FLOOD PREVENTION

loods, among the most perilous natural disasters, result from the accumulation of excessive water in a given area. They are often triggered by heavy rainfall, melting snow, or the collapse of dams. The aftermath of floods is devastating, disrupting daily life and causing mass destruction. Loss of life, injuries, and the spread of diseases such as malaria and dengue are common outcomes. Power outages due to electrocution risks and inflation in prices of essential goods compound the challenges faced by affected communities.

Economically, floods result in substantial losses, as resources are allocated to rescue efforts and rehabilitation. Citizens lose their homes and possessions, exacerbating the financial burden. Moreover, floods have detrimental effects on the environment, leading to soil erosion, damage to flora and fauna, and loss of fertile land. Preventing floods requires collaborative efforts between the government and citizens. Public awareness campaigns and early warning systems are essential for timely evacuation and minimizing casualties. Infrastructure improvements, such as elevated buildings in flood-prone areas and robust drainage systems, can mitigate the impact of floods and prevent waterlogging. Efficient water management, including storage of excess rainfall and strengthening of dams, is crucial for flood prevention. By implementing these measures, we can mitigate the harmful consequences of floods and safeguard lives.

"How to Live a Peaceful Life"-Book review

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL hen on one hand with the release of Happiness Index in the world, we find India ranked 126th out of 143 nations in the World Happiness Report (WHR) 2024, at the same time the release of the book "How to Live a Peaceful Life" written by non else but revered I D Soni, who had held multiple responsibilities and recipients of countless awards in different fields of his activities spread to multi sphere and when we perch into his literary field, he has already five masterpiece books at his credit, I am sure the book will provide us a road map to pull down this Happiness Index as peace and happiness are associated concepts. Peaceful countries report a higher level of happiness. Peace and happiness are described as positive human experiences. True peace is a state of harmony where individuals, communities, and nations coexist in mutual respect, understanding and cooperation; this is the indicator I track from the writer's mind. "With graceful reading habits, Mr. Soni is a treasure of knowledge. Be with him for a while, and you will simply acknowledge", these are the lines by Dr. Jitendra Udhampuri (Padma Shree) in-between the remarks in his forward about the book. A deep dive into each page of the book and each line of the page carry us to the realization that we must have patience and tolerance, we need positive thinking and attitude, need to adhere to morality, we need to be sympathetic, sincere and honest About life, the writer has attributed it as a gift of God and of the view that God's gift are wonderful, are beauteous. are graceful, are adorable, are divine and above all worth appreciating. Human conduct and belief are now transforming and more disturbing than any since the appearance of wealth and our approach to have a happy life has diversified to materialistic than to spirituality for a contented life but alas! We have failed to differentiate between a happy life and a contented life. The writer has given us few 'Mantras' as how to live a peaceful life and have categorized them as: Have a full faith in God and worship him, practice compassion, be truthful, exert to be humble, have loving heart for all creatures, develop unilateral positive character, form the habit of forgiveness, always make use of gratitude - secret of life, be a giver, dethrone the ego, exert to have patience and tolerance, to have positive attitude/thanking, maintain peaceful co-existence, adhere to moral values, be sympathetic, always count your blessings, be a true friend to all and maintain healthy relationship, develop sense of humor, be fearless, sincere and honest, make efforts to enlighten yourself. A peaceful, happy life greatly depends on our inner balance - that inner connectedness with ourselves and the way we live. The writer has beautifully reconciled spiritualism and materialism when he speaks that when we go into our self-dipper and dipper, we will touch love at last and love is at the heart of life, love and purpose. The writer by quoting the views of different religions and great souls have made it crystal clear that compassion has a definite role to play in living a peaceful life. He has beautifully elaborated the steps to compassion such as: Develop a morning ritual, practice empathy, practice commonalities, practice relief of suffering, and practice the act of kindness. Compassion is not an attribute of any religion. It is a universal principle for happiness and peace. While elaborating on the 'Mantra' to be truthful, the writer has concluded that human behavior is subordinate to ethics. But when it comes to truth, ethics itself becomes subordinate to ethics. Truth represents God in this world. That individual is blessed before whom when truth reveals itself and on recognizing it, he bows before it. The writer advises us to exert ourselves to be humble by guiding us that humility is not self-abasement; it is recognition of every animate being, every inanimate object as a theophany of the eternal. Humility is a royal quality. Humility is necessary and useful for the same reason that a lead is useful on a racing sloop: it keeps us from tipping over. The writer guides us to have a loving heart and claims that words fall in front of love; reason and logic fall short of expressing the beauty that is love. Love is by acclaim the most interesting of all forms of human experience. Perfect love casts out fear. Love is always harmonious. Love breaks the barriers of timidity or lack of understanding. Regarding 'Mantara' as to 'Develop Unilateral Positive Character', the writer defines the character as a combination of integrity, unselfishness, understanding, conviction, courage, loyalty, compassion, humility, commitment, determination and respect. As to form the habit of forgiveness, the writer says forgiveness is a deliberate and conscious choice that we make. Forgiveness is an attitude of compassion and understanding with which we choose to react to the world around us. Forgiveness is not a one-off action; it is a constant and ongoing process. Forgiveness is certainly the better option, for it is based on a proven formula of saving ourselves from even worse experiences. Here we need to shed tit-for-tat policy as it arouses the ego of another person, whereas if we follow the policy of forgiveness, it will activate the other person's conscience. And it is a fact that, in controversial matters, consciousness always plays a positive role. The writer gives an edge that always makes use of gratitude - the secret of life as gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others. Gratitude is the perfect antidote to negative emotions like depression, frustra-

