

ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

In the present era, the alarming decline in various species of animals, depletion of natural resources, and loss of vegetation are stark reminders of the pressing environmental challenges facing our planet. This degradation stems from a multitude of interconnected factors, including population growth, escalating pollution levels, widespread habitat destruction, and the relentless exploitation of nature and its resources. The consequences are dire, with an increase in natural disasters and a growing threat to life on Earth. To combat this crisis, urgent action is needed at all levels. Individuals can make a significant impact by conserving water, minimizing energy consumption, and embracing sustainable practices such as tree planting and gardening. By opting for reusable and biodegradable products, we can reduce our ecological footprint and mitigate further harm to the environment. However, broader systemic changes and collective efforts are also essential, including policy reforms, corporate responsibility, and international cooperation. Only through concerted action and a shared commitment to environmental stewardship can we hope to reverse the alarming trends and secure a sustainable future for generations to come.

It's essential for individuals, communities, businesses, and governments to work together to mitigate the impacts of human activities on the environment and protect the planet for future generations.

UDAN - Ushering revolution in aviation sector



ROHIT MATHUR

There is no exaggeration in saying that UDAN scheme is the most innovative and intelligently designed scheme ever brought in aviation sector in post-independence India. The impact which UDAN is bringing on ground may not be apparently visible in Delhi but it is making asilent revolution in some of the remote and far-flung areas of the country. UDAN success stories are spread out in multiple tier 2 and tier 3 cities all over India.

Take the example of Darbhanga, the second airport to start operations in Bihar after Patna. It has turned out to be a big success story of UDAN and today Darbhanga handles a traffic of 1500 + passengers every day. Same story goes for Prayagraj where there were hardly any flights operating to these cities before Indigo started Prayagraj-Bangalore and Spicejet started Kanpur-Delhi under UDAN around 2018-19. Today in just 4-5years both these airports handle 1000-1500 passengers daily. There are several other examples of UDAN success stories like Bareilly, Shimoga, Kamru etc. These tier 2 and tier 3 cities have suddenly become harbingers of growth for commercial aviation. Airlines are not just getting good traffic but their average per seat km revenue is higher in these tier 2 tier 3 towns when compared to flights operating between metro cities.

Encouraged with huge response from these UDAN flights, airlines are now more than eager to start new Udan routes in tier 2/3 cities. This is just half the story. The bigger story of UDAN is emergence of a number of smaller players operating small aircrafts and helicopters to some of remotest and unconnected towns of India. It is very surprising that before UDAN scheme came into picture a country of the size of India had only 1 aircraft in less than 80 seat category which was ATR 42 operated by Alliance Air in Shimla route. There always existed potential of operating 9-19 seater aircrafts in several towns and cities but in absence of incentives which are provided under the UDAN scheme, smaller operators could never dare to take the plunge.

Aviation is a very tricky business and operating scheduled flights is not easy for smaller players (Even bigger ones have kept sinking). There are multiple problems which are being faced by smaller operators. Firstly the risk appetite is much lower which is a basic requisite to enter aviation business. Secondly in India the financing ecosystem does not exist and no bank wants to finance aviation companies, some due to previous bad experiences with bigger airlines. Even the international finance or leasing institutions are hesitant to support smaller airlines. Despite so many constraints if nearly half a dozen new players have started Regional Connectivity flights on smaller aircrafts it is only because of UDAN scheme. Without the incentives of UDAN scheme all these smaller operators would never have had the courage to start scheduled operations. Notable name among smaller operators is STAR Air which started operations on 50 seater Embraer 145 aircraft and within 4-5 years this small airline has expanded to a fleet size of 9 aircrafts and now they are operating at 18 airports most of which never had flights earlier. This aircraft was also a new addition in Indian aviation as a result of UDAN. Some of the other smaller aircrafts introduced due to UDAN are 3-seater piston engine 'Benam' aircraft by Air Taxi, 9-seater Cessna Caravan by IndiaOne and 19-seater Dornier 228 by Alliance Air and Twin Otter by Flybirdairlines. Introduction of 19-seater aircrafts in India is a very important milestone and has huge potential. Smaller aircrafts can operate at smaller runways and do not require expensive airport infrastructure. Some of the airports at which these small aircrafts are operating have minimal infrastructure like Cooch Behar in West Bengal, Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh, Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand etc. A road journey from Dehradun to Pithoragarh takes 18 hours and flight takes only 1 hour. Reaching from Cooch Behar to Kolkata takes 17-18 hours by road and similar time by train but now people can use the UDAN flight and reach Kolkata in an hour. Subsidised airfares in UDAN have only added icing on the cake for people living in these far-flung areas.

