

“The physical ego serves as its own worst enemy when, by delusive material behavior, it eclipses its true nature as the ever blessed soul.”

-Paramahansa Yogananda

## BALANCED APPROACH

There is no doubt that what the movie 'The Kashmir Files' has projected has been endorsed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah claiming that the movie has showcased the heart wrenching tale of KPs in the best possible manner. The fact that the Prime Minister of the country and the Home Minister have appealed to the people to go and watch the movie to know the facts really sets up a bounded duty on all to spare time and watch the movie in cinemas and get the overview about the ordeal faced by Kashmiri Pandits who faced migration in their very own country and were forced to live a life of refugee after getting displaced from the Kashmir Valley on behest of separatists and Pakistani mentors of the terror mongers of Valley. There are few opposition leaders in J&K who have raked-up unnecessary controversies over the movie by giving various unfounded logics and alibis to deny what has happened in Kashmir in year 1990 and afterwards. The top among those are senior NC functionary and former chief minister Omar Abdullah, and PDP chief and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti. With Kashmiri Pandits coming out in support of the film giving nod to authenticity of the facts depicted in this piece of art, Omar has been questioning the very same facts and Mehbooba is also toeing the same line despite knowing very well that there is no exaggeration or twisting of the facts in the movie. It is however magnanimity of the senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad for giving a balanced statement over the movie by saying that every resident of J&K was affected by the over three-decade long Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. He has rightly said that Pakistan-sponsored terrorism has brought death and destruction and is responsible for all the evil things. The people should gauge things by using their acumen as everything is in front of their eyes and they should not get swayed by anyone rather they should go for the narrative which is balanced and true as their knowledge and experience.

## PHILANTHROPIC GOVT

Already what the government of India has done for the safety of students studying in Ukraine is highly commendable as reportedly more than 22,000 of them have been evacuated through painstaking efforts and involving several countries in the mission. The government through such endeavours has time and again proved that it is the people-friendly dispensation whether the citizens of the country are dwelling within the country or abroad. In this context, LG Manoj Sinha has also bolstered the confidence of the students hailing from J&K who have left studies midway due to invasion of Ukraine by one of the world powers Russia. He has given indication that the union government is working out a policy so that the Indian students studying in Ukraine for the MBBS course can complete their studies in the country. This really is the big announcement for the students of the UT of J&K as they were in a fix with regard to their career and studies. The assurance came from LG's side during his meeting with the students hailing from Jammu and Kashmir, who were earlier evacuated by the central dispensation. It is pertinent to mention that thousands of students studying for the MBBS degree in Ukraine had to abandon their studies mid way and leave the war torn country to return to India through special flights arranged by the Modi Government after it deputed several central ministers to various European countries neighbouring Ukraine. With such a big announcement, the students who have left their studies have got the much needed moral support and the point has become clear that the BJP government at the centre is best of all as the philanthropy shown by this dispensation is unmatched as no government in the past has done something like this. Surely for the students, this decision is a dream come true and they must be delighted to know that their future is safe and to make this happen, the Modi government is doing things which are out of the box and never seen before in the history of independent India.



OFF 'D' CUFF

## Shiva-The Friend

Lord Shiva is a friend to us and at our Premgiri Ashram He is established as Lord Mahakaleshwar. From our Ashram, His Grace flows incessantly to everyone. Today on this day, rather we'd say on this night, why have we gathered? What is going to happen? And what should we do? About this, we will share some things with you.

If you see, there are many really auspicious days, important days for spiritual seekers in the entire year. Such as Guru Purnima or Buddha Purnima, Diwali, Dussehra and Mahashivratri.