tion, resentment and bitterness. Summing up the book in totality, I am of the opinion that there may be many other books on same subject with different headings but the book "How to Live a Peaceful Life" under my consideration is a unique in itself as it has in detail given us very simple Mantras that can stand in full strength with us if we are really interested to proceed in direction as how to live a peaceful life. I am of the view that 'Fundamental peace is a peace that occurs in an individual as well as a society at large, as a unification of its three 'pillars' - freedom, consciousness, and happiness'

16/198 Udhampur (JK)

Agro-ecotourism- An Approach to Sustainable Rural Development

■ DR BANARSI LAL

gro-eco-tourism (AET) is a new concept in the tourism sector. This type of tourism is associated with the agriculture and is helpful to create job opportunities for the rural people. Agro-ecotorism is an amalgamation of agriculture, ecology and tourism and has gained prominence in the recent years. Agro-ecotourism can be successful in rural and often remote areas where alternative sources of livelihood are scarce. The objective of agro-tourism is to develop a unique product for integrated tourism that will contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas. The urban stress has led to growing interest in the rural areas. We all know that real India resides in the villages. Industrialization and development is mostly urban centric. Agro-eco-tourism (AET) is a new concept in the tourism industry. It normally occurs on farms and is associated with the agriculture. It is the symbiotic association of farming sector, tourism industry and farm business. It can create the job opportunities for the rural people. The concept of agroecotourism entails visiting a working farm or any agriculture, horticulture or agribusiness operation, for the purpose of leisure, refreshment, recreation, education and active involvement in the activities of the agriculture including agricultural operations, fishing, dining and celebrating local festivals with the farming communities. The development of agro-ecotourism is primarily aimed to give awareness and knowledge on conservation of environment and natural resources in a participatory mode with farmers and to improve their socio-economic status.

Agro-eco-tourism (AET) as an enterprise possesses immense potential to boost the economic growth especially in the rural areas. Environmental consciousness, increasing interest in culture and heritage, improving villages' accessibility etc. are the factors responsible which are shifting the trend towards agro-ecotourism. Under this scheme key geographic regions are identified for the development of agro-ecotourism. Jammu and Kashmir has tremendous potential for agro-ecotourism due to its unique heritage, culture and natural attractions. Agroecotourism is possible in J&K where about 80 per cent people reside in the villages. It can create new jobs in rural areas, attract many youths for rural employment and can slow down the migration of rural people towards the urban areas. Indeed, the economic activity occurs when people link travel with agricultural products, services or experiences to cater the needs of mutual demands. Agro-eco-tourism (AET) provides an opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the traditional food and get experienced with the various farming tasks. This tourism enterprise keeps the tourists relaxed and helps to revitalize in the pure natural environment, surrounded by magnificent agricultural setting. It would also provide tourists with an opportunity to be close to where about 70% of Indians live.

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most beautiful tourists' destinations in the world. This

