

BALANCING SKILLS

Combining hard skills with soft skills is essential for achieving long-term success in today's competitive and rapidly evolving world. Hard skills refer to the technical abilities and knowledge required to perform specific tasks, such as programming, data analysis, accounting, or operating machinery. These skills are often measurable, teachable, and acquired through education or training. On the other hand, soft skills are interpersonal attributes that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others. These include communication, teamwork, adaptability, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and leadership.

While hard skills may help an individual secure a job, soft skills are what sustain and advance a career. For example, a software developer may possess strong coding abilities, but without communication and teamwork skills, it becomes difficult to collaborate with colleagues or understand client requirements. Similarly, a manager may have deep technical expertise, but without leadership and empathy, they may struggle to motivate and guide their team effectively. The integration of hard and soft skills creates a well-rounded individual who can not only perform tasks efficiently but also navigate complex workplace dynamics. Employers today increasingly value this balance because modern work environments require collaboration, innovation, and adaptability. Technical knowledge alone is no longer sufficient; professionals must also be able to communicate ideas clearly, handle feedback constructively, and work in diverse teams. One of the key benefits of combining these skills is improved problem-solving. Hard skills provide the technical foundation to identify and analyze issues, while soft skills such as critical thinking and creativity help in generating practical and innovative solutions. Additionally, strong interpersonal skills enable individuals to present their solutions persuasively and gain support from stakeholders.

Another important aspect is adaptability. As industries evolve due to technological advancements, employees must continuously update their hard skills. However, soft skills like resilience, willingness to learn, and adaptability make it easier to embrace change and acquire new competencies. This combination ensures that individuals remain relevant and competitive in their fields.

Furthermore, the blend of hard and soft skills enhances leadership potential. Effective leaders are not only knowledgeable but also capable of inspiring and guiding others. They use communication, empathy, and decision-making skills alongside their technical expertise to achieve organizational goals. This balance fosters trust, boosts team morale, and improves overall productivity.

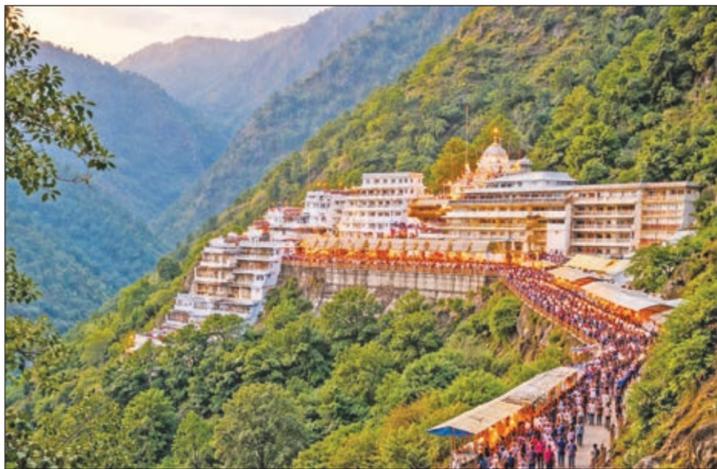
Navratri in Jammu: A Blend of Devotion, Tradition, and Economic Activity

■ SWATI SUMAN

Navratri, one of the most significant festivals in India, holds a special place in the cultural and spiritual landscape of Jammu. As the nine-day festival dedicated to Goddess Durga begins, the region transforms into a vibrant hub of devotion, celebration, and economic activity. From the echo of devotional hymns in temples to the bustling local markets, Navratri in Jammu is not just a religious occasion but a reflection of the region's rich traditions and community spirit.

At the heart of these celebrations lies the revered Mata Vaishno Devi Temple, one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in the country. During Navratri, the number of devotees visiting the shrine increases significantly, with pilgrims arriving from different parts of India to seek blessings. The spiritual energy around Katra and the entire Jammu region becomes palpable, as chants of "Jai Mata Di" fill the air. For many, this journey is not just about faith but also about inner reflection and renewal.

Beyond the temple premises, Navratri is celebrated with deep-rooted traditions across Jammu. Homes and local temples are beautifully decorated, and people observe fasts, perform prayers, and participate in community gatherings. The recitation of religious texts, including Durga Saptashati, is a common practice, bringing families and communities together in shared devotion. In many places, special events such as bhajan evenings and cultural programs add to the festive spirit,



creating a sense of unity among people.