A spiritual seeker looks forward to these days. Whenever during this time or these days, you do your sadhana (spiritual practice), you move ahead very quickly on the spiritual path. At least 100 times faster. Suppose you are sitting in a car, in some vehicle and going somewhere and your car is stuck in traffic, you are stuck somewhere; then suddenly you see on Google Map that there is some space, there is a different road, where there is less traffic. There is a small road, by which you can reach quickly. Many a times it happens that suddenly a path opened for a while, the gate opened and from there you went ahead. So, these roads which quickly take you ahead are these days. Where with your devotion, with your sadhana, you can

quickly move forward. So, if you see in the whole year, there are many such days, one of those is Mahashivratri.

About Mahashivratri, though 12 Shivartris occur in the whole year and the special one, on which you are very close to Lord Shiva, you can see him directly, you can get His Grace directly, is tonight that is called 'Mahashivratri'. Amongst the 12 Shivartris, the greatest, the biggest one is today's Mahashivratri, on which spiritually you can progress really well. Now, when we talk about spiritual growth or what it means to 'be spiritual' or what is the meaning of 'spirituality'? Sometimes we just don't understand this thing itself. Does 'spirituality' mean just meditating or chanting or wearing a mala, applying a tilak or wearing some special clothes? By doing this does one become spiritual? Like, "I have been reciting mantras for 20 years. So I am spiritual." So, it's not like that at all.

First you should understand what is spirituality. Spirituality means discovering oneself, understanding your True Self, discovering the Divine. This is spirituality. Your efforts should be consistent.

Not binding yourself to those kriyas, sadhanas; you have to keep focusing on that direction, that goal: "I want to understand myself, I want to discover the Divine."

Dadashreeji

## Transforming J&K

# 'Oukhoo-Pencil village of India' writes its own growth story

Oukhoo village in South Kashmir's Pulwama district, popularly known as 'Pencil Village of India', writes its own growth story as it supplies 90 per cent of the raw material to country's pencil manufacturing units besides exporting it to 150 countries with the handholding of J&K government.

Earlier, India used to import wooden supplies from countries like China. But since 2010 local entrepreneurs decided to make use of Kashmir's famous poplar trees, a peculiarly supple wood which makes it best suited for manufacturing of pencils. The poplar wood grows best in the valleys of Kashmir where the moisture content is ideal and the weather conditions allow the wood to remain soft during the tree's growth. The government announcement regarding resumption of offline classes has rekindled the hope of better business for Manzoor Ahmad Alai (45 years), owner of

one of the biggest pencil slate making factories in Oukhoo after disappointment writ large on his face during the Covid period.

In 2011, after Alai toured Jammu to learn about skills of making of wooden slats, from which pencils are sliced out, he set up a unit in Oukhoo with assistance from Hindustan Pencils, a leading pencil manufacturer and exporter of India. Soon, others followed Alai's example and more slat-manufacturing units came up. "This spring has again brought spring in our lives too. The schools, colleges have opened up again. We are now racing supply against demand from big brands across country. Most of my workers from outside J&K have returned back and rest of them also joining us in some days to cater to the demand," Jubilant Alia said, "Government has facilitated us. We now want round the clock electricity to accelerate our production."

The village came into the limelight after

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, mentioned its success story in his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat', where he had spoken at length about "Pencil Village of India". He had said that Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir is emerging as a hub for pencil manufacturing.

"Today, Pulwama is playing an important role in educating the entire nation. If the students across the nation do their homework, prepare notes, it is because of the hard work of the people of Pulwama," PM Modi had said in his 70th Mann Ki Baat address. "Almost 90 per cent of the demand for pencil slate in the country is met by the Kashmir Valley and Pulwama has a big share in that. At one time, we used to import the wood for pencils, but now, Pulwama is making the country self-reliant in this field," he had added.

To give much needed impetus to the industry, Government of India approved

the new Industrial Developmental Scheme for Jammu & Kashmir. The scheme will go a long way in ushering an era of socio-economic development of the region as also catering to the aspirations of people. "The scheme is being implemented with the vision that industry and service led development of J&K needs to be given a fresh thrust with emphasis on job creation, skill development and sustainable development by attracting new investment and nurturing the existing ones," Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, had said at the launch of the scheme. New Industrial Development Scheme for J&K will give a boost to domestic manufacturing in the region and help the UT becoming Atmanirbhar. It will encourage new investment, substantial expansion and also nurture the existing industries in J&K besides providing a major support to local industry creating new business opportunities.