beautiful Union Territory(UT) is characterized by scenic beauty, folded mountains, gushing fountains, cool pollution free breeze, deep gorges, rich wild life, natural waterfalls, alpine pastures, lush green forests, snow clad fields, carpet green turfs, lofty skying grounds, charming gardens, shimmering lakes, apple orchards, benevolent people etc. The industrial sector in J&K is not well developed and Agro-eco-tourism (AET) can play a significant role for the upliftment of the rural economy of the UT. It can improve the quality of life of the rural people of J&K. Agro-eco-tourism (AET) entrepreneurship has gained importance as it is seen as a major driving force behind Agro-eco-tourism (AET). J&K has lot to offer to the tourists across the globe because of its scenic beauty, a kaleidoscope of traditions, a variety of cultures and an array of opportunities to explore the outdoors activities through sporting and adventure activities. J&K possess rich diversity of flora and fauna and there are large numbers of international and domestic tourists' destinations throughout the Union Territory.J&K is one of the most important places in terms of tourism in India. Religious places like Raghunath Temple, Amarnath, Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, Shiv Khori Shrine, Baba Aghar Jitto Ji, Siarh Baba, Nao Devian, Deva Mai, Dhansar Baba etc. are in J&K and pilgrims from across the globe used to visit these spots throughout the year and pay homage. Considering this scope for combining the natural resource available in J&K synergistically with agriculture and tourism activities, it is essential to promote the concept of Agro-eco-tourism (AET) in the Union Territory. The successful Agro-eco-tourism models can act as a sustainable source of income for rural youths and farm women of the UT. Diversity of flora and fauna can be sustainably utilized through AET. Apart from the core agricultural activities, the animals and fish components can easily be linked with agro-eco-tourism to effectively blend the natural resources within the system in an integrated manner. However, there are no systematic guidelines for the functioning of AET models. There is need to investigate and document the status of AET models in J&K, to study the sustainability of agro-ecotourism model and to promote the agri-tourism entrepreneurship in J&K. Plash (Butea Monosperma) and Kachnar (Bouhnia Bahalai) can be useful to make ecofriendly cup and plates and by establishing such types of units employment can be created in the rural areas of J&K. Cottages for lodging and dining of the visitors can be constructed. Horticultural crops nursery activities can be promoted to educate the visitors or tourists about plant propagation techniques. As J&K is rich in biodiversity so biodiversity parks can be established. Bamboo/wooden handicrafts units can also be established in J&K. Ponds can be developed for initiating the fish angling/boating activities in the UT for the tourists. Primary processing units, value addition kiosks and packaging units for fruits, oil extraction units, vegetables and spices can be established. Rural museums contourists in J&K.

Agro-ecotourism involves observing the indigenous people whose farming and herding practices that are part of their customary knowledge and cultural identity can be experienced firsthand. Agro eco- tourism is different from other sectors of industry. The agro- ecotourism industry can earn a huge amount of money and thus can enhance the income and employment in the rural areas of J&K. It can thus be a source of aid from within the Union Territory, country and out of country. Agro ecotourism is directly helpful in correcting UT's economic position and thus can divert the rural people towards progress. Through Agro eco-tourism, government can gain more economic profits from taxes on things tourists use and buy. Agro-eco-tourism can become a major sector influencing all aspects of the rural people. Government should take proper measures for creating framework for the promotion of agro-ecotourism in J&K. The technical expertise is also required for successful promotion of agro eco-tourism and for that purpose Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) of SKUAST-J and SKAUST-J can play the pivotal role. There is need of proper planning and effective legislation for resource conservation and balanced developmental activities for the promotion of Agro-ecotourism in J&K. Agro-ecotourism units in J&K can help to demonstrate and promote the concept of the agro-eco-tourism to farmers, entrepreneurs, researchers, students and related stakeholders in a scientific manner. The components from agriculture, livestock and fisheries can be included in these units. Indigenous and new varieties of field and horticultural crops can be maintained in the units to serve as information to the visitors and to create awareness about bio diversity in the area. Biodiversity parks comprising of different species (herbs, shrubs, climbers, trees etc.) can be demonstrated in the units. A fish pedicure unit and a public aquarium complex can be maintained. Major fisheries resources of this area can also be displayed in the AET unit. Other important components are apiculture, recycling of biodegradable waste through composting and vermi-composting, organic inputs preparations, nursery and plant propagation activities etc. Rabbit units and ornamental poultry units can also be established in J&K. Systematic research on development of ecofriendly and sustainable Agro-eco-tourism models to improve the farm income and improve the socio-economic status of the farmers of hilly areas is also needed. There is need to promote the sustainable and ecofriendly Agro-eco-tourism models. There is also need to impart knowledge on sustainable Agro-eco-tourism practices through awareness, trainings and demonstrations. Local communities should be involved in its planning and in the benefits it brings. Agro-ecotourism can be a source of livelihood and environment management in the hilly

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Embracing Democracy: Mera Pehla Vote - Desh Ke Live

taining the villages' ancestral items can also attract the

■ DR FIRDOOS WANI

ntroduction: India, the world's largest democracy, pulsates with the vibrancy of its people, Ltheir aspirations, and their collective voice echoing through the corridors of power. For countless young Indians, stepping into the realm of democracy is a rite of passage, a momentous occasion marking their entry into the decisionmaking process that shapes the nation's future. As one of the crores of young Indians poised to cast their first vote, you stand at the threshold of history, ready to partake in the grand festival of democracy - the 18th Lok Sabha Election. Welcome to Mera Pehla Vote - Desh Ke Liye, where your voice becomes the cornerstone of

