

## PLIGHT GENUINE

There is no exaggeration in the plight raised by Talwara Migrants who are also reeling under miserable conditions since the last many years but the governments never paid any heed towards their problems and demands. These were also hit by the terrorism that affected the Valley but the victims in this case are moving from post to pillar with no one to listen to their predicament. This is sheer injustice by the governments which remained in the power and of course those who on one side are raising lot of hue and cry over Kashmiri Pandits' plight but when it came to terror-hit population of Jammu region not one or two but all goes into silent mode as if these victims don't have human rights or civil liberty to live in their native places because till date they are also languishing in miserable conditions at migrant camp in Talwara area of Reasi. There was immediate response of the government for those who migrated from Kashmir but the poor victims of Jammu region are still facing step-motherly treatment because till date no one has given them what is due leaving this community to live a life of pauper with lost hope and dejection. What is agonizing is the fact that those who were witness of horrendous massacres of innocent villagers at Prankot-Dhakikot, Thub, Morha Salui, Kantha, Galyot and other areas of Jammu region are still finding it hard to convince the government that their exodus was no less than the Kashmiris but what they got is just peanuts. The aforesaid terror incidents which forced these victims to flee from their homes and hearth was never considered seriously by any of the governments in J&K. The incumbent government which has shown that it is of the people, for the people and by the people should take a sympathetic view over the issue and provide genuine support to these families giving them what is due. The Government should also consider construction of residential quarters for these migrants in Jammu and announce employment-package to the community as their ordeal is in no way less than the Kashmiri Pandits and they also deserve justice.

## FACE-LIFT TEMPLES

Jammu which is popularly known as the 'City of Temples' should take the cue from Ramesh Kumar, CEO, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, who recently reviewed the status of Shankaracharya Temple located on the hillock at the eastern side of Katra town and has taken the decision to redevelop the aforesaid temple besides giving a new look to the area for boosting its economy. Similar initiatives could be taken in Jammu for face-lifting many temples which are facing neglect since last many years despite being the significant part of region's rich heritage. As the age-old J&K Dharmarth Trust which is successfully looking after many shrines and temples in J&K has also time and again appealed to the government to provide assistance for face lifting the temples falling under its jurisdiction therefore the government should come up with a comprehensive plan to add sheen to the City of Temples by rejuvenating not one, not two but all the temples which need such facelift as the same can proved to be game changer as far as increasing tourist footfall is concerned. The Central Government has also come up with an exclusive scheme for religious tourism namely 'PRASAD' and the UT Government should ask the Centre to help rejuvenate the temples in the city under this flagship scheme better known as 'Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive'. PRASAD scheme focuses on developing and identifying pilgrimage sites across India for enriching the religious tourism experience and to integrate pilgrimage destinations in a prioritised, planned and sustainable manner. For tapping the potential of pilgrimage tourism, there is a need for holistic development of the pilgrimage destinations by the government along with the cooperation of other stakeholders like Dharmarth Trust, etc. The major share of tourism benefits in Jammu region depends on pilgrimage tourism therefore to boost the local economy it is imperative for all the stakeholders including the government to focus on this aspect and provide all facilities to devotees and visitors of these temples as soon as possible besides face-lifting the same without any delay.

ST

OFF 'D' CUFF

### Don't Miss This Chance

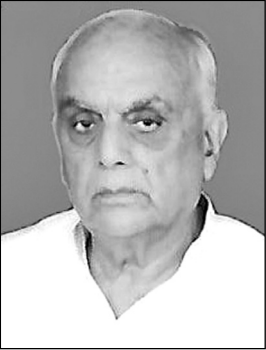
a person to death bed.

In life, a boss may utter something unpleasant at work. But if you go on worrying about that, your quality of life will be affected. I know someone whose daughter went through a bitter divorce. The daughter is well educated and works for a good company, but the mother is still constantly worried about her divorced daughter. In this worry, the mother misses the joy of being in the family and other good things in life. One small error is spoiling her life and health. It is true, a simple psychological error can really mess up our lives.