Udan scheme is also proving to be a turning point for helicopters. Heritage Aviation identified the potential of UDAN scheme right since beginning and were the first private helicopter company to start UDAN flights on helicopters in February 2020. It is operating daily connectivity from Dehradun to far flung border districts of Chamoli and Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand. More than 80 % of the passengers are local people, reiterating the fact the UDAN's theme of Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik and our Prime Minister's vision of hawai chappal walehawaijahaaz me chaleare not just mere slogans but are actually getting realized due to UDAN.

In latest round of UDAN 5.1 tender the airlines has been awarded several new routes in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim and very soon daily flights will commence connecting remote and picturesque towns of Munsiary, Pithoragarh and Champawat with Haldwani. Helicopter flights to these small towns will not just provide much needed air connectivity but also boost tourism in these areas. The Government has also relaxed several norms for helicopters and small aircrafts making it much more attractive for the industry. Covid pandemic played a major role in derailing the delivery of UDAN scheme as all operators were badly affected. However, in last 2 years industry has managed to surpass the damage done by pandemic. Next 5 years present huge opportunity and now the industry is prepared to ride the growth wave and we will see massively transformative results of UDAN scheme which many industry observers could never imagine.

(The writer is the Founder and CEO of Heritage Aviation Pvt Ltd.)

ID SONI

(A) Seven centuries ago he came, he whose name is a benediction, he whose memory is fragrant. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu they call him. He was born in far off Nadia in Bengal. He was a great scholar. He was a professor. He was a professor of logic. He laughed at bhaktas, at devotees of God. Whenever the devotees of God visited his town he picked faults in them. He made of them a laughing stock before the people. He did not believe in devotion to God. He disregarded it all.

Suddenly a transformation takes place in his life. His mother has sent him to Gaya, in connection with certain ceremonies which are to be performed on behalf of his dear departed father. And there in the temple of Gaya a miracle happens. The true miracle is the miracle of transformation. The true miracle is when our life is transformed, when we become new. This is what happens to him. This what happens to this professor. In the temple of Gayahe has a vision of Sri Krishna. He has the vision of the nityaleela of the Lord. The Leela that is eternally going on. The veils are lifted from the eyes of Sri Chaitanya. He was known as professor Nimai then. And this professor suddenly becomes prophet. He returns to Nadia, he returns to the University of Nadia. But now there is but one name on his lips: krishna! Krishna! Krishna.

This is the one mantra that he repeats again and again and still again. They put to him many questions. He was the idol of Nadia's youths. They flocked around him wherever he went. They were eager to catch the pearls of wisdom that dropped out of his lips but he is become a different person. To every question that is put to him, he has but one answer to give, Haribol, Haribol, Haribol bhair.

They put to him this question, they say to him, you have spoken to us concerning the mysteries of the Name Divine, the mysteries of the Holy Name, tell us who is qualified to repeat the Holy Name of the God? Tell us who is qualified to get into tune with the vibration that is the Name Divine? And in answer to this question, this great prophet Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says, "If you would get into tune with the vibration which is at the heart of the cosmos, the heart of the universe, which is there with in every one of you, if you would become one with this vibration, if you would be

SRI CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU

lost in this vibration, you must be humble as a blade of grass. You must be more for bearing than a tree and you must seek to honour others without seeking any honour for yourself."

The books speak of seven sins and every sin keeps us away from the Lord. The greatness amongst these sins is the sin of pride- the sin of egoism. And Sri ChaitanyaMahaprabhu says, if you would be one with the Name Divine, you must be humble as a blade of grass. Regard yourself as nothing. I am nothing O Lord. I am naught. Thou alone are! I am nothing. I am like the dust of road. Men may trample me under foot. I shall not complain. When we arrive at such a state then indeed are we worthy of repeating the Name of God. Then indeed is there hope that we may get in tune with that Cosmic Vibration, which is at the heart of universe.

(B) SRI CHAITANYA: THE GREAT MASTER

Krishna became all to Chaitanya. He saw the one light in all, and he blessed all, the Hindu and the Mussalman, the Brahmin and the Outcast. In all temples and shrines and in all creatures, in man and bird and beast, Chaitanya saw his one beloved. If the Master were with us in physical body, would he not say to us all: "All temples and all shrines meet at the one Gate of God?"