Understanding the Significance of Democracy: Democracy isn't merely a system of governance; it's a beacon of hope, equality, and freedom. It empowers citizens to participate actively in the governance of their country, ensuring accountability, transparency, and representation. In India, democracy is deeply ingrained in the cultural ethos, where diversity thrives, and unity is forced through the ballot box. Every election cycle is a testament to the strength of democracy, where people from all walks of life come together to exercise their constitutional right and duty. Understanding the significance of democracy in India requires delving into the historical, social,

and political context that has shaped the nation's journey since its independence in 1947. Every five year, millions of Indians participate in free and fair election to elect their representatives at the national state and local levels. This democratic exercise is not just about casting votes its about empowering citizens to shape the destiny of their nation, hold their leaders accountable, and express their aspirations for a better future. Indian democracy has proven to be remarkable resilient in the face of challenges. Indian democracy has facilitated social and economic progress by providing avenues for participation and inclusion. Over the decades, marginalized communities, including Dalits, Adivasis, women, and relius minorities, have leveraged the democratic space to demand their rights, challenge discrimination, and assert their identities

"Mera Pehla Vote - Desh Ke Liye" symbolizes a commitment to the greater good, a pledge to uphold the principles of democracy, equality, and justice. It is a declaration of solidarity with our fellow citizens, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion, united in our pursuit of a better tomorrow. With each ballot cast, we reaffirm our faith in the democratic process, recognizing that our voices, however humble, have the power to effect change. Whether it's advocating for social reforms, championing environmental causes, or demanding accountability from our elected representatives,

con of hope amidst the challenges we face.

But "Mera Pehla Vote - Desh Ke Live" is more than just a rite of passage; it's a rite of citizenship, a testament to our commitment to the ideals upon which our nation was founded. It is a reminder that democracy is not a spectator sport but an active engagement, requiring our constant vigilance, participation, and above all, our unwavering belief in the power of collective action. So let us embrace this privilege with humility and determination, knowing that our actions today will shape the India of tomorrow. Let us make our first vote count - not just for ourselves, but for the countless voices that echo through the corridors of history proincing to strive for a more inclusive equitable, and prosperous nation. "Mera Pehla Vote - Desh Ke Live" - for the country, for the peo-

ple, for the future. Your Role In Shaping Future

As you prepare to cast your first vote, remember that you are not just a spectator but an active participant in the democratic process. Educate vourself about the issues that matter, scrutinize the policies of candidates, and make an informed choice that aligns with your values and aspirations. Your vote carries immense weight, and by exercising it responsibly, you can contribute to the progress and development of the nation. The impact of the single vote extends far beyond the

ballot box. It influence the direction of government, the allocation of resource, and the enactment of laws that shape the fabric of society whether its advocating for social justice, environment sustainability, economic prosperity, or any other cause. Voting provides a platform for individuals to express their values and aspirations for

Moreover, casting a vote is a testament to the principles of democracy - the belief in equality, representation, and the power of the people. It reinforces the idea that every voice matters and that collective action can drive meaningful change. In a world where the future is uncertain, exercising the right to vote empowers individuals to actively participate in shaping the trajectory of their communities and the world at large.

Postscript: As you embark on this journey of democracy, remember that the power to effect change lies in your hands. Embrace the opportunity to make your voice heard, to stand up for what you believe in, and to shape the future of India. Mera Pehla Vote - Desh Ke Liye welcomes you to the grand festival of democracy, where every vote counts, and every voice matters. Together, let us usher in a new era of progress, prosperity, and unity, fueled by the collective will of the people.

> (The author is a PhD scholar, writer, columnist and approved councillor in IGNOU).

Preserving Mansar and Surinsar Lakes

G L KHAJURIA

ringed by lush green vibrant forest covered hills, Mansar and Surinsar are most majestic lakes in Jammu & Kashmir State. The lakes are the prime attraction of Jammu region and are conveniently approachable from Samba as well as from Jammu through regular buses and private convenience around the year. These spots are of ample importance apart from being lakes aloes. These constitute as the big water bodies amidst the hills with beautiful locations. The twin lakes harbour a rich variety of marine wildlife comprising endangered flap shell turtles and other multihued marine lives within the water body of these lakes. These are also prime destinations for the winged visitors who flock over here

