sustainable dev, climate justice

Sustainable development is an approach towards development and growth by using resources in a way that allows them to renew or continue to exist for future generations. In this context, the government of Jammu and Kashmir has launched remarkable initiative 'Har Gaon Haryali' programme in consonance with the vision of 'Green Jammu & Kashmir' drive 2021 to ensure sustainable development and promote climate justice across the Union Territory.

The Green Jammu and Kashmir drive itself is in consonance with the National Forest Policy 1988 and the Jammu and Kashmir Forest Policy 2011 which envisages afforestation on all degraded and denuded lands in the union territory within and outside forests. Spelling out broad contours of this initiative, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, remarked that the 'Green Jammu and Kashmir' campaign aims at creating people's movement at a massive scale with involvement of all stakeholders particularly village Panchayats, women, students, Urban Local bodies, NGOs and civil society. "Our aim is to

bring two third geographical area of Jammu and Kashmir under the forest and tree cover. The forest and tree cover in Jammu and Kashmir is about 55 per cent, which is substantially higher than the national average of 24.56 per cent," Lieutenant Governor maintained.

The J&K Government also initiated 'Har Gaon Haryali' campaign in November 2021. Under this campaign, forest and sister departments were vested with the responsibility to cover all the village panchayats and planting of one crore saplings. With an aim to realise objectives and target set under Har Gaon Haryali campaign the Social Forestry department is laying emphasis on providing hybrid clonal plants to farmers from its modern nurseries, so that farmer's income can be supplemented and sustained supply of raw materials to wood based industries can be ensured.

In addition, department is organizing such programmes with multiple activities in all districts of Jammu and Kashmir to provide impetus to J&K Green drive initiative with participation of local communities. The department has apprised the people in general and

farmers in particular to avail the supply of plants from departmental nurseries to take up agro-forestry activities on their lands.

Furthermore, in a bid to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' in collaboration with the School Education Department, the Social Forestry department is also involving schools in afforestation and awareness activities. The students being important stakeholders in sustainable development, their adequate sensitization would go a longer way in achieving the long-term objective of the programme. This campaign is strenuously laden with the potential and propensity to act as breakwaters against the unbridled trend and temperament of environmental pollution. This in turn, will help in reversing the progression of climate change and help in promotion of concept of climate justice. It also envisaged addition to the already existing strength and resources of the farmers thus helping in realization of objective of doubling the income of farmers in the long run.

Importantly, if the participation of all stakeholders at the grassroots level is

ensured and taken in its intended direction, the campaign will help in reducing carbon footprints. With this campaign, India will be able to fulfill its global obligations regarding climate change and in the long run will help in realizing the sustainable development goals like end poverty in all its forms everywhere, end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, make human settlements and cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss among others. More significantly, if this campaign is taken in its right perspective, it will help in maintaining ecological balance and consequently will help in the preservation of fragile ecology and rich biodiversity of the Himalayan landscape of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mahashivratri-A night of awakening & bliss