The festival also has a visible impact on Jammu's local markets and economy. As Navratri approaches, bazaars come alive with shops selling religious items, traditional attire, and festive essentials. Vendors dealing in fruits, dry fruits, and fasting food items witness a surge in demand. Small businesses, in particular, benefit from this seasonal boost, as increased footfall translates into higher sales. The hospitality sector, including hotels and transport services, also experiences heightened activity due to the influx of pilgrims and tourists.

Interestingly, Navratri in Jammu is not

limited to religious observances alone. It also reflects the evolving lifestyle of the younger generation.

While traditional practices remain intact, there is a growing trend of organizing events such as Garba and Dandiya nights, especially in urban areas. These celebrations bring a modern touch to the festival, allowing people to connect with their roots while embracing contemporary forms of expression.

At the same time, the administration plays a crucial role in ensuring smooth celebrations. With large crowds visiting pilgrimage sites, especially during peak Navratri days, authorities make extensive

arrangements for security, crowd management, and basic facilities. This coordinated effort helps maintain order and ensures that devotees can perform their rituals without inconvenience.

Navratri also highlights the spirit of togetherness that defines Jammu. Regardless of age or background, people actively participate in the celebrations, reinforcing social bonds. The festival becomes an opportunity for families to come together, for communities to interact, and for traditions to be passed on to the younger generation.

In recent years, there has also been a growing awareness around eco-friendly celebrations. Many people are making conscious efforts to reduce waste, use sustainable materials, and celebrate in a way that respects the environment. This shift reflects a broader understanding of responsibility, blending tradition with modern values.

In essence, Navratri in Jammu is much more than a religious festival. It is a time when faith, culture, and economic activity come together to create a unique and vibrant atmosphere. The festival not only strengthens spiritual beliefs but also contributes to the social and economic fabric of the region.

As the nine days unfold, Jammu continues to resonate with devotion and celebration, reminding everyone of the enduring power of tradition and the collective spirit of its people.

(The writer is currently pursuing M.A. in Mass Communication and New Media (2nd Semester) at Central University of Jammu)

Mitigating Air Pollution Mitigation through Urban Forestry

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Every year 21st of March is celebrated as the World Forestry Day or International Day of Forests to raise awareness about the values, significance and contributions of the forests to balance the life cycle on the earth. In 1971, World Forestry Day was established at the 23rd General Assembly of the European Confederation of Agriculture. The theme of this year World Forestry Day is "Forests and Economies", highlighting the central role of forests in sustaining livelihoods and economic opportunities across sectors. With many countries seeking to move towards a sustainable bioeconomy, forest products offer nature-based solutions as replacements for carbon-intensive materials while generating new economic opportunities. Forests are indispensable for healthy economies today and for future generations. For many rural communities, forests are a source of income, nutrition, energy and resilience particularly in times of economic or environmental stress. Urban areas are characterized by high population densities and a network of non-natural and built-up infrastructure. High material consumption and per-capita energy and large resource inputs have increased pollution levels in urban areas. The urban areas have been expanding exponentially by encroaching the surrounding agricultural lands and forests from the last few decades. Urban areas harbour a variety of habitats such as water-bodies, parks, gardens, forests etc. We observe that urban areas have old monuments and old trees. Now-a-days our cities have millions of vehicles, ever expanding roads and spewing out immense pollution. People are migrating from rural areas to the urban areas and these people carry their poverty along with them to the cities which gets perpetuated in urban areas. These rural people migrate to the cities in search of

employment and finally want to settle down in the cities. Urban areas have their own limitations as they too have limited resources. With the increasing urbanization and demand for more houses, transportation etc. does urban forestry today stand a chance? The answer may be yes. With the increase in population the demand for wood has also been increased resulting in the fast degeneration of forests and villages woodlots. Presently India has only 11% of the land area under close forest cover. The recorded forest area of Jammu and Kashmir in 2013 was 20948.27 Sq. Kms while in 2023 the forest cover increased to 21,346.39 sq. km.