This vision of the One Beloved in all filled, the hearts of all disciples of Chaitanya. What joy filled their daily Work and Worship. The joy flowed from a vision of Krishna. In joy they renounced their wealth to become humble servants of the Lord. Krishna's vision, they said, was far more precious than earthly kingdoms. "What is vice and what is virtue? We know not," they said, "What we do know is: "Thy Lotus Feet, O Krishna, are the Holy Treasure of life."

In the silence and solitude of Puri, Sri Chaitanya could be with Krishna, face to face. Who led Chaitanya to the new life rich in contemplation and silence, rich, too, in the service of the poor and lowly, if not Krishna himself? At Puri, Chaitanya lived, year after year, gazing at the Face Divine and communing with Krishna, the brother and Burden-bearer of all who trailead in agony and pain.

Filled with krishna consciousness, Chaitanya served everyone, irrespective of caste or creed. As Jesus spoke to

Judas, so spake Chaitanya to robbers and criminals. It was a life of intense contemplation he lived at Puri: but his contemplation overflowed with a love that served and blessed all. He realised, like the truly great ones of Humanity, that spiritual life was, in its ascent to the Eternal, a marriage of the soul with krishna, a union with Love that filled the heart with tremendous energy for the healing of the broken ones.

At Puri, Chaitanya spoke, day and night, of krishna, with eyes filled with years. Chaitanya saw his Beloved in the cloud, the river and the tree. And how dear to Chaitanya was tulsi. To him the tulsi was a symbol of the gopis of vraja, the Blessed Realm of Vrindavan the "vana", the "Forest" of Vrinda, the woodland where krishna had ravished the hearts of cowherds and milkmaid with his song of the Flute Divine. The Holy spirit poured on Chaitanya the benediction of the Eternal. And crying, "Krishna! Krishna!". Chaitanya followed the gleam, followed his vision, followed His Beloved through forest and field.

When we look at the little statue of the Master at Nadia, we are deeply impressed, specially with his delicate, gracious face. Fairer he appears to us than most of the children of men. And we say to ourselves, "Well has he been called Gaur, the fair one!" And we gaze and gaze at the beauty of his face. What a longing in that fair face! And again we say to ourselves, "Blessed are they who thirst for krishna!"

The face reflected, to our mind, the mysterious force of the heart, the force, the shakti of love. Not without reason did they regard him, in the years of his manhood: an avatara (manifestation) of Krishna. Some, indeed, spoke of him as one in whom Krishna and Radha were blended into one. To the majority of men, Nimai was no longer an ordinary man. Nimai was krishna-possessed. How they loved him, loved to look at the beauty of his face! How they believed in him! And how on the roads to his many pilgrimages they went after him in the faith that to look at him was to be blessed. His simplicity was so impressive. Again and again, this simple worshipper of krishna went into ecstasy. And men and women often would stand and watch how he went into silence or in deep, in-expressible love cried out: Hari bol! Hari bol!

Nimai no longer spoke in arguments he spoke in kirtan (song and dance). His kirtan thrilled multitudes of men and women who came to hear him, to see him, to gaze at the beauty of his face, to be blessed by him. His kirtan sprang from the new heart which was a gift to him from krishna. Nimai showed forth to many the beauty of krishna whose roots were in the depths of the heart. The Hidden Krishna became manifest in this Man of Destiny. How men and women in long rows followed him! How even the crippled, the lepers, the sick, the deaf-mutes, the blind followed him from day to day!

Not a few were the miracles the Master wrought with the power of love in his heart. Bengal was ruled, in those days, by a Muslim King. The Muslim king did not enjoy much reputation of being a man of sympathy or statesmanship. Nadia was, in those days, practically under the domination of two influential officials, Jagai and Madhai. They were rich and they were robbers. They robbed the people of their wealth: and they were drunkards. They were converted by Sri Chaitanya.

The two great ministers of the Muslim king were Rupa and Sanatana. So great was the influence on them of the Muslim Ruler that Rupa and Sanatana, though born Hindus and were good students of Sanskrit, denied their race and religion and consented to bear Muslim name: and to live in daily life as children of Islam. Under the influence of Sri Chaitanya, both Rupa and Sanatana changed the course of their lives. They became disciples of the Master. They started living a new life, of simplicity, compassion and love. Sri Chaitanya loved Gita and the Bhagavata. Both are charged with the teaching of the dedicated life: and dedication is offering of all to the Lord in the spirit of bhakti or living devotion.

