

## SAVING FORESTS

Forests in Jammu & Kashmir are a vital natural treasure, covering approximately 20% of the region's total geographical area. These forests not only play a critical role in maintaining ecological balance and biodiversity but also provide livelihoods, clean air, water, and climate regulation for millions. However, in recent decades, Jammu & Kashmir's forests have faced significant threats due to deforestation, urbanization, illegal logging, encroachments, and forest fires. Saving these forests is not just an environmental issue—it is crucial for the sustainable future of the region.

The forests of J&K are home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including many rare and endangered species such as the Hangul (Kashmiri stag), Himalayan black bear, and snow leopard. These forests support agriculture by preserving soil fertility, preventing erosion, and maintaining the water cycle. The rivers and streams flowing from forested hills sustain both rural and urban populations.

Forests are also culturally and economically significant. Many communities, especially Gujjars, Bakarwals, and other tribal groups, depend on forests for fuelwood, medicinal plants, and grazing. The tourism industry, one of J&K's economic backbones, also thrives on the natural beauty provided by lush green forests, mountain trails, and wildlife sanctuaries.

Forests in J&K are under increasing pressure. Rapid urban expansion, overgrazing, and illegal felling have led to forest degradation. Climate change has worsened the situation, leading to more frequent and intense forest fires. In some areas, forest land has been encroached upon for infrastructure projects.

Weak enforcement of forest protection laws, lack of awareness among locals, and limited community participation further hamper conservation efforts.

To save forests in J&K, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. Large-scale tree plantation drives must be conducted in deforested and degraded areas. Native species should be prioritized to restore natural biodiversity.

Local communities should be engaged through joint forest management programs. Forest-dependent populations must be provided with alternative livelihood options to reduce pressure on forest resources.

Remote sensing, drones, and GIS mapping can help monitor forests, detect illegal activities, and track forest health. Mobile apps and portals can be used for citizen reporting of encroachments or fires.

## Under the Blazing Sky: A Growing Crisis of Climate and Survival

ANUSHREE BHATTACHARYA

India is no longer a stranger to the extreme heat from the past few years, but in previous years, the country has been facing a drastic rise in the intensity, frequency, and duration of heat waves, what was once a seasonal discomfort for the country is now becoming a public health emergency. With this accelerating change in climate we can clearly see the end of the globe very soon. India is emerging as one of the most affected countries to this extreme heat.

The summer of 2024 was already a wake-up call for everyone. The record says the deadliest and longest heat waves were seen in the last summer in India's history. According to reports from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), over 700 approx deaths and 48,000 people came with the complications of heat stroke and heat-related cases all were reported between March to June 2024. This report screams the deep cracks in public health systems, urban planning, and environmental policies.

In 2024, parts of the country reported temperatures soaring past 52°C, surpassing previous records. Even the capital saw nearly 49°C, affecting transportation, energy supply, and the daily lives of millions. These temperatures were not just uncomfortable but they were dangerous. The car engines caught fire alone just by standing for too long under the sun and so on. And with each passing year, there is a new record that breaks the previous one.

## Health Hazards on the Rise

Prolonged exposure to the extreme heat causes severe effects on human health. The most common conditions are; heat cramps, heat exhaustion, dehydration, and a heat-stroke, when the body fails to regulate its

temperature.

Some other symptoms were like dry skin, rapid pulse, nausea, vomiting and even unconsciousness. Most affected populations are the elderly people, young children, outdoor laborers, and people with any chronic diseases are most at risk.

Hospitals were reported overload of emergency cases during the peak summer months. The issue is that mostly heat-related mortality is unreported due to lack of awareness and misclassification.

## Economic and Infrastructural Impact

The effects of scorching heat waves doesn't limit till public health. It hits the economy also, particularly in agriculture, construction, and energy sectors. Farmers face less crop than earlier due to heat and water scarcity. Workers are getting ill by working in this extreme temperature, the consequences are not only about physical health risks but also income loss due to reduced working hours.

In urban areas, the electricity demand spikes due to increased use of air conditioning and cooling appliances in almost all households. In 2024, India's faces overburden of power consumption leads to blackouts in several regions. The power is depend on the fossil-fuel energy to beat the heat that further makes a harsh change in climate that will be not-so-good for India.

The excessive heat effects in urban areas caused by the dense infrastructure and limited green spaces. It blocks the natural air from the trees in the cities and increases only pollution that makes the heat management worse than ever. We should make a strategy for heat management in urban islands.

## Animal Suffering

The soaring temperature also leaves a devastating impact on animals, especially stray

animals who have no shelter to hide from the furious sun or access to clean drinking water to quench their thirst. There are infinite cases of heatstroke, dehydration, and even death of the street dogs, birds, and cattle due to the heat.