Forests are largely distributed in Kashmir valley and Jammu region whereas Ladakh region is devoid of forest vegetation as the region is a cold desert. There can be severe environmental crisis as we cut more trees than we plant every year. Although barren lands are mostly in rural areas but we have a better scope for planting trees in urban areas. Our urban areas need more natural vegetation to check the increasing environmental pollution by purifying the air and improve our microclimate. In cities pollution is very high due to emission of harmful gases produced by the automobiles, factories, sewage etc. The towering buildings in the cities prevent the free circulation of air, absorb a lot of heat and thus increase the atmospheric temperature. Noise pollution affects the peaceful living in the cities and accelerates the sickness among the people.

The pollution in cities can be controlled by planting trees in urban areas as the greenery in the cities helps to sustain natural ecosystem and acts as buffer zones against the pollution. These green areas can also provide habitats for a variety of animals and birds and act as rest places for the hectic life styles of urban people. Urban forests provide environmental health and economic bene-

fits to cities. Urban forestry helps to improve the air quality by absorbing pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen dioxide, ammonia and particulate matter as well as performing carbon sequestration. Tree planting in urban areas is easy because of protection of livestock, availability of water, awareness among the literates' people etc. Water plays the critical role for the trees growth right from planting. Roof top water harvesting, proper water management and recycling of water including that of utilization of sewage and effluents and other untapped sources can be recommended for growing the trees in urban areas. Different trees species can be recommended according to the needs of the people.

If a river flows through the city then the ecological and landscape value of the river need to be studied and analyzed. The River Front Development along with appropriate tree species add to the beauty and health of the cities. Selection of tree species for industrial areas is dependent on the nature of industry. It is necessary to select tall evergreen trees so as to reduce the wind velocity around the chemical factories. Adaptability of tree species to hazardous gases and particulates should be the primary criterion followed by the tolerance of effluent water. Species like Neem, Eucalyptus, Mulberry, Guava, Jamun, Ber and Bel can bear Sulphur Dioxide toxicity. In areas having fluoride pollution tree species such as Cashew, Amaltas Casurina, Peepal, Banyan and Jackfruit can be grown. In Cement factories and thermal power plants areas trees like Peepal, Banyan, Neem, tamarind, Pride of India, Oak, Arjun, Teak etc. can be grown. In areas where there is emission of Carbon Dioxide and smoke trees such as Bougainvillea, Shishum, Drumstick, Ashok and Neem can be grown. When pollution is not a serious concern in the area then selection of trees can be done on the

basis of rate of growth, utility and flowering habits. People generally visit parks and other recreational sites to relax. The trees having spreading branches with colourful flowers are preferred for such areas. Trees such as Cassias, Bottle brush, Gulmohar, Putravanti, Banyan and most of ornamental trees can be selected for parks. Trees in parks should be planted at a wider distance and maintained with proper training and pruning.

Medicinal plants help to cure the common ailments but unfortunately they are vanishing fast. There is need to create awareness among the people about the scientific use of medicinal plants and to conserve them to make use of Ayurveda popular. Medicinal plants such as Aonla, Asparagus, Cinnamon, Neem, Jamun, Pomegranate, Tamarind etc. can be grown in the herbal gardens. For planting along the roads, the tree species should grow straight with medium canopy. Hardy, evergreen, deep rooted, flowering trees instead of fruit and other valuable species should be preferred. Tree species such as Coral tree, Protea, Plumeria, Raintree and Narra are preferred in these areas. Strong and deep-rooted trees should be preferred in these areas so that they can be protected from fast winds. Many times we observe that trees alongside the roads are uprooted because of fast winds. Proper planning is necessary to facilitate water infiltration around the trees. Fruit trees such as Mango, Sapota, Lemon, Ber, Fig, Apple, Papaya, Guava etc. are preferred in residential premises. Trees such as Bottle brush, Bakul, Champaka, Exorta night Jessamine etc. can beautify our surroundings. Promotion of fruit trees cultivation can also motivate the people to plant more trees and take proper care. Recommended doses of insecticides-pesticides and fertilizers can be used for the utmost care of trees. In urban areas we general-

ly grow trees and plants in our houses or institutions but now-a-days this is not necessary that we will find open spaces for the plantation in these areas. Multistoried buildings and housing complexes have reduced greenery in the urban areas as apartment complexes do not always offer space to grow trees. We should not despair over this matter and need to find solutions. Now concept of urban agriculture has been emerged through which we can use our roofs and balconies of our buildings for plantation. We can use pots, old discarded buckets, drums, trays etc. for plantation at the roofs of our residential buildings.