Chaitanya taught that there was no such thing as "secular" that every act, every deed, every thought, every aspiration, must be dedicated to the Feet of the Lord.

Chaitanya himself grew, from more to more, in the great thought that every aspiration, every activity, every moment of deep silence and meditation, every prayer, every invocation, every adoration of the Lord should be an offering, a, yojana to Sri krishna.

(The writer is President Home of Aged& Infirm, Ambphalla, Jammu)

Need of Agro-Processing for enhancing the Farmers Income

DR. BANARSI LAL

In the present era the whole world has become a single global market and there is too much competition in this market. Agro-processing and crops diversification has become key words in the agricultural trade. Product diversification is must for harnessing the full potential from present scenario of development. Agro-processing helps in the, industrialization, employment generation, export, extended availability of produce, avoidance of post harvest losses, foreign exchange earnings, product diversification, easy marketing etc. Although there has been large industrialization in the last 60 years, agriculture still occupies the prominent place of importance. Agriculture is considered as the backbone of the Indian economy. Agriculture has provided us the food security but nutritional security is still awaited. Value addition is the process in which for the same volume of a primary product, a high price is realized by means of processing, packing, upgrading the quality or other such means. Value addition in agriculture is one of the important components of nutritional security. Sometimes farmers get less price of a particular farm produce due to its surplus production. This problem can be solved by the crop diversification which creates an opportunity to earn more money from the different crops produce. Crop diversification and value addition are the two techniques for the profit maximization and nutritional security. The most important problem now-a-days is to provide the remunerative price to the farmers for their farm produce. This problem can be solved by the value addition in different crops produce and can be marketed both inside and outside the country. This can also generate more employment for the rural people. Value added agriculture helps to increase the value of primary agricultural commodities through a particular production process. Small scales processing units, organic food processing, traditional crops production, agri-tourism and bio-fuels development are examples of various value-added projects that have supported to cre-

ate new jobs in the rural areas.

Agro-processing is needed for the profitability of the farmers, to empower the farmers and weaker sections of the society, to provide safe, quality and branded food to the consumers, to reduce post-harvest losses, reduction in import and increasing exports, encourage the growth of subsidiary industries, to reduce the risk of marketing, to promote the crops diversification and to increase the financial stability of the farmers. Attentiveness to consumer demands in quality, variety and packaging are important. In order to be unique and novel, new product should be attempted. The product we develop should be one of its own kinds for which crop and variability indigenous to our country should be exploited. The product should be new and unusual like black or blue rose so that no one can compete in the market. Biotechnology can be utilized for the value addition especially in horticultural crops. The product we develop should have demand in the market. The product should have high value for low volume for ease of trading and distribution and the extracts such as spices and herbal plants can fulfill this requirement. Quality and quantity of the product should be maintained in the market. Ultimately market is the key for success of any product.

Agro-processing industries can play a pivotal role in achieving the objective of 'doubling the farm income'. The consumption of processed foods is synchronous with the rise in incomes as income elasticity of these foods is very high. Presently our country reached the status of 'lower middle-income' among the countries in the world and therefore, the share of processed food in the food basket of our population is bound to go up. Urbanisation, diversification of diets, globalization of diets, rising share of women in work force, nuclear families, changing policy perspectives including digitalisation and export opportunities propel growth of food processing sector. Agricultural innovations have a significant impact on agricultural performances and can be beneficial for both the producers and consumers. Processed

foods were considered as rich people food for a long time and suffered heavy taxation, riddled with so many taxes including steep taxes for packaged products. This has been gradually changed with successive reduction in excise duties and state taxes to benefit farmers. Concept of cold chain was non-existent before the nineties and post-harvest losses were very high due to poor infrastructure facilities. Transport costs were relatively high leading scholars to conclude that importing from other countries was cheaper than transporting from one part of the country to another. Standards and protocols for food safety and laws for food safety were almost negligible. Before eighties the food policy in India has mainly concentrated on increasing the production with a view to substitute imports which became a common feature during the immediate post-independence years. Before eighties the issue of processing the food did not arise as a policy question. On the other hand, the industrial policy since the second five year plan concentrated on the heavy industries required to build up the necessary infrastructure for the industrial development. Though there were some foods processing industries in the organized sector; they were part of small and village industries and have no separate identity. The consistent rise in per capita incomes and the shifting of the incomes after 1981 to a higher growth path led to the rise in middle classes, who were able to purchase the power to buy the processed foods.