# Why BJP failed to win elections in Kerala?

■ M R LALU

The Modi Juggernaut is the electoral victories of the BJP since 2014 are ornamentally described as. Winning the Hindi heartlands of India, the BJP has always been making consistent progress in electoral politics. But towards the south, its influence was exiguous except in Karnataka which the BJP managed to make it a party stronghold. The party enjoyed meager support or no support in the remaining south Indian states. But it never hesitated to painstakingly toil to make its presence felt. Among those, Kerala was the only state that rigorously kept the BJP at a distance from winning elections, except once in 2016 the saffron party managed to win one seat in its history, sending the party veteran O Rajagopal to the state assembly from Thiruvananthapuram. When it comes to the parliament, the party had multiple arduous experiments during elections but it was never successful. Kerala's political intransigence remained unblemished all through the Modi wave, as a large area of the country conceded to the saffron dominance. Interestingly, BJP has been actively present in the state ever since its first incarnation, the Jan Sangh. The Jan Sangh had its 14th National Plenary session conducted in Kerala in 1967 in which Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay was crowned as its National President. There has always been an inflow of congruent Sangh ideologies into the social life of Kerala. Contribution of intellectuals like P Parameswaran, a senior RSS Pracharak and ideologue, who rose to become the National Vice-President of Jan Sangh, brought great fertility to the saffron thoughts in Kerala. He later chose to leave electoral politics completely and pursued and propagated cultural nationalism. Year 1967 was again crucial for the Jan Sangh as the party was catapulted to the level of a political pressure force against the EMS Namboodiripad led Communist government. Kowtoend to the demand of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the state government decided to trim-size a new district chiseled out of Palakkad, Kozhikode and Kannur districts. This was purely on religious lines as the Malappuram District as it is today, was then a Muslim dominated area. In line with the creation of Pakistan, the IUML wanted a 'Mappilasthan' carved out of the three districts in the Malabar region. The Jan Sangh had fought against this move with great vigor, sending almost all its veteran leaders to jail. Again in 1975

during the emergency, many of its senior leaders were arrested under Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). So, the presence of RSS, Jan Sangh and the right-wing ideology has always been a part of Kerala's political spectrum. Yet the party despicably failed to make inroads into electoral victories. With all his Chanakya tantra, Amit Shah failed to send his men from Kerala to the parliament, not even once.

The BJP's electoral politics has been consistently progressive increasing the number of votes but inadequate to make any structural impact in the state's political scenario. In the assembly election-2021, the party managed to garner 11.3 per cent of the total polled votes slightly increasing its vote share from 2016, which was 10.53 per cent. Both the Left Democratic Front (LDF) headed by the CPI (M) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Congress have always been precautions to spread wet blankets on BJP's electoral prospects. They could engineer it by helping each other in case a BJP candidate was predicted to be the winner. The cross-voting trend in Kerala began in 1991, when K G Marar, a senior RSS Pracharak deputed to BJP, failed to win the election from Mancheswaram constituency by a thin margin of 1000 votes. Political revelations after the elections stunningly disclosed the secret that made Marar bite the dust. This continued in the same constituency and in many other constituencies until the last election. Again, K Surendran, the present party president was defeated on a thin margin by the same unprincipled cross-voting and it is a worst kept secret in Kerala politics.