That is why it is worthwhile to explore the reason for this. Actually, there are several reasons why this happens, but the most important one is our ego. The ego in us wants to survive its misery by hook or crook. It even creates its own unique brand of misery all the time. If we look at our lives, we will see that we don't even listen to our body, mind, feelings, hurts, or upsets. If we listen to our sorrows, we will realize that our sorrows are an extension of some illusion that we are holding on to. For example, if you believe that married people are happy and your daughter is not married, you will worry because of the illusion that you carry. When the philosopher Socrates was asked - "Will I be happy if I get married or will I be happy not getting married," he replied, "Either way you will be unhappy!" Happiness is not the result of marriage or not getting married. Happiness is an approach to life.

**Swami Sukhabodhananda**

■ ER P L KHUSHU



'The Kashmir Files' movie has given an opportunity to the scores of Indians to know about the truth and the harsh reality about the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir in 1989-90, along with making the people of India to know about the brutal genocide of Kashmiri Pandits, that had been converted up or denied for all these years. People are finding it hard to accept that the movie is based on true stories when the victims of the genocide were never heard. It has shaken the false beliefs of decades of whitewashing and denials about this genocide and atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits. For the unversed, the film is set around the time of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits during the Kashmir insurgency in 1990. The so-called intellectuals of this country with JNU base and recognition with 'Tukde-Tukde' Gang, called it a film full of untruths and as an exercise in futility. Some politicians who have lost their grace and base after 2014, when Modi came in power were equally reluctant to accept the film as a tale of genocide and atrocious configurations on Kashmiri Pandits. So is case with dynastic politicians of Kashmir like Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah, who declared the film as a tale of false disclosures, smelling that their silent role as abettors of this criminal genocide of Kashmiri Pandits is getting exposed and surfaced on ground. This resulted in rubbing enough of salt on bleeding wounds of Kashmiri Pandits, who are the victims of this genocide and atrocious acts by Islamic Fundamentalists working in the valley with the hidden blessings of the main line dynastic politicians. Another nail was driven in this coffin when Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal recently created a stir after he mocked the Government for declaring 'The Kashmir Files' tax-free in several states. The politician was brutally trolled by netizens, even the film's director Vivek Agnihotri and actor Anupam Kher slammed Kejriwal for making such a statement. This movie also features Darshan Kumar, Chinmay Mandlekar, Pallavi Joshi and Mithun Chakraborty, while Prakash Belawadi, Puneet Issar, Atul Srivastava and Mrinal Kulkarni are in supporting roles. Their classified roles in this film have exhibited the real scenes of those horrifying and crucifying events which the victims of Kashmiri Pandits passed through. This film about the forced exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, has done what Art is meant to create as a perpetual impact and impression about a nostalgic happening of historical base. Who does not know the style of working of Arvind Kejriwal, who is known as a cunning politician of sops, when he has achieved his bashful success through false and deceitful promises and exploitation of the lower strata of the society at the cost of the development of economic, social and general progressive development of Delhi. The national capital is in shambles because of zero development in its infrastructural development, being the capital of a big country, which counts in portraying the prospective image of a nation. Delhi being the capital of India looks like an ordinary city with pathetic surroundings of environmental corridors like the situation of Yamuna which has become a perfect slum, after Kejriwal took over the reins of governance of Delhi. The road communication network system in Delhi, is at the same stage where Sheela Dixit left it as a monstrous chief minister of Delhi, who is to be crowned for her golden contribution of introducing the metro rail facility in Delhi. He is distributing the tax collected money amongst a section of people to extract favors from them as votes to remain in power somehow. Kejriwal is the founder preceptor of Sheen Bagh stir which continued for months, for his vote bank politics. Some rumors came forth allegedly recently when it was suspected that Kejriwal has links with Khalistan elements, which is believed to have made his party to win elections in Punjab on a mass scale. His atrocious statements about this film is an outrage of his wicked mind which has rubbed salt on the bleeding wounds of Kashmiri Pandits both within the country and beyond the country. He has been cursed and condemned by all the cyclised sections of the Indian society or his outrageous remarks including the Kashmiri Pandits in one voice. Calling it propaganda has hurt the sentiments of all the right-thinking Hindus across the country. It has exposed the base of Congress party and other pseudo secular political parties which are reliant on vote bank politics, driving the country to a vertical divide between the nationalists and anti-nationalists.

