

SAFEGUARDING
ANCIENT MONUMENTS

As Jammu and Kashmir is a place having vast traditional and cultural background as people of various faiths used to live here from the times immortal, the Union Territory is home to several ancient heritage sites which have their own significant value. But it is irony that these precious sites were ignored by the earlier Governments of the erstwhile state due to which these national heritages are in shambles with no one to take care of the same. Many of these sites have either been damaged due to weather vagaries or on the verge of collapse due to zero maintenance and care which is really a serious issue. After raising the issue numerous times with the authorities, the Union Territory administration in the month of July 2021 finalized a specified plan to ensure revival, restoration, preservation and maintenance of Architecture of various heritage sites, which was also approved by the highest decision-making body i.e., Administrative Council led by LG Manoj Sinha. To ensure smooth implementation of the scheme, not only a necessary framework was drafted and instructions were issued to all the district administrations to identify various sites for revival and restoration falling in their jurisdiction and conveying the same to the administration so that necessary work can be initiated at the earliest but an amount of Rs 100 crore was also sanctioned for the purpose. Further, in the month of September, various district level committees were also formulated for the purpose but despite considerable lapse of time and availability of adequate funds, it is really surprising that work has not been initiated over this important project. In the recent budget also, an amount of Rs 100 crore was again reserved for the purpose as it got lapsed with the end of the financial year but there is no improvement in the scenario. As per the reports, the work is being delayed due to non-availability of necessary Detailed Projects Reports (DPRs) and adequate manpower as the department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums is lacking the well-versed and experienced officials to deal with such types of ancient buildings which are hard to be restored. It is expected that very soon necessary initiatives may be taken for effective implementation of the scheme in order to safeguard the ancient buildings which are a part of our glorious and splendid heritage.

LISTEN TO KPs' DEMANDS

As Kashmiri Pandits are demanding to set-up a commission to investigate the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley, there seems no reason to deny what the community is demanding because already the successive governments have denied many things which the displaced community deserved after its exodus from Valley. Although sitting on Dharna to mount pressure on government during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit over the issue is not justified because what the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has done for Jammu and Kashmir in general and for KPs in particular is simply unmatched and holding protests over any of the issue in this regard is unjustified because Prime Minister Narendra Modi is giving the different segments of society everything which they deserve and demanding and the days are not far when the demand of KPs will also be considered. It is pertinent to mention that members of a Kashmiri Pandits organisation, led by Sandeep Mawa, were sitting on a fast-unto-death in Srinagar ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit pressing for their demand and in the same context Kashmiri Pandit Volunteers (KPV) led by Vikram Kaul sat on a Dharna near the Press Club Jammu, prompting the police to vacate them in wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the region on Sunday. In this regard, at least 200 KPV members sat on a Dharna at Muthi Ghat here demanding a probe into the killings and destruction of temples in 1990s. The KPs were also demanding stern action against Farooq Ahmad Dar alias Bitta Karate, who had allegedly admitted to have killed dozens of Pandits during the 1990s. The need of staging protests and demonstration was not there because at no point of time Prime Minister Narendra Modi has denied the KPs what they deserve and already the narrative has been established that those behind the holocaust in Kashmir will be taken to task although it can take some time. The people who want things to be accomplished through Prime Minister Narendra Modi or the Central Government should understand that running the affairs of the entire country is not everybody's cup of tea and when the Prime Minister is doing the same with efficacy he should be given adequate time and space to act prudently.

OFF 'D' CUFF

Understand
Shri Rama the
consciousness
within yourself

Gudhi Padva (also known as Vaisakhi, Ugadi and several other names all over India) is also the first day of the Navaratri festival that actually reaches its full energy-potential on the festival of Rama Navami – the day of Shree Rama's auspicious birth. Gudhi Padva marks the beginning of creation, and after each of the nine forms of Devi are worshipped, we arrive at Rama Navami and the coming of the highly conscious avatar of Shree Rama. Like the beautiful lotus, that blooms in a swamp, Shree Rama's life depicts how one can live in this world and yet be above and beyond its bondages. In the Indian culture, he is a striking example of engaging with the materialistic world but staying away from the race of wanting to acquire more and more. Shree Rama and Shree Krishna are both Avatars of Lord Vishnu. Each avatar illustrates certain qualities for the common man to aspire to and attain. Shree Rama demonstrated the art of Karma Yoga i.e. to work and act (according to one's dharma) without being driven by the expectation of results. He worked purely for doing what is right and best regardless of whether the results were in his favour. He showed us the path

of selfless service without attachment or ego. Detachment does not mean one should leave everything aside, or necessarily go away and sit in a cave. Even in a remote Himalayan cave if one is sitting and thinking about worldly objects and fanning one's own ego by calling oneself a renunciate, it is all in vain. In such a renunciation, even in the mountains one will remain far away from the experience of truth, oneness and bliss that is Shiva. It will be interesting for people to know that when he meditates, Shree Rama chants 'Aum Namaha Shivaay'.