Besides ornamental plants, vegetables can also be grown at our rooftops. For a good rooftop garden we must waterproof the place and should have proper drainage systems. If we do not water proof the place although our plants may not suffer it may harm our buildings. Seepage can occur in walls which further can damage the buildings. The water on the rooftop should not stagnate at one place and it should have suitable outlets. Many people in the urban areas are often keen to plant trees at their homes but they don't get the proper guidelines and planting material.

They can seek the technical guidelines from the agricultural universities, agricultural institutions and concerned department. Print media and television too can play an important role for creating awareness on trees plantations in the urban areas. The NGOs and Municipal Corporations can also help to motivate the urban people in this direction. There is need to make the eco-clubs who can encourage the people in planting trees. Emphasizing long-term research needs and integrating climate change strategies are critical for advancing forestry's role as a significant player in air pollution mitigation.

(The writer is Dr. Banarsi Lal, Chief Scientist & Head, KVK Reasi SKUAST-J)

1965 WAR: BATTLE OF BURKI

■ PROF. (RETD) VERINDER SINGH MANHAS

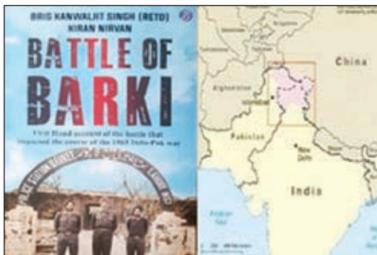
The Article is dedicated in Memory of those who fought The Battle of Burki on 10 Sept. 1965

The Battle of Burki is one of the glorious battles between India and Pakistan in the 1965 war. Since the partition dividing India and Pakistan on 15th August 1947, India and Pakistan remained in contention over several issues, although the issue of Kashmir was the pre-dominant issue dividing the nation, there were several other border disputes existing all over the demarcation of boundary line between India and Pakistan by Cyril Redcliffe, a Barrister in the University of London, invited by Lord Mountbatten in March, 1947 but came for demarcation on 7th July 1947 after the passing of Indian Independence Act in the British Parliament.

The predominant border issue was the marshy and swampy areas in the Rann of Kutch between Gujarat and Rajasthan. Another border issue was the Thar desert of Rajasthan devoid of water for agriculture. Further the issue of Punjab, the fertile land of west Punjab was given to Pakistan and the remaining Punjab was left to India. The boundary issue became pre-dominated. Over Kashmir ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh over a Muslim dominated population led by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. These boundary issues were parts of the two nation theory of Mohammad Ali Jinnah assisted by the Muslim Conference of Sheikh Abdullah in Kashmir.

In 1954 the United States signed an agreement with Pakistan on defence by giving seven hundred dollars to upgrade Military equipment.

After the defeat in 1962 Sino-Indian War, the Indian Military was undergoing major changes in personnel and equipment. During this period, despite being numerically smaller, than the Indian military Pakistan's armed forces had a qualitative edge in airpower and armour over India, which Pakistan sought to use before India completed defence buildup. Pakistani soldiers



began patrolling in territory controlled by India in Jammu and Kashmir which was followed by attacks both countries on each other posts on 8th April 1965.

Pakistan launched "Operation Desert Hawk" and captured a few Indian posts near Kanjarkot Fort border area. In June 1965 the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson successfully persuaded both countries to end hostility. Both countries signed an agreement to settle the disputed border through international arbitration by the International Court of Justice, 30th June 1965. A tribunal was set to resolve the dispute, the verdict which came later in 1968 saw Pakistan had already invaded and acquired 780sq. Km of the Rann of Kutch, as against its original claim of 9100 sq. km. Pakistan's purpose for this operation was to assess the response of the Indian Govt. and military to come south of Kutch away from Punjab and Kashmir region.

After its success in the Rann of Kutch, Pakistan under the leadership of Mohd Ayub Khan believed the Indian Army would be unable to defend itself against a quick military campaign in the disputed territory of Kashmir as the Indian Military had suffered a loss to China in 1962 the Sino Indian War.

OPERATION GIBRALTAR: On 5th August 1965 Pakistan soldiers crossed the Line of Control dressed as Kashmir locals headed for various areas within Kashmir. These infiltrators



carried out intelligences collected with the help of locals in cities like Gulmarg and Rajouri. Indian forces, tipped off by the local population captured several Pakistani soldiers who revealed that Pakistan was attempting to ignite the resistance movement employing a covert infiltration code named Operation Gibraltar. The operation was eventually was unsuccessful.