■ OMKAR DATATRAY

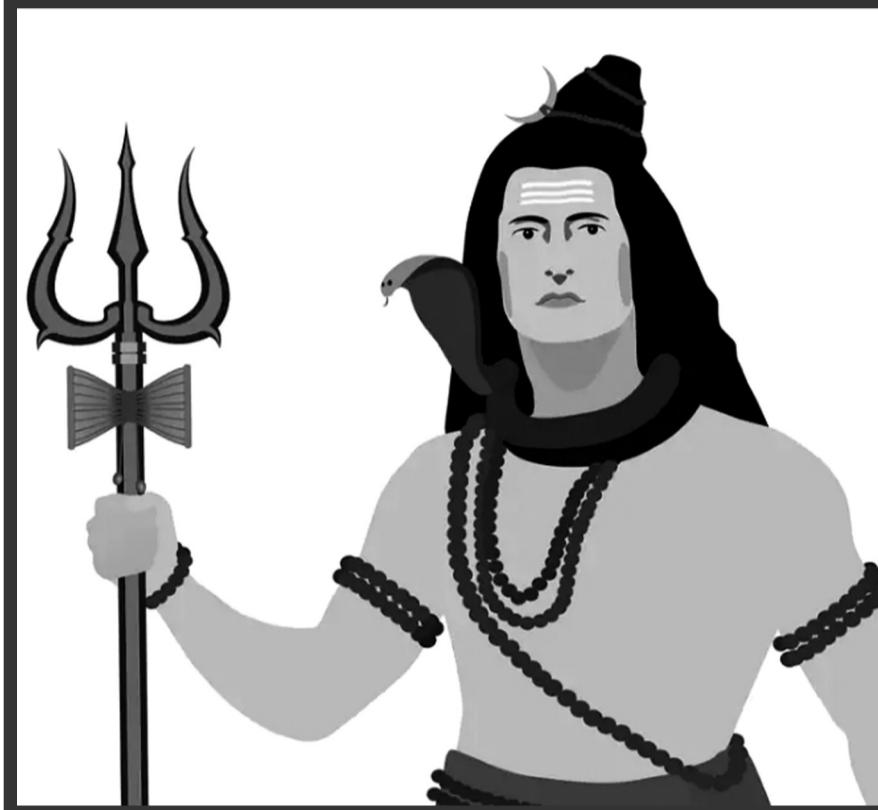
There is an unknown and mysterious energy that is driving all of us. Scientists have not been able to give it a name yet. However, saints of yore have called this unknown energy Shiv, which is believed to make every living being alive. We are able to breathe, eat, walk and carry out our day to day activities because of Shiv. Not only does this energy drive living beings, but it also resides in non living things - as their energy. Shiv, thus drives existence. Shiv literally means nothingness but it is nothing which creates everything and thus it is Shiv which is behind creating everything. So Shiv implies nothing out of which everything is created and thus Shiv is manifest in each and everything. Shiv in fact thus represents cosmic energy which makes all the people to work and perform all the activities and drives all of us. Mahashivratri is the night of awakening and bliss. In our hustle and bustle of life, we forget our source of energy—that which is running all of us. India is the land of festivals and fairs and we celebrate many festivals but the festival of Mahashivratri is an important festival and it is celebrated across the length and breadth of country. But the festival of Mahashivratri has special importance for Kashmiri Pandit community and they celebrate this festival in a unique, special and different way. Mahashivratri is the festival to remember and to take our awareness to the basis of our existence. The pertinent question is as to why is Shivratri celebrated. There is more than one stories behind celebration of this festival.

1. As per a story, Bhagwan Shiv married Maa Parvati on this day, so it is the day of celebration of this sacred union.

2. Another story is that when Gods and Demons churned the ocean together to obtain ambrosia that lay in its depth, a pot of poison emerged. Bhagwan Shiv consumed this poison, saving both Gods and the mankind. The poison lodged in the Bhagwan's throat turning it blue. As such, to honour the savior of the world, Shivratri is celebrated.

3. One more legend is that as Goddess Ganga descended from heaven in full force, Bhagwan Shiv caught her in his matted locks, and released her on to Earth as several streams, thereby preventing huge destruction on earth. As a mark of tributes, Shivalinga is bathed on this auspicious night.

Also, it is believed that the formless Bhagwan Sadashiv appeared in the form of a Lingodbhav Moorthi at midnight. Hence, people stay awake all night, offering prayers to him. These are some of the stories that can possibly answer why we celebrate Shivratri. Mahashivratri is very significant for people who are on the spiritual path. It is also very significant for people who are in family and also for the ambitious in the world. People who live in