from far away places for seasonal change and breeding. The lakes are existing at an elevation of around 670 meters (2000ft) from mean sea level (MSL). And occupy their own placement of enchanting prominence of Jammu's duggar land. On the Lower Shivalik of outer Himalayas these form an important tourists destination as well. It is prominently believed that these twin lakes share their sanctity of lake Mansrovar located amidst the pride Himalayas. According to Jalmanu Muni, who explains in the revered granth Sree Jalmani yashxamedh that these composite lakes were created during Mahabharta when a war was waged by Arjuna's son Vabruvahan. Both these lakes are an epicenter of Dogra culture as the word Dogra has originated from Sanskrit word Devigrat meaning between two thoughts. As such, it is believed that Dogras are an Indo-Aryan tribe that originated between Mansar and Surinsar lakes. Presently, both these lakes form the social and cultural importance of Jammu region and more so due to a cluster of temples around the lakes of all temples, the most prominent being the main shrine on the eastern bank of Mansar lake famously called as Shesnag Mythologically, Shesnag is a Snake God with six heads. The shehnag temple and his image is within the temple. There are other prominent temples of Umapati Mahadev and Narsimha. There is a temple of Maa Durga on the bank of Mansar lake. The people who throng over there from far flung areas takes a holy dip in the lake on all festive occasions.

The newly wedded couples consider auspicious to have three circumambulation of the lake. Some communities however perform mundane ceremony (first hair cut) of the male children which is considered most auspicious. Amongst many dogra families, Shehnag is revered as Kuldevta and their traditional rituals are performed over here.

Mansar is also famous for Alexandrian Darakeet which is local parlance is spoken as 'Mansariya' or 'Rai Tota'. This parrot is considered as a boon. It is so called because Alexander the great had taken to Greek and from that time it is recorded as first export of wild bird from Mansar. Some suggestions: Since both these lakes are situated in Shivaliks of Jammu region, lying in the outer Himalayas. The soil conditions and the forest cover keep the ecosystem well in place. Despite all that the area over the years has under gone drastic changes. Amongst a multitude factor. Deforestation is the major factor . the pristine grandeur, Glory and purity had undergone sea change. So in order to bring back to its originality some innovative and concrete measure shall have to put in place in order to protect, preserve and conserve the natural heritage of our region. The following points in sight are:-

"Soil Conservation measures: before we go ahead in carrying out any activity, soil conservation measures are of utmost importance. A series of comprehensive measures are warranted to be taken by the soil conservation department.

"Foreclosing the area: The areas need to be fenced by laying out fence line preferably with barbed wire and PCC posts. This shall be prehand treatment for the cover. Once the area is well protected, Subsidiary operations shall be carried out in subsequent stages.

"Plugging rills and gulies shall be our next target . chect dams as and where are demanding shall have to constructed. This way the soil shall be conserved and obviously the drainage system shall be boosted. All the filth conglomerated with eroded soil/ boulders which drains down into the lake shall be averted and silation shall

"Subsequently, with the onset of Monsoon plantation operation of such species as santha (Dedonia Vescosia) need to be introduced

along with other local species e.g. Acacia, Cassia, Syzizium cumin etc. Kutzo vine is very good soil binding species and its inculcation shall go a long way in conserving the soil.

Ipomia cutting along fence line shall re-infore the fence line and shall strengthen the fencing of the area. Cactus along fence line at places yield successfull results and their introduction shall be a boon for life long protection and strengthening of the fore-closed area as a whole. " Introduction of medicinal, aromatical trees which will is

the clarion call of the day. Our revered Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is very much enthusiastic in preserving and promoting Lakes, wetlands and other wetlands throughout the length and breadth of the state. If wular and dal lakes in the vale of Kashmir, are presented Mansar, Surinsar don't deserve their due share for development part apart from other wetlend and water bodies sprawling over Jammu Leh, and ladakh which constitute an equally important component of or heritage.

It has oftenly been observed that there are ever escalating hue and cry amongst jammuunites and developmental front. in the vision of the Chief Minister and the environment ministers. These developments should at no cost should become lop-sided and sreas apart from vale of Kashmir are not being deprived of their due share of development. The media have most frequently been highlighting the issues of Jammu, leh and Ladakh which has always been shelved in the silent box. It is therefore, urged upon the government under whose the administrative and executing authorities are very alive. These should act upon judiously for all the regions so that we can be proud of equality and transparency which beyond facts is the fundamental right enunciated in the constitution of state as well that of India.

Narendra Modi has always been a symbol of iustice and stood

Conclusively on therefore, it is added over here that our state being the crown of India is as well tourism top, socially strong and finally a treasure frove perhaps any state in our sub continent have

has it. We are proud of our majestic Mansar and Surinsar. (The author is Former Deputy Conservator of Forest J&K)