On 6th and 7th August Indian Forces engaged in skirmishes with several columns of Pakistani soldiers who tried to outcome communication lines and mix with the locals during celebrations.

The Indian Army crossed the Ceasefire line on 15th August and captured several peaks overlooking the Srinagar - Leh highway. By the end of August, Pakistan had made progress in areas of Tithval, Uri and Poonch.

OPERATION HAJI PIR: Stopping the influx of Pakistani troops into Uri -Poonch bulge, the Indian Army COAS J.N. Chaudhary, commanded the XV Corps under Lt. Gen. KS Katoch to advance and take over Haji Pir Pass. Under the watch of Lt. Gen Harbaksh Singh led by Brig. Z C Bakshi of the 68 Infantry Brigade, Indian Forces Captured the Hazi Pir Pass, 8 km into Pakistan administered Kashmir by 28 August, 1965.

CHHAMB OFFENSIVE: On 1st Sept 1965, Pakistan launched a counterattack, called Operation Grand Slam, with the objective to capture the vital town of Akhnoor in Jammu, which



would sever communications and cut off supply routes to Indian troops. Ayub Khan calculated that Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of hard blows at the right time and place although by this time Operation Gibraltar had failed and India had captured Haji Pir Pass.

Towards Lahore: Ichogil Canal: The Battle of Burki.

After the failure of Operation Gibraltar, Operation Grand Slam and the failure of Pakistan in Chamb and Akhnoor, Pakistan had no other alternative to prevent Indian Forces to come towards Lahore. It was here that the Ichogil Canal the boundary between India and Pakistan came into limelight which was the International border on the western front. On 6th Sept, the Indian forces crossed Ichogil Canal and marched towards Lahore. President Ayub Khan on 6th Sept 1965 declared a state of emergency through Radio Broadcast proclaiming that Pakistan was in a state of war with India. On 6th Sept the 15 Infantry Division of Indian Army under World War-II.

Veteran Major General Niranjan Prasad, battled a massive counter attack by Pakistan near the west bank of the Ichogil Canal, which was in fact border of India and Pakistan. The Generals entourage itself was ambushed and he was forced to flee his vehicle.

The Battle of Burki: The 7th Infantry Division under the command of Maj. Gen Har Kishan

Sibal attempted an offensive on the canal on 6th September. The forces advanced through Khar-Burki - Lahore road and reached Burki by 7th Sept. The famous 36 Sikh (4 Sikh) Regiment under the command of Col. Anant Singh was given a short notice on receipt of new weapons. The CO of 4 Sikh held a Sainik-Sammelan on 8th Sept with a Slogan "Nischay Kar Apni Jeet Karo". These words echoed in the ears of hundreds, of Khalsa's of 4 Sikh. The A Company under the leadership of Major Shashsher Singh Manhas marched towards Lahore where a fierce battle took place on 10th Sept where the Indian Forces of Sikh Regiment were fighting the enemy troops firing from bunkers.

The 4 Sikh captured a Police Post of Burki on the morning of 10th Sept. The firing continued and at 3:30 PM the company commander Shashsher Singh was injured in the ongoing battle. At this time the Brig. Comr. of 48 Brigade, 7 INF. DIV, Brig. Farris ordered the other companies to move towards Lahore. It was here that the Pakistan Army under Armoury of Patton Tank's besieged the three companies and took them as Prisoners of Wars (POW). Yet even after the injury of company Commander the Khalsa's of 4 Sikh never gave up capturing the entire Burki Village. The company Commander Major Shashsher was awarded the Veer Chakra (VrC) on 10th Sept 1965.

The Battle of Burki is glorious since it had a Battle Honour day on 12th Sept 1897 in which the 21 Sikh Khalsa's of XXXVI Sikh, under the command of Hav. Isher Singh fought gallantly against the Afghan tribes under Russian Imperialism against the Indo British Nationalists.

All the 21 Sikh Soldiers of the 36 Sikh were given posthumously the Indian Order of merit (10m). At the time, this was the highest gallantry award for Indian Soldier's under British rule, equivalent to the Victoria Cross.

(The writer is Geography Department (University of Jammu), Ex CSRD/SSS/ JNU)