Extreme heat also affects biodiversity. Rising temperature causes drying out of water bodies, damage vegetation, and disbalance the ecosystem.

## Precautions We Can Take

To stabilize the health impacts for future heat waves everyone should contribute including individual, community, and government.

## Precautions For Humans:

► **Stay Hydrated:** One must drink plenty of water even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and sugary drinks as they don't hydrate your body.

► **Wear Light Clothing:** Try to wear light-colored, loose cotton clothes for your comfort and always cover your head with caps or scarves. Use an umbrella whenever going outside.

► **Avoid Peak Hours:** Avoid going outside between 12 PM and 4 PM if not necessary try to stay indoors or under some shelter, even if you have to go then try to take frequent breaks in the shade.

► **Use Coolers, Fans, and Shade:** Use traditional methods of cooling your body along with electric modes to reduce your body heat.

► **Know the Symptoms:** Always prepare for the symptoms of heat exhaustion. If you feel any of these, take medicine immediately or search for medical help.

## For Community and Urban Spaces:

► **Increase Tree Cover:** Plant more trees and maintain green belts, especially in cities to reduce the urban heat island effect and get some shade and natural air for the living

beings.

► **Water Availability:** The government should install water tanks and shaded shelters in public places for the needy people.

► **Awareness Campaigns:** Promote different precautions and safety rules and aware the audience about the signs of any medical emergency.

## For Stray Animals:

► **Keep Water Bowls Outside:** Always keep small containers of water outside your house or workplace for the animals. Even a single bowl can save lives.

► **Create Shade:** You can create a small shade for animals in empty areas so that they can move whenever they feel heat.

► **Report Cases:** If you see any animal in pain kindly inform the local NGOs or animal welfare helplines or take them to the hospital for treatment.

► **Feed Hydrating Foods:** During this extreme heat, feed foods like watermelon, cucumber that can help animals to stay hydrated.

## A Call to Action

India's rising temperatures are not a distant threat anymore and they're deadly. The previous year summer was just a glimpse of what the future could do to us if action is not taken timely. Educates people about their environment, future climatic conditions and the actions they take to save themselves along with the earth.

In this peak era of climate unpredictability, survival of an individual will not depend on how we adapt to the change but actually depends on how we are going to respond as a society, as a living creature of this planet.

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## Ambedkar, the economist

ARJUN RAM MEHWAL

B.R. Ambedkar's wisdom has shaped and nurtured India's governance in a multidimensional manner. His contribution as an architect of the Constitution and a prominent voice of justice is widely acknowledged, but his legacy as India's earliest and sharpest economic thinker still remains elusive to many.

Long before India had its own Reserve Bank or a stable currency system, Babasaheb was writing about money, what gives it value, how it should be managed and why a country like India needs to control its own financial future. When he was 22 years old, Ambedkar arrived at Columbia University, New York, as the first Dalit student abroad. In 1915, he received an MA for his thesis, 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. The following year, he submitted a thesis for his PhD degree, 'The National Dividend of India: A Historic and Analytical Study'. Later on, this was enlarged and published as 'The Evolution of Imperial Provincial Finance in India'.

On his return, in November 1918, Ambedkar was appointed professor of Political Economy at Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Bombay. In July 1920, he moved to London to further pursue his studies in Economics. He completed his MSc thesis, titled 'Provincial Decentralisation of Imperial Finance in British India' in June 1921. In 1923, he wrote a groundbreaking thesis titled 'The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution'. These were not mere academic works. They emerged as a bedrock for India's

financial and monetary system in the years to come.

These works were a deep dive into how a weak monetary system could weaken a nation. During his time at the LSE, he studied the Indian currency system not just as an academic subject but as a lived reality affecting millions back home. His thesis was the first serious attempt by an Indian scholar to explain how colonial monetary policies were weakening the Indian economy from within. He clearly explained the manner in which the relationship of the Indian rupee to the British pound was artificially manipulated by the colonial rulers, putting a crushing financial burden on the Indian economy.

Ambedkar questioned the very foundation of India's currency system. He offered solutions that were bold, practical and visionary, proposing that India adopt the gold exchange standard, a more stable and modern approach being followed by many developed countries at the time. This would tie the value of the rupee to a gold-backed currency like the British pound, bringing in more predictability and fairness in exchange rates. More importantly, he called for the creation of an Indian authority, something like a central bank, that would have full control over currency issuance, monetary policy and inflation management.

His thesis didn't stay confined to library shelves. In 1925, just two years after its publication, he was invited to present his views before the Hilton Young Commission. This commission was tasked with reviewing India's entire monetary framework, and Ambedkar

offered it a well-researched economic roadmap. Nine years later, the RBI was established in 1934 through an act passed by the British government. This act had his intellectual fingerprints all over it. His doctoral thesis inspired the setting up of the Finance Commission of India and his works acted as a beacon in framing guidelines for the RBI Act, 1934.