The film takes viewers back to 1989, when due to rising Islamic Jihad, a huge conflict erupted in Kashmir, forcing KPs to flee from the valley. According to esti-

mates, roughly 4,00,000 Kashmiri Pandit migrated between February and March 1990. Much more of them fled in years that followed until just hardly 1,000 families remained back in the valley. Thus arrived the period of 1989-1990, when Kashmir the paradise of the Kashmiri Pandits became a death trap for the KPs, due to the spurt of terrorism backed by Islamic fundamentalism sponsored across the border, abetted by local political set up. It is the time period when the terrorists in the valley of Kashmir were in search of prominent and selective Kashmiri Pandits, at the asking of their organized Islamic fundamentalists and groups from the valley to kill them, for making a frightening news scare and alert among other fellow Kashmir pundits so that they run away from the valley. This ultimately resulted in the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pundits from the valley of Kashmir. Their first prey in this regard were Kashmiri pundits of immense repute, writers, community elders, legal luminaries, press and media personalities, government officers/officials who were on prominent positions in the state administration or were known prominently.

Jehadi cum communal speeches from mosques were put on loud speakers meant for 'Azaan & Nimaz', which would say 'Yeti- Bani Pakistan, Bhatov Bhegeer the Bhatenen-San', meaning there in that Kashmir will become a Pakistan without male Kashmiri Pandits but including womenfolk of Kashmiri Pandits. The humble ethos which a noble and a common Kashmiri Muslim was possessing prior to the spurt of terrorism, had got converted into contempt and hate, with an approach synonymous to vultures, amongst most of them. The dark night of January 19, 1990, shivering with cold, is remembered by all of us, as it was the worst nightmare for the Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley. Screaming from loud speakers and crowded streets was a message for KP's living in Kashmir, which said, Ralive, Tsaliv, Neti- Galiv. (It meant that either convert to Islam or leave Kashmir and in the alternative face death). Even after about 30 years, Kashmiri Pandits shiver remembering the night which forced them into exodus and a life of exile within their own country.

On 14 September 1989, Pandit Tika Lal Taploo, who was a lawyer and a prominent leader of KPs, was murdered in Srinagar. Prominent lawyer Prem Nath Bhat was gunned down on 27th December-1989 in South Kashmir. Soon after Taploo's death, Pt. Nilkanth Ganjoo, an imminent judge who had sentenced Maqbul Bhat to death, was shot dead. On 29 April 1990, Sarwanand Kaul Premi, a veteran Kashmiri poet was gruesomely murdered. His young son was also killed gruesomely. Several intelligence operatives were assassinated, over the course of January. On 2nd February 1990, Satish Tikoo, a young Hindu Pandit social-worker was murdered near his own house in Habba Kadal. On 13 February 1990, Lassa Kaul, Station Director of Srinagar Doordarshan, was shot dead. This is only a small tale of KPs who were killed brutally, because of being Kashmiri Pandits. Many Kashmiri Hindu women were kidnapped, raped and murdered, during this period of exodus. In March 1997, terrorists dragged out seven Kashmiri Pandits from their houses in Sangrampora village and gunned them down. In January 1998, about 23 Kashmiri Pandits, including women and children, were shot in cold blood in Wandhama Village. In March 2003, about 24 Kashmiri Pandits, including infants, were brutally shot dead in Nadimarg Village. More than 4,00,000 Kashmiri Pandits left the Valley and took refuge in Jammu and elsewhere, leaving their entire properties and belongings in the valley to the mercy of terrorists and Jehadis. Most of them started living in the refugee camps established in Jammu Province. One can understand the agony of this exodus along with travesty of having lost everything in life, like one's property, one's belongings, agricultural lands and orchards, commercial establishments, means to earn a living honorably and above all our own culture which was unique for all of us and was very much dear to us. Most of the KPs still languish in refugee settlements of 8 x 8, even after more than three decades. More than 1,500 KPs were killed by terrorists when most of them after being maimed and tortured in most inhumane ways. Over 800 KPs died due to sunstroke, snakebites in refugee camps at Jammu and Delhi. Over 8000 KP refugees died unnatural deaths while living in sub-human conditions in exile. Thousands of KPs are still living in sub-humane conditions in camps for want of better accommodation. Over 30,000 residential houses, business establishments, shops, small scale industries, were gutted by the Jehadi's and others in the valley. About 145 Hindu shrines and temples were burnt by the terrorists in Kashmir. This is only a small summary about the whole story of exodus. There are other horrifying tales too, which cannot be mentioned here because of the paucity of space. The movie which is based on video interviews with first-generation Kashmiri Pandit victims of the Kashmir Genocide begins with the episode of the year