The BJP has consistently been upfront in trying to establish ties with the minorities especially the Christians. In a pragmatic move, the long-standing dispute between the Jacobite and Orthodox Church in Kerala was brought to Narendra Modi's table for a consensus, with the present Goa governor also a BJP veteran P S Sreedharan Pillai mediated it. The saffron party has made concerted efforts to make inroads among the unimpressed minority. This being the case, the party could seldom make any impulse in the direction of winning hearts of the 18.4 per cent Christians in the state. Elections 2021 in Kerala was seen as an opportunity for the party to improve its tally, becoming a perceptible opposition in the assembly. Interestingly, the BJP enjoyed the presence of metro man E. Sreedharan, retired civil servant C.V. Ananda Bose, former IPS officers Jacob Thomas and

T.P. Senkumar (both retired DGPs) and many more reputed personalities in its bandwagon. Both the IPS officers had burnt their fingers for being truthfully resisting the ruling establishment's unwarrantable propaganda. Despite the party leadership's reach out to the minority, a visible consolidation of votes against the BJP remains a reality in the state. Still unconvinced about the genuineness of the party's secular credentials, the minority is still at a distance from the saffron cohort. Mostly in triangular fights, the BJP slips to triviality and the intense infighting of the party's state leadership hammers the last nail on its coffin in every election.

Though the party manages to increase its vote share every time, the 'zero tally' pulls it down to the level of a chronic insignificance. The RSS initiative to lift the ailing party to a significant political pedestal has been a routine, per se. Bringing senior RSS Pracharak Kunmanam Rajashekharan to the party's rescue as its state president could give the party an ideological makeover. His simplicity, commitment and soft-spoken leadership received huge acceptance. He rose to popularity in Kerala as a mass agitator for the Hindu rights. His agitations during the famous Nilakkal violence in 1982 in connection with a church being allegedly built in the forest land of Sabarimala temple and the Marad massacre of 2002 in which eight Hindus were killed by an islamists mob in the Marad beach of Kozhikode got him win a superstardom among the Hindus in the state. But internal feuds in the party could not give him a breathing space, he was later enthroned as the Mizoram governor. The Ezhavas, the caste among the Hindus, predominantly lenient to the Communists, occupy about 24 per cent of the state population as per the last census. The support that it extended to the left parties remained rock-hard until recently, though ripples of denial are surfacing with a slow pace. The Nairs, the second largest Hindu community comprising 14 per cent of the population, is frequently flexible with its votes scattered among various parties. The BJP victory, with Modi taking center stage winning elections, is still a mirage in the state of Kerala. The RSS keeps drawing discipline lines for the party leadership, but it fails to remain a unified cohort bringing good results in its electoral progress card. Winning elections in God's own country is still an uphill task for BJP and Modi.

(The author is a Journalist/Social Worker).

## Employment assured to all eligible with dignity in Doda



After re-organization of J&K, the government has taken varied steps for bringing a positive change in the people's mindset with regard to the functioning of the administration at different levels. Yogvata Se Rozgar imitative is one such move where transparency and fair selection was made the benchmark to rope in youth squarely on merit basis. Fair and transparent selection process assured each competitor the position he deserved with dignity.

Recently, Yogvata Se Rozgar Mahotsav was celebrated in Doda district during the Block Diwas. The elated candidates selected for different posts were felicitated by the administration for beating the competition. Each selected candidate as Panchayat Accounts Assistants and Class-IV had their own account of apprehensions and fears before final selection. However after the selection, "We can say with full conviction that the system has changed and only the best on the merit scale will get the job and not through political influence or any other unfair means."

Jagdeep Singh of Chounwari village of Tehsil Gandoh District Doda has been selected as class-IV employee in Jal Shakti Department at his home place. His father was in the army and had fought 1971 war. After retirement, he died in an accident. agdeep's family was receiving very little pension, due to which Jagdeep could not continue his higher studies. He said that he left his studies and used to work as a labourer. He is highly satisfied with his new job in Jal Shakti Department and applauds the initiatives of the LG Administration in bringing transparency in the system. Another candidate Anirudh Singh of village Sewli Shingini of Tehsil Gandoh shares similar feelings on his selection as Accounts Assistant (Panchayat). "I belong to a very poor family and hail from a far flung area. I worked very hard and thought myself fit for the post. But for the transparent recruitment I am in this position" he shared. Similarly, Parmodh Singh of Choinwari Tehsil Bhalesaas is selected as class-IV in the Revenue Department at Gandoh. He belongs to a farmer's family. All my apprehensions and fear proved wrong as the UT administration ensured fair selection, which it had promised.

water has worsened the already available water storage situation in many parts of the state.