Ambedkar believed that without sound economic planning, social justice would remain incomplete. For him, money was not just a technical issue, it was tied to human dignity, labour and opportunity. A weak economy, he believed, would always push the poor further into suffering. In all of this, his aim remained clear - to build an economy that protects the vulnerable and promotes fairness. He also supported state-led development and planned industrial growth.

During his time as labour member on the Viceroy's Executive Council, he introduced several pro-worker policies, such as regulated working hours, maternity benefits, and dispute resolution boards. He was instrumental in shaping the water, power and labour welfare policies. He was one of the founders of employment exchanges in our country. He also pushed for the better management of water resources through institutions in the form of the Central Water Commission, the Central Technical Power Board, the Damodar Valley Project, the Hirakud Dam Project and the Sone River Project, among others.

In an era of global financial uncertainties, Babasaheb's arguments about financial discipline and real-value currency are more impor-

tant than ever. As we move toward a world of digital currencies, AI-driven financial decisions, and decentralised finance, Ambedkar's emphasis on transparency, control, and fairness remains our best guide. His concerns regarding what gives money value, who controls it, and how to protect the common citizen from financial shocks, still hold. His emphasis on how inflation disproportionately harms the poor, and his insistence that currency must be managed responsibly, still echo in today's policy debates. India's inflation-targeting framework, its resistance to reckless monetary expansion, and the emphasis on welfare-centric policies, financial inclusion and direct benefit transfers are all in line with Ambedkar's thinking.

Ambedkar was the mind behind some of India's earliest and most important economic ideas. His economic ideas were not just about numbers but also justice, dignity and self-reliance. The RBI and the Finance Commission and the creation of waterways infrastructure, in many ways, are living embodiments of that vision. Today, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the nation is on cusp of becoming the third-largest economy in the world. As India prepares for its next phase of economic growth to realise the goal of Viksit Bharat, adherence to the economic wisdom of Babasaheb is a fitting tribute to the noble soul.

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## Savoring the Summer: Special Foods of Jammu That Beat the Heat and Celebrate Tradition

As the sun shines brightly over the northern plains and hills, the region of Jammu welcomes summer with a culinary transformation that embodies both seasonal wisdom and rich traditions. Stepping away from the flashiness of modern food trends, Jammu's summer cuisine stays true to its roots with time-honored vegetarian recipes designed to cool the body, nourish the soul, and celebrate the cultural heritage of the Dogra people.

Jammu's food culture emphasizes simplicity and substance. During the intense heat, heavy and spicy meals give way to lighter, tangier dishes, often featuring locally grown vegetables, yogurt-based recipes, and native cooling ingredients. These meals are not just tasty—they are practical, age-old solutions to the challenges posed by a hot climate.

## Ambal: The Crown Jewel of Dogra Vegetarian Fare

At the heart of Jammu's summer dining experience is Ambal—a delightful sweet and sour pumpkin dish that is both comforting and refreshing. Crafted from ripe yellow pumpkin, tamarind or dried mango powder (amchur), jaggery, and tempered spices, Ambal is light, aromatic, and perfectly balanced. Traditionally served with plain rice or soft wheat rotis, it is a staple in both everyday meals and festive gatherings. Its cooling properties and easy digestibility make it perfect for hot summer days.

## Khatta Bhaaji: Greens with a Tangy Twist

During summer, Dogra households often turn to green leafy vegetables, with Khatta Bhaaji being a local favorite. This dish, made from spinach, bathua, or khatta palak (sour leafy greens), is cooked with a tangy base, often enhanced with curd or amchur. Served alongside plain rice and a dollop of homemade ghee, it is rich in iron and digestive benefits, while keeping meals light and refreshing.

## Chhaach &amp; Lassi: The Traditional Coolants

No summer in Jammu is complete without the classic drinks of chhaach (buttermilk) and lassi. These yogurt-based beverages, seasoned with cumin, mint, or black salt, serve more than just thirst-quenching purposes—they are rooted in Ayurvedic traditions and designed to combat internal heat, aid digestion, and replenish energy lost to the sun. While chhaach is savory and light, lassi can be sweet or salted, often serving as a wholesome breakfast on its own.

## Kalari Cheese: The Vegetarian Street Star

Kalari, a soft cheese unique to the Jammu region, is traditionally made from cow or buffalo milk but is entirely vegetarian. It is often fried on a hot tawa until crispy on the outside and gooey inside. Served with chutneys and bread, it is a beloved snack enjoyed during evenings or late lunches, providing protein and satisfaction without the heaviness of meat. Unlike other Indian cheeses like paneer, Kalari has a dense, stretchy texture and is sun-dried, setting it apart in both flavor and preparation.