1990 when the then CM of Jammu and Kashmir Farooq Abdullah had resigned. Reportedly, Islamization of Jammu and Kashmir had already began in 1980s when the government led by Sheikh Abdullah had changed the names of around 300 areas in Kashmir to Islamic names. It is since then, that the Kashmiri Hindus were deliberately targeted and referred to as 'Mukhbirs', or informants of the Indian military. They were named in the hit list of the Islamist terrorist organizations.

The film 'the Kashmir Files' revolves around the family of Pushkar Nath Pandit, a character portrayed by actor Anupam Kher, whose son gets named in the hit list and then gets killed by the terrorists, daughter-in-law gets killed in the public and grandchild gets a bullet in the head. The pain of the family shown in the movie makes the audience question how human beings can be so cruel against fellow humans, in the name of religion. Here are some incidents depicted in the movie and the way they happened in reality. The movie has a scene that shows the frightened Hindu community of the Kashmir Valley following the killing of a Srinagar High Court judge in the broad daylight. This is from November 1989 when the terrorists had shot dead retired Judge Nilakanth Ganjoo in broad daylight in Maharaj Bazaar, Amira Kadal. Justice Ganjoo was being watched after he had given death sentence to Maqbool Bhat, the leader of JKLF, whom he had found involved in the murder of Amar Chand, a CID Police Sub-Inspector of Jammu and Kashmir Police, resident of Nadihal village of Baramulla district.

In an interview to the BBC Hard Talk almost twenty years later, JKLF leader Yasin Malik had confessed that he had killed Justice Ganjoo. Malik was heard saying that the JKLF had shot Justice Nilkanth Ganjoo as he had announced the hanging of Maqbool Bhat. According to the reports, earlier in September 1989, the organization had also shot Pandit Tika Lal Taploo who was a lawyer by profession and the President of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Kashmir Chapter.

On 25 January 1990, Yasin Malik had fired 40 rounds at the Indian Air Force personnel who were waiting for their vehicle at Rawalpora bus stand. Four Indian Air Force personnel, Squadron Leader Ravi Khanna, Corporal DB Singh, Corporal Uday Shankar and Airmen Azad Ahmad were killed and 10 other IAF personnel were injured. According to the reports, the shots were fired from the 2 to 3 automatic weapons and one semi-automatic pistol in presence of 1 head constable and 7 constables of Jammu and Kashmir Police post, who did not react. A clip in film shows a senior journalist posted at 'Kashmir news' justifying brutal killing of the Kashmiri Hindus. The clip roughly says that 'the Kashmiri Pandits, though in minority, were trying to snatch benefits of the Kashmiri Muslims and so were forced to flee'.

One of the most heart-wrenching scenes of the film directed by Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri is where a woman is force-fed rice soaked in her husband's blood. This is the recreation of a brutal murder from 1990 when terrorists had come searching for engineer B K Ganjoo, who had hidden in a rice barrel. He would have been alive today had his location not been disclosed to the terrorists by his own neighbours. He was shot dead by the terrorists who fired multiple rounds at the rice barrel allowing the blood to drip out of the container. The rice soaked in the blood was then forcefully fed to Ganjoo's wife.

What comes as a shock in the movie is the killing of a lady belonging to Kashmiri Pandits community. She is shown given away by the jihadists to the mechanical saw machine alive, cutting her right from the middle of her body.

While the true picture about the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits have come to surface due to this film, some tangible action is expected from the present government to do in this regard. Rightly fingers are being raised that what has been done by the present government for Kashmiri Pandits rehabilitation back in the valley so far, when it is in power for almost for the last seven years. Probably by making it tax free for the viewers is no reply to heal the wounds of Kashmiri Pandits. Government of the day has to immediately institute a commission of enquiry, to be headed by a prominent legal luminary of the country to locate the culprits in this regard and get them punished as per the law of the land, just in the same manner as was done in the case of genocide of Sikhs in 1984. Otherwise it will rub further salt on the wounds of the Kashmiri Pandits by exposing their woe-fall tales, without any logical remedy and relief to them. It may otherwise appear as a political ploy of BJP to again use the sad plight of Kashmiri Pandits as an election stunt for the national elections of 2024. History will never forgive BJP for their participation in a coalition government with PDP some time back in Jammu and Kashmir, while Kashmiri Pandits were toiling for their survival as displaced persons in their own country.