families observe Mahashivratri as Shiv's wedding anniversary. Those with worldly ambitions see that day as the day Shiv conquered all his enemies, but for the ascetics, it is the day he became one with Mount Kailash. He became like mountain—absolutely still. In the Yogi traditions, Shiv is worshipped as a God but considered as Adi Guru, the first Guru from whom the science of Yoga originated. That day is Mahashivratri. All movement in him stopped and he became utterly still, so ascetics see Mahashivratri as the night of stillness. Mahashivratri is an opportunity and a possibility to bring you to that experience of the vast emptiness within every human being, which is the source of all creation. On the one hand, Shiv is known as the destroyer. On the other, he is known as the most compassionate. He is also known to be the greatest of the givers. The yogic lore is rife with many stories about Shiv's compassion. The ways of expression of his compassion have been incredible and astonishing at the same time. So, Mahashivratri is a special night for receiving too. It is our wish and blessing that you must not pass this night without knowing at least a moment of the vastness of this emptiness that we call as Shiv. Let this night not just be a night of wakefulness, let this night be a night of awakening for us all. Maha Shivratri is one of the most auspicious festivals of Hindus and is dedicated to Bhagwan Shiv. It is being celebrated on March 1 (Tuesday) in all over the country. It holds a great significance for Hindus all across the globe and is one of the most celebrated

festivals across the country. This day marks Bhagwan Shiv's marital union with Goddess Parvati. Devotees visit Shiv-Parvati temples to seek blessings and also observe fast on this day. Maha Shivratri this year falls on Chaturdashi Tithi during Krishna Paksha in the month of Magha in the South Indian calendar or the Amavasya Hindu lunar calendar. However, according to North Indian calendar or the Poornimant lunar calendar, Maha Shivratri is the Masik(monthly) Shivratri in the month of Phalgun. The day is celebrated as Goddess Parvati and Shiv's marriage. This is the most popular legend associated with Maha Shivratri. The day marks the marital union of the Bhagwan with his consort. After his wife Sati's death, Shiv lived like a hermit. He was immersed in meditation and undertook severe penance. Sati took rebirth as Parvati in order to win Shiv's heart once again and become his consort. She did rigorous penance for years and did that entire she could to win his attention. On seeing her dedication, devotion and immeasurable love, Shiv accepted her as his wife. They married on the 14th day of the dark fortnight in the month of Phalguna. It is related with Samudra Manthan episode. In a contest of one-upmanship, Devas and Asuras - started churning the Samudra or ocean to obtain the divine nectar (Amrita) to gain immortality. While churning the ocean with Mount Mandara as the rod and Vasuki, the King of serpents as a rope, a number of beneficial things emerged from the ocean but with it also surfaced the

halahala or poison. Halahala was so toxic that it could ruin the creation. In order to save life and the universe, Bhagwan Vishnu asked the Devas to reach out to Bhagwan Shiv, who alone could consume the poison. Bhagwan Shiv readily agreed to consume Halahala. Fearing it could harm him, Goddess Parvati pressed his neck with her hands thereby preventing the Halahala from going down his throat. This made Halahala find refuge in his throat. Though it failed to cause harm to Shiv, it turned his neck blue. Hence Shiv is also known as Neelakantha. In order to ensure, Halahala has no other impact on the Bhagwan, the Devas and devotees of the Bhagwan kept him awake all night singing praises and performing dances. Shivalinga came into being this way. Once, Bhagwan Vishnu and Bhagwan Brahma had an argument over their supremacy. This created much disturbance in the Devaloka and the Devas reached out to Bhagwan Shiv for help. In order to make Brahma and Vishnu realise that there was a supreme power governing them, Shiv appeared as a fiery flame shaped like a lingam and challenged the two to trace the beginning and the end of the beaming light. Vishnu transformed into a boar and headed underground while Brahma took the form of a Swan to fly upward. The search turned out to be so tiring that Brahma persuaded Ketaki flower to play witness to his achievement of tracing the origin of the beam and convey the same to Bhagwan Vishnu. This is when Bhagwan Shiv emerged in his full form from the beam. Realising that their argument was futile and their claim to supremacy meaningless, Brahma and Vishnu bowed to Bhagwan Shiv and pleaded forgiveness. Since Shiv appeared in a Linga form on this day, people celebrate his supremacy by remaining awake and chanting mantras honoring him on Maha Shivratri. As already mentioned Shivratri is celebrated in a unique, different and special way by the Kashmiri Pandits and the festival has great importance for the Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmiri Hindus start the preparations for this yearly festival a fortnight before the day of Shivratri and on this day the head of the family observes fast and break it after the Pooja at midnight. They fill some pots with water and walnuts and perform Pooja. These pots are symbolized as Bhagwan Shiv, his consort Parvati and their son Ganesh and also Bharavas. It is said that the four kernels of the walnut represent the four Vedas. After three days the walnuts are distributed to the relatives and neighbours. Kashmiri Pandits cook many vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes and offer them to Bhairav on the auspicious night and after Pooja they eat specially prepared food and dishes. May Bhagwan Shiv end coronavirus from the world and save humanity from the pandemic.