## Phullan Wali Kadhi: Yogurt Curry with a Twist

Phullan Wali Kadhi is a must-have summer dish made with gram flour (besan), sour curd, and local spices. What makes it special are the small phullis (fried gram flour dumplings) that soak up the yogurt gravy, creating a rich yet cooling curry. Typically paired with steamed rice and raw onion on the side, it is the Dogra way of achieving hydration and nutrition.

## Seasonal Fruits &amp; Desi Street Snacks

With the arrival of summer, local fruits burst onto the streets of Jammu. Vendors sell jamun, phalsa, raw mangoes, and karonda (natal plum) at every market and village corner. Sprinkled with black salt and red chili powder, these fruits are the perfect snacks for all ages—tangy, refreshing, and packed with antioxidants.

Raw mango chutneys, pudina (mint) dips, and sun-dried amchur flakes find their way into nearly every meal, either as condiments or key ingredients. These flavors not only enhance the dishes but also help cool the body, detoxify the system, and add zest to simple plates of dal-chawal.

## In Conclusion

Jammu's vegetarian summer cuisine is a brilliant example of seasonal living. It's not just about eating light—it's about eating right, just like generations before us did. While the world rushes toward convenience, the people of Jammu continue to honor traditional recipes that prioritize health, flavor, and culture. In every bowl of Ambal or glass of chhaach, there's more than just food—there's a rich heritage.

## Beyond the Trend: Why a healthy lifestyle is our lifeline

RISHI YADAV

In today's fast-paced and convenience-driven world, our lifestyle has undoubtedly become more comfortable, yet paradoxically more complicated and unhealthy.

With the advent of modern technology and the rise of the digital age, the way we live and work has undergone a significant transformation. Where people once remained active through natural means like farming, walking, and outdoor physical activities, now most of our time is spent sitting in front of screens, be it computers, tablets, or smartphones.

While technology has enhanced our productivity, it has drastically reduced our physical activity, leading to a surge in lifestyle-related diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, insomnia, and chronic stress. These issues, once associated with old age, are now affecting the younger generation, even children, at an alarming rate.

Children who once eagerly played outdoors are now glued to their screens, their eyes strained, their minds overstimulated, and their bodies inactive. Adults, too, are caught in an endless cycle of work and stress, unable to spare even a few minutes for self-care. The lack of regular exercise, improper eating habits, consumption of junk and processed foods, irregular sleeping patterns, and mental exhaustion are slowly but surely damaging both our physical and mental health. People often ignore the early signs of fatigue and stress, only to find themselves facing serious health conditions later on. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a wake-up call, reminding us that a strong immune system and mental resilience are our first line of defense in any crisis. And both can only be cultivated through a well-balanced, conscious, and healthy lifestyle. It is therefore essential that we stop treating a healthy lifestyle as just another passing trend or social media challenge, and instead embrace it as a lifelong responsibility and foundation of well-being. World Health Day, observed



every year on April 7, reinforces this very message that health is the greatest wealth and should never be taken for granted. This day also marks the establishment of the World Health Organization (WHO), which has been working since 1950 toward global health awareness and improvement. The theme for 2025, "Healthy Start, Hopeful Future," underscores the idea that a successful and balanced life begins with good health. When we start our day with nutritious food, adequate sleep, and mindful movement, we not only strengthen our bodies but also nurture our minds with clarity and calmness. A healthy body fosters a positive mindset, and a positive mindset drives us forward toward our goals. But it's crucial to understand that health isn't just about physical fitness; it includes mental and emotional well-being

too. In this age of intense competition, social media pressure, and internal conflicts, many people, especially youth struggle silently with mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and burnout. Incorporating practices like yoga, meditation, deep breathing exercises, and self-reflection into our daily lives can significantly enhance our inner strength and emotional balance. Instilling healthy habits in children from an early age such as personal hygiene, nutritious eating, discipline, and physical activity lays the foundation for lifelong wellness. These practices shape them into confident, self-reliant, and socially responsible individuals.

Moreover, we must not overlook the health of our environment. Clean air, safe drinking water, green spaces, and harmonious social interactions collectively create a nurturing

atmosphere for sustainable and healthy living.

A healthy beginning, therefore, extends beyond personal habits; it involves conscious efforts toward community welfare, ecological balance, and intergenerational responsibility. It's about planting the seed of wellness today so that tomorrow's tree of life grows strong, fruitful, and beneficial for everyone. A healthy lifestyle is not something we adopt temporarily; it's a continuous journey of mindful choices, daily discipline, and genuine self-care. The habits we build today. The way we think, eat, move, rest, and connect with others. What will shape our future. Therefore, making a healthy start is not just a personal preference but an essential commitment to a brighter, more balanced, and hopeful tomorrow.