The growth of manufacturing industry also necessitated encouraging food processing sector. The central government, in view of these changes, has started attempts to invigorate the sector by forming a separate ministry for food processing industries in 1988. India is a late entrant into the food processing sector and international market. Though some measures are initiated after the formation of the ministry for the speedy development of the sector; it is only after the country embarked on full scale liberalization in 1991 that the food processing sector got real impetus. Several policy initiatives for freeing the licensing system, foreign invest-

ment etc., are taken during this time to encourage this sector. The concept of food parks, agri-export zones, mega food parks, cold chains and human resource development have been initiated besides several incentive schemes. The central government has released a food processing policy in 2001 and again in 2005. The new agro-processing industries set up to process, preserve and package fruits and vegetables are allowed under Income tax act. The role of state is considered to be vital. Hence, the centre has urged the state governments to allow exemption for this sector from sales tax and other local taxes. Several state governments have also announced food processing policies. Most recently, centre has allowed 100% FDI in trading of food products including through e-commerce to boost growth of the sector. 42 food parks were sanctioned for setting up of processing units.

The scourge of organised food processing sector continues to be low. The main paradox in food processing industries is the dichotomy between organised and unorganised segment in regard to output and employment. While output and value added are higher in the organised segment, unorganised segment with one-fifth of output employs three times higher employment. Food processing sector creates lot of employment in comparison to the manufacturing sector as a whole. The productivity of this sector needs improvement though studies show that there has been improvement after 2000s. There is a need to infuse more technology in both the organised and unorganised segments with liberal provision of credit. Value of land poses the biggest threat to unorganized manufacturing in general and food processing in particular and it needs special attention of the policy makers. Recent initiatives like mega food parks and cold chain schemes are well conceived and showing signs of positive impact. India still needs a lot to do in the agro-processing sector.

(The writer is Sr. Scientist and Head of KVK, Reasi SKUAST-J)

YOUR COLUMN WHO IS NITASHA KAUL?

Dear Editor;

Till Karnataka government minister Mahadevappa invited Indian-origin Professor Nitasha Kaul, born in Gorakhpur of Uttar Pradesh and the Director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster in London, people had hardly known about her. Thanks to the invite of Kaul by Congress from Karnataka, people have come to know who she is. She was invited to attend the state government sponsored conference on the Constitution and Unity of India. She was to deliver a speech on international relationship. It was not widely known that she was the ardent critic of laws enacted for Kashmiris. She had reportedly alleged that the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) was talking of killing the Muslims who are manufacturing bombs and suggested to molest the Muslim women. RSS is a patriotic organization. There is no reference to the statements attributed by her

to RSS. Pakistan sympathiser Kaul needs to be reminded that 34 years ago, Kashmiri pundits fled away following threat from Islamic radicals. The Kashmiri pundits were given three choices; either to convert themselves as Muslims or face death or leave Kashmir. They were 'instructed' not to take women along with them. She believes that the terrorists operating on Kashmir soil are innocent persons. This view is very much akin to the views of Mehboba Mufti who called the terrorists "sons of soil". Mufti had advocated to save the terrorists. Arundhati Roy had opined that Islamic terrorists are not a problem. Real terrorists are teachers and mothers, according to Roy. Kaul is of the view that the Kashmiris always stood behind Palestinians because they are also facing a situation of the kind Palestinians are facing. She has alleged that military has been stationed in the areas where people are living. If the people have to live peacefully in the disturbed part of the country, the military protection is absolutely necessary. Reports have it that between 1990-2017, terrorists neutralized were 22,000, death of civilians 14,000 and army men martyred were 5,000. Between

2017-2023, there were 791 instances of terrorist attacks claiming 1193 people. She has drawn parallel between China treating Tibetans and India treating Kashmiris. She has alleged that the army has been exercising power without any authority and responsibility. Recrimination among political parties is common. But what was the need to invite a person who is sympathetic to Pakistan? The authorities concerned did well to send her back to UK from the airport itself. What can be expected from the speech of a Pakistani-sympathizer? By inviting her to speak on Constitution and Unity, Congress has demonstrated that it is more comfortable with anti-nationals than the pro-nationals. To corroborate this, immediately after the Rajya Sabha election result was announced that Nasir Hussain from Congress won in Karnataka on 27/02/2024, his supporters raised slogans "Pakistan Zindabad". Congress must refurbish its sagging image if it wants to be an effective force to reckon with.

Yours faithfully, K. V. Seetharamaiah