YOUR COLUMN Change is must

Dear Editor,

It has been many days or it has not been many days. Time seems to have stopped somewhere. Then, it seems that even if he had stayed, it would have been fine. Sometimes I don't understand whether there is sadness or sadness, or both. Yes, the same reason, even though it is not there. Recently Hijab came up as an issue, so I find my role in it. What do I think, what do I want, which side am I on? Obviously, I am not in favour of any kind of curtain, be it a veil or a Naqab. I do not support any kind of traditional dress because it is considered right by the society. What to wear, what to live as it is a completely personal matter. But as soon as it comes to the 'private', there is a lot of socialization mentality in it. The samething that we do not know that what is inside us by becoming our will is actually a pre-thought, decided thing, behavior of the society. In this sense, there is no talk of neutrality in support or support on this issue. Wear whatever you want. But don't put any pressure on someone who doesn't want to. Change, if it goes through a process, gives lasting and tangible results. If it is imposed, it can take a regressive position rather than a progressive one.

Swami Sukhabodhananda

If any change is really needed, then the will has to be really allowed to be their will. We are all victims of this. Our conduct, behavior, food, language, dialect, dress, culture, festival are all under its purview. Today, when Hijab has been brought into discussion for political use in this way, I find it with all those who consider wearing Hijab as their right. This is exactly the same as there was talk about the entry of women in Sabarimala temple. Even then I could not understand why I am with these women in the fight to go to the temple, even though I have no faith in all this. The matter is the same, everyone has equal rights. Are those who are against Hijab also against the veil? Understanding has to be developed for which education is needed. Education that is not based on prejudice. Let the understanding of 'your choice' develop, let someone learn to question, reason on his own.

Then he surprises himself. Can such huge political gimmicks be countered with such innocent questions? It was to be that in the light of knowledge, we all had to be free from all such stereotypes, traditions, which have no meaning. But what happened is that the orthodox structures that were to be demolished have to be defended. It is not necessary that the one who is in hijab should not have a free mind. Just like someone who is not necessarily modern in appearance and speech, he should also be modern in thoughts and thinking.

This is real politics. Only change our fight. Change the direction of our standing only when we have to understand each other. If we want to heal each other's misery, then we should be filled with hatred towards each other. A recent incident made headlines as to how the teachers who had to break the walls of communalism are participating in strengthening it through their messages. Teachers like these will have students, those who spread fear and frenzy against girls on the question of dress and dress. There is sadness, there is sadness. How did we become we didn't have to be like that. Our battles were meant to be something else and they have been given something else to make. Even if we do not fight, it is his victory and even if we fight for the changed issues in a changed situation, the victory is his. The only hope in this sadness is education and teachers. Teachers will have to understand their real roles, invert their behaviour, thinking and methods to see if they are unknowingly or unknowingly doing any such behavior which is entangled an entire generation. Education is not just about the number entered in the mark-sheet. That is the vision of seeing life, the sensation of being a human being. Do we have that? We all educated people need to think in solitude on this question. Otherwise, in public forums, the most insensitive people have made people cry a lot with their speeches and there is applause.

Vijay Garg.