**(The author is a retired Chartered Civil Engineer and a displaced Kashmiri Pandit, who loves his motherland the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir).**

### Transforming J&K

## Srinagar-Sharjah direct flight a runaway boost for J&K's economy

Srinagar-Sharjah direct flight has been a runaway success for the economy of Jammu and Kashmir as the initiative is boosting both tourism as well as trade here. The Flight has gained popularity among travelers of J&K who are residing in middle-east besides a large number of international tourists have started visiting J&K directly from UAE.

The flight was flagged-off by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on October 23, reviving the direct air link between the valley and the UAE after 11 years. "We declare it open from today. This will help in boosting tourism and bring more investment in the Union Territory," the Home Minister said at the inauguration event. Despite witnessing initial hiccups, the flight operating from a longer route now has gained popularity among Kashmiri travelers.

The first flight, operated by Go First, took off for Sharjah at 6:30 PM IST and landed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) around 9 PM IST. As per the officials, thousands of passengers including people of Kashmir and tourists have travelled on route since the inauguration of flight by the Home Minister. The

Srinagar-Sharjah flight is taking an extra 40 minutes after Pakistan refused to allow usage of its airspace. However, flights have good occupancy despite the hurdle created by Pakistan. The flight has also gained popularity among the trade fraternity also. A senior Trade Union Leader said that trade fraternity is happy about the initiative from Lieutenant Governor and supported by central Government. He hoped that more flights are started from Srinagar airport to international destinations. Direct international flights as well as international cargo operations of Go First between Srinagar and Sharjah resumed operations after a break owing to COVID-19 pandemic. "GoFirst flight G8 1595, after a hiatus due to the COVID pandemic, departed from Sheikh Ul-Alam International Airport in Srinagar at 19:45 hours and arrived in Sharjah at 22:30 hours. On the return, GoFirst flight G8 4095 will operate from Sharjah International Airport at 00:05 hrs and arrive at Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi at 05:10 hrs. Go First will operate two flights a week between Srinagar and Sharjah," said the airline spokesman.

He added that resumption of operations in this sector will boost trade and tourism between Jammu and Kashmir and the UAE as both are popular holiday destinations. Meanwhile the designation of Srinagar International Airport as the custodian for import and export of goods directly from Srinagar to international destinations would also boost trade in Kashmir.

The commissioner of customs, has notified the Srinagar airport as custodian for the import and export of goods from abroad at the airport's cargo terminal. "With this authorisation and notification by the government of India, we can now offer our services to the business community for the import and export of goods directly from Srinagar," Srinagar Airport Director Kuldeep Singh said. The officer invited all the airlines to make full use of this facility and commence their cargo operations from Srinagar airport. "We also call upon the business community of Srinagar and surrounding areas to expand their horizons, dream big, and turn the world into their market by making full use of this great opportunity," the Airport Director said. He is hopeful that this facility will be a

huge step in the direction of economic development and create many jobs by multiplier effect in the catchment area of the airport.

Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industries (KCCI) expressed gratitude to Lieutenant Governor J&K, Manoj Sinha for resuming direct flights from Srinagar to Sharjah, and hoped the Srinagar - Jeddah flights be also started soon. The KCCI thanked LG Manoj Sinha for resuming the air connectivity. An owner of a reputed travel agency in Srinagar said that with the help of Srinagar-Sharjah flight, the business has started picking up. "We are now receiving a lot of enquiries from middle east for different destinations of Kashmir. We welcome and express gratitude to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha for taking concrete steps that will help us to regain lost glory of trade," he said. Pertinently, a 31-member group of investors from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) participated in the first ever overseas investment summit in Srinagar. They highlighted that J&K has potential for investments in different sectors and such investments will be mutually beneficial to India and UAE, especially Kashmir.