Every year in the summer season, various scary pictures of water crisis come to the fore from different parts of the country. In the year 2020 and 2021, the discussion of water-crisis was less, because the whole humanity was facing the crisis of corona epidemic. Otherwise, remember that in its previous years, Shimla had appealed to people to stop the movement of tourists due to the water crisis and in a metropolis like Chennai, people were advised to work from home, as there was no drinking water for everyone in the offices. Even water was not available. Every year water crisis disturbs normal life in Bundelkhand. Reports of violent skirmishes for water also surfaced in the summer of 2020, but their discussion in the media was less. The news of water crisis may have gone in the background, but the concern of water conservation is one of the most burning issues for humanity. The major reason for this is that for the fulfillment of his water related needs, man is still either dependent on nature or on groundwater. In such a situation, it is necessary that we are sensitive to the conservation of the sources of natural water storage. But we have treated the traditional water sources very softly and selfishly. The old ponds, wells, lakes, stepwells and cisterns were left neglected. The situation is that the water of most of the rivers of the country has not been found even potable at many places. The holy river Ganges is also included in this list. These ancient water bodies not only stored sufficient amount of water during their existence, but also played an important role in maintaining the ground water level. But unfortunately the modern norms of progress have struck a double blow on this wealth of nature. Not only were traditional water sources destroyed, but groundwater was also exploited arbitrarily. Things got worse in the 1970s when governments, without considering the future possibilities, dug tube wells on a large scale across the country. This met the immediate needs of the people, but the storage conditions for the future became dire. According to an official report, the groundwater exploitation which was 60 per cent in 1975 has increased to 400 per cent in 1995. Every story of conflicts over water reinforces the fear of some scientists that the next world war may not be over water that too when two-thirds of the earth is surrounded by water. But when we know the fact that 97.2 percent of

the total available water on earth is marine and it is not possible to use it for drinking, then we are aware. The availability of water in the year 1989 was nine thousand cubic meters, which is likely to be reduced to five thousand one hundred cubic meters by 2025. Indiscriminate exploitation of ground water is also a major reason for the increasing water crisis.

According to a report of the Central Ground Water Board, the groundwater level in the country declined by sixty-one percent between 2007 and 2017. The situation has become such that even in the villages situated on the banks of many rivers, people are facing the shortage of drinking water. It is important that India is at the top in the use of ground water in the whole world. China and the US are ranked second and third respectively. A joint research report by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Khadgpar and Athabasca University in Canada states that Indians use an average of two hundred and thirty cubic kiloliters of water annually. This figure exceeds the water use norms considered by global agencies as essential to human communities. It is also believed that if water is used after a certain limit, then it is not actually used, but misused. We may come up with ways to justify our abuse on the basis of reasonableness, but this situation is intimidating. Especially when we read this data of NITI Aayog's Water Management Index that even today seventy-five percent of the households in the country do not have proper water supply system. It is clear that most of them are from the marginalized sections. This class has to face the crisis born out of the convenient habits of the affluent class. It is said that nature has the resources to satisfy the needs of all beings, but that greed cannot satisfy anyone. Unfortunately, the behavior of mankind in terms of water use has been greedy as well as careless. When the purity of rivers was challenged by pollution, traditional water bodies like wells, stepwells, Kunds, Johads and ponds became victims of ever-increasing hunger or neglect of the land. The traditional means of rainwater harvesting were considered irrelevant by the modern lifestyle. In such a situation, it is necessary that we should be conscious about the conservation of the available storage of water and should be aware of the storage of rainwater. Only this awareness can save us from future troubles.

Vijay Garg.