Shree Rama, the Karma Yogi, lights the path to Moksha. The ancient culture says that being born human is a golden opportunity to understand the impermanent nature of the world. At the very same time, it is very easy to become absorbed in the temptation to be attached to the things and relationships in this world, and become lost in its myriad attractions. It is precisely to light the path towards Moksha (freedom from mandatory birth and death), that the Supreme has taken birth as Avatars like Shree Rama and Shree Krishna.

Shrenguru Dr Balaji Tambe

The philosophy of life: Life is not a struggle, not a tension... Life is bliss. It is eternal wisdom, eternal existence.
-Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

EDITORIAL

JUBILANT J&K

J&K emerging as top destination
for foreign, domestic investments

Govt bringing wide-ranging reforms to improve governance, standard of living

Jammu and Kashmir is set to become the top investment destination in the country as it races up to various infrastructure projects and is reaching out to foreign and domestic investors through several forums and industrial summits.

According to officials, investors from foreign countries particularly middle-east are keen to invest in J&K with an investment of many folds which Jammu and Kashmir has not received in last 75 years. Before arriving in Pali village in Samba to participate in the celebration of National Panchayati Raj Day celebrations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met a large delegation from UAE. The Prime Minister said that a new story of development is being written and many private investors are interested in Jammu and Kashmir. For seven decades of independence, private investment of only Rs 17 thousand crore could be made in Jammu and Kashmir. But, this investment is now reaching around Rs 38,000 crore.

Lieutenant-Governor's administration in Jammu & Kashmir worked hard to convince Dubai-based investors to explore investment possibilities in the Union Territory. JSW Steel Ltd. and Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd. became the first major corporations to buy land for their projects after the reading down of Article 370 in 2019. The possession of 70 Kanals of land (8.75 acres) has already been handed over to JSW Steel Ltd. In Pulwama's Lassipora industrial area to set up a Rs 150-crore steel plant. Similarly, Apollo Hospitals is setting up a 250-bed super speciality hospital in the Jammu region. The administration has already earmarked 100 kanals (12.5 acres) at Jammu's Miran Sahib for a medicity, which will accommodate the country's top health sector corporates to invest here.

In Kashmir, Medicity is coming up on 368 Kanals (46 acres) in Sempora of south Kashmir's Pulwama district as many groups have also shown equal interest to invest in the medicity. Administrative Council had approved the transfer of land measuring 750 Kanals in favour of Industries & Commerce Department for setting up a Medicity. The Operationalization of the Medicity will bring world-class health care infrastructure and facilities to the region, besides providing employment opportunities to the medical/pharma professionals, local pharmacists and vendors, SAC said in a statement.

An official of the Industries Department said that they are trying to bring in high tech investment, keeping the environment and people in mind. "The UT administration is bridging three decades of lack of development. Jammu and Kashmir was never exploited the way it should have been for the larger good of people and the changes are visible on the ground," he said. Unlike the past, the empowerment of J&K grass root level workers was prioritised by LG administration which received praise from Prime Minister in his speech. The Prime Minister said that 'celebration of National Panchayati Raj Day in Jammu and Kashmir marks a big change.' Prime Minister expressed deep satisfaction and pride that democracy has made way to grass roots in Jammu and Kashmir. 'Be it democracy or resolve for development, today Jammu and Kashmir is presenting a new example. In the last 2-3 years, new dimensions of development have been created in Jammu and Kashmir', the Prime Minister stressed.

Since the introduction of constitutional reforms in J&K in August 2019, the government has been focusing on bringing about wide-ranging reforms to substantially improve governance and enhance ease of living for the people of the region at an unprecedented pace besides domestic and foreign investment. The projects inaugurated and whose foundation stone was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will go a long way in facilitating provision of basic amenities, ensuring ease of mobility and development of infrastructure in the region.

Prime Minister inaugurated the Banihal Qazigund Road Tunnel, built at a cost of over Rs 3100 crore. The 8.45 Km long tunnel would reduce the road distance between Banihal and Qazigund by 16 km, and reduce journey time by around one and a half hour. The tunnel would help establish an all-weather connection between Jammu and Kashmir, and bring the two regions closer.

Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of three road packages of Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, being built at a cost of over Rs. 7500 crore. They are for the construction of 4/6 lane access controlled Delhi-Katra-Amritsar Expressway from: Balsua on NH-44 to Gurha Baidaran, Hirnagar; Gurha Baidaran, Hirnagar to Jakh, Vijaypur; and Jakh, Vijaypur to Kunjwani, Jammu with spur connectivity to Jammu Airport. The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone of the Ratle and Kwar Hydroelectric projects. The 850 MW Ratle Hydroelectric Project will be constructed on Chenab river in Kishtwar District at a cost of around Rs 5300 crore. The 540 MW Kwar Hydroelectric Project will also be built on Chenab river in Kishtwar District at a cost of over Rs 4500 crore. Both the projects will help meet the power requirements of the region.

Investing in planet 'Earth' a social responsibility

■ SHONIMA MALHOTRA

Investment' - Whenever we hear this word, the first thought that strikes our mind is financial investment. It is a natural tendency that we tend to perceive this word in economic terms. But Investment does not merely connote financial or monetary one. Economic investment is no doubt important and cannot be done away with. But we need to move beyond this narrow perspective and consider this term in a broader way. As a sociologist, I personally feel that in the present scenario, a more serious investment is needed, that is investment in our planet earth. As a sociologist I want to draw the attention of the members of the society to the fact that it is high time we start realizing the grave necessity and responsibility of investing in our planet if we want to save it. And remember this investment will be a sustainable one with the involvement of minimal or no money. Doesn't that seem to be gainful? Indeed, it does.

As explained by Earthday.org, investing in our planet means 'building a prosperous and equitable future' and 'building healthy cities, countries, and economies.' Green, clean energy, green innovation and commitments in the private sector, a government-backed sustainable revolution, and an emphasis on sustainable personal choices and civic actions are all examples of what it might look like to begin the journey of investing in our planet this Earth Day and beyond. Earth is a beautiful living planet in the Universe and the common habitat of more than 7 billion human population and millions of species of biodiversity. Without Earth, we cannot even imagine living. How we would walk if there is no Earth, there will be no water to drink, there will not be animals living here, and of course, no cultivation, so no food to eat. Can you imagine a life on the Earth if resources are not available here? And, the answer comes not at all.

Nothing could be scarier than this. Despite unavoidable free services provided by the earth to humans, we are not able to pay off her kindness to us. Rather we humans are being cruel to our Earth with our selfish activities. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." Therefore, saving the earth is the primary need. Taking care of the Earth is not just a responsibility, it's a necessity. We need to acknowledge that our planet is the only planet that supports life. So, when the earth will be in peril, we will have no other option than to move to another planet for our safety. Instead of reaching that stage is it not sensible on our

part to make the balanced use of what we have right now in a sustainable manner and start investing judiciously in our planet. I feel it definitely is. Before I start with the ways and measures through which we can make investments in our planet earth, I would like to mention that the typical approach and mindset of human beings is to set a bigger goal and then try to make the best possible efforts to achieve that goal as soon as possible. So often we convince ourselves that change is only meaningful if there is some large, visible outcome associated with it. Whether it is losing weight, building a business, travelling the world or any other goal, we often put pressure on ourselves to make some earth-shattering improvement that everyone will talk about. In that process we fail to realize the fact that even making small changes and improvements every day will add up to something significant. And they too are important. It is felt that, improving by just 1 percent isn't notable (and sometimes it isn't even noticeable). But it can be just as meaningful, especially in the long run. In the beginning, there is basically no difference between making a choice that is 1 percent better or 1 percent worse. In other words, it won't impact you very much today. But as time goes on, these small improvements or declines compound a huge difference.

Applying this concept of compounding to my topic, I would say that if we make our earth one percent better each day for one year, we will end up making it thirty-seven times better by the end of one year. In that spirit, we need to take small steps to help save our planet. Every single one of us can do at least one small thing every day to make a positive difference in our environment and our world and make earth a better place to live on. And you know what doing these small things are both cost and time effective.

I would strongly like to emphasise that just celebrating Earth Day once in 365 days is not sufficient and would not solve the purpose. Rather, the need of the hour is to 'make each day the earth day'. In the opinion of Jane Goodall, "We cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around us. What we do makes a difference, and we have to decide what kind of difference we want to make." So, it is entirely upon us to decide what kind of difference we would like to bring in our planet-positive or negative. I hope the answer would be positive. Then, why not act accordingly. Focus on taking smaller steps and try slowly and slightly mending the normal everyday habits and

Optimal implementation of CSSs
easing life of people across J&K

Jammu and Kashmir Government is on the course to ease the life of its citizens through the efficient and optimal implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs).

From the days of being under achievers to achieving front runner status, the statistics reveal that the growing population is being significantly covered under the centrally sponsored schemes in J&K.

The Mid-day Meal Scheme programme of the Government of India designed to better the nutritional standards of school-age children nationwide, over 8.30 lakh children have been benefitted by this scheme across Jammu and Kashmir.

Similarly, under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, a pioneering programme in the education sector of the country, 1588 Information Communication Technology labs, 1423 Computer-aided Labs, 803 Vocational Labs have been established in J&K besides uniforms and textbooks worth Rs 67 crore were provided to 7.8 lakh children.

The Scheme is a major catalyst to bridge the digital divide amongst students of various socio-economic and other geographical barriers.

Moreover, around 8.96 Lakh beneficiaries were covered under Poshan Abhiyan, an overarching umbrella scheme to improve the nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers to prioritize the efforts of all stakeholders on a comprehensive package of intervention and services targeted on the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

To accord high priority to water conservation and its management, 54304 Hectares have been covered under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).

The scheme has been formulated with the vision of extending the coverage of irrigation 'Har Khet Ko Pani' and improving water use efficiency 'More crop per drop' in a focused manner with end to end solution on source creation, distribution, management, field application and extension activities.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) a multidimensional programme, is providing guaranteed wage employment, creating durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural households across the rural people here.

Natural Resource Management and water conservation measures are changing the landscape of rural India.

The livelihood thrust in MGNREGS has been brought in to raise incomes and improve skills for diversification of earning opportunities of poor households.

According to the official documents 405.38 Lakh person-days under the scheme were generated in 2021-22. Notably, Jammu and Kashmir was declared the state Open Defecation-Free (ODF) and launched the 'Swachhata Hi Sewa' - a fortnight-long cleanliness campaign for public awareness and involvement of the community. At the launch of the 'Swachhata Hi Sewa' campaign at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), J&K was self-declared as ODF.

With the sustained efforts of all the stakeholders, Jammu and Kashmir has achieved 100 per cent toilet coverage and became ODF "one year in advance".

All the 22 districts, 4,171 gram panchayats and 7,565 villages in the state are self-declared ODF as per Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) SBM (G) guidelines. An official said that apart from constructing 1.1 million individual household toilets (IHHLs) and 1,350 community sanitary complexes in J&K, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has played a vital role in bringing about behavioural change in the people.

Moreover, 105 projects were completed under Smart City Projects aimed at transforming Jammu and Srinagar into modern, sustainable and economically vibrant cities with a dedicated focus on improving infrastructure and services besides increasing mobility. The ambitious project, on completion, would strengthen urban infrastructure, improve city services, public aesthetics, ease of living, and provide a clean and sustainable environment besides enhance administrative machinery in both the capital cities of Jammu & Srinagar.

wildlife, keep in mind to go about it ethically. Be wary of attractions involving any unnatural interactions with animals. Living a less consumerist lifestyle can benefit you and your planet. There are yet many more solutions that can be adopted but I restrict myself to these only keeping into consideration the factors of space and length.

In conclusion, I would say that as global citizens and more importantly as members of the society, all of us have social responsibilities towards our mother earth. Our 'Mother Earth' despite serving us truly as a mother, we as children have not been able to pay back her back in the right spirit. Thus, we need to mend our ways starting with the most obvious improvements. Improvement is not always about doing more things right, but at times about doing fewer things wrong, eliminating mistakes, reducing complexity, and stripping away the inessential. As said by Einstein, "Compounding is the eighth wonder of the world." So, the time is ripe for us to start rectifying our mistakes and start taking smaller steps which finally would get compounded and establish a sustainable future on the earth. If we take a look around, we can see this pattern is playing out everywhere. For example, consider Amazon.

The company started by selling books. Once they mastered the online purchase and delivery process of books, they moved on to other products. Today, they sell just about everything. So, to save earth what is required on our part is to start taking initiatives, though at smaller level, but with sincere commitment. We need to love the earth as we love ourselves.

There are lots of ways to give. Become a member of WWF, adopt an animal, take on a challenge for Team Panda or encourage your family and friends to donate by setting up a Facebook birthday fundraiser.

Not only 'Earth Day' but each day should encourage us to reflect on what we are doing to make our planet a more sustainable and livable place. Thus, for the sustainability of our planet, let's promise and take a pledge to fulfill our responsibilities towards Mother Nature so as to protect our living planet from deterioration & to handover clean & green planet to our future generations. Maybe our single efforts may seem small but if thousands of us can unite together towards nature conservation, then one day our collective efforts will definitely end up protecting our motherland Earth from destruction.

The author is an Assistant Professor of Sociology, GDC Sidhra.