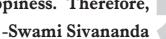


There is no end of craving. Hence contentment alone is the best way to happiness. Therefore, acquire contentment.





# **EDITORIAL**

### WAQF BILL

he WAQF Bill is a legislative framework governing waqf properties-assets dedicated for religious or charitable purposes in Islamic law. The bill aims to regulate and streamline the management of waqf properties, ensuring their protection, development, and proper utilization for the welfare of the com-

The bill proposes a comprehensive digital database of waqf properties, making their records transparent and:

The bill grants greater powers to the State Waqf Boards to manage and prevent encroachment of waqf

It ensures that waqf properties are not illegally leased or sold without proper authorization. The bill proposes strict legal actions against individuals or entities encroaching upon waqf lands. A framework is set up to resolve disputes related to waqf property outside civil courts, through dedicated waqf tribunals.

Supporters argue that the bill is necessary for protecting waqf properties from illegal occupation and mismanagement.

They believe that Waqf properties were historically donated for public welfare, yet many of them have been illegally occupied.

The bill provides legal safeguards to ensure that these assets remain in the service of education, healthcare, and religious purposes.

The digitalization of waqf records will prevent forgeries, fraudulent claims, and mismanagement, ensuring that waqf assets are monitored efficiently and used correctly. The waqf tribunals will offer a dedicated judicial mechanism to resolve conflicts, reducing delays in legal proceedings and preventing undue interference from external entities.

By prohibiting unauthorized sales or leases of waqf properties, the bill ensures that land and assets remain dedicated to their original purpose and are not exploited for commercial gains.

Properly managed waqf institutions can contribute significantly to social welfare by funding schools, hospitals, orphanages, and community programs, aligning with the government's vision for inclusive growth.

The WAQF Bill is a significant legislative step aimed at ensuring the protection and proper administration of waqf properties in India.

While it has the potential to streamline waqf management and prevent illegal occupations, concerns regarding property rights and the extensive authority of wagf boards remain key points of debate.

A balanced approach ensuring both community welfare and legal safeguards for all stakeholders will be crucial for the bill's successful implementation.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Promoting Neurodiversity in Society

#### RISHI YADAV

eurodiversity emphasizes the acceptance of neurological and cognitive dif-Y ferences as natural variations of the human brain rather than disorders. This concept includes conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), ADHD, and dyslexia. Despite growing awareness, ASD is often perceived as a problem rather than a unique way of thinking. Individuals with ASD face numerous social, educational, and professional challenges. However, with the right support, awareness, and inclusive strategies, they can lead successful and meaningful lives.

#### World Autism Awareness Day and Its Theme

In 2007, the United Nations declared April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day to promote awareness about autism, encourage early diagnosis, and protect the rights of autistic individuals. The goal of this annual observance is to eliminate stereotypes, foster understanding, and create an inclusive society that acknowledges the abilities of those on the spectrum. The theme for World Autism Awareness Day in 2025, "Embracing Neurodiversity," underscores the significance of accepting and appreciating diverse ways of thinking. It challenges the misconception that neurodiversity is a weakness and instead highlights its role in human evolution. By embracing autistic individuals, society can recognize their unique capabilities and ensure equal opportunities for them to thrive. Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that influences communication, social interaction, and daily life. It is not a disease but rather a different way of experiencing the world. Since ASD exists on a spectrum, the challenges and abilities of individuals vary significantly. Some may experience mild difficulties, while others require significant support to navigate everyday life.Individuals with ASD often find it challenging to interpret social cues, maintain eye contact, and engage in conversations.

Many display repetitive behaviors, have intense interests in specific topics, and exhibit heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli such as bright lights or loud sounds. Despite these difficulties, many autistic individuals excel in fields such as mathematics, music, science, and art due to their exceptional attention to detail and deep focus.

#### Challenges Faced by Individuals with ASD

Autistic individuals often encounter numerous societal barriers that limit their ability to thrive. One of the most significant hurdles is the lack of social acceptance, as many still view ASD as an abnormality rather than a natural variation of the brain. This misunderstanding can lead to discrimination, social isolation, and inadequate support systems. Education also presents challenges, as traditional learning environments are often not equipped to meet the needs of autistic students. Many schools lack specialized programs and trained educators who can adapt teaching methods to accommodate neurodiverse learners. As a result, autistic children may struggle with academic progress and personal development.

Employment remains another major obstacle, as many autistic individuals face difficulties in communication and social interaction, making it harder to secure and retain jobs. Although they often possess exceptional skills and intelligence, workplaces are not always designed to accommodate their unique strengths and working styles. Sensory sensitivity is another struggle, as heightened reactions to stimuli such as bright lights, loud noises, and crowded spaces can lead to stress, anxiety, and even depression. Everyday situations can become overwhelming, making it essential for society to implement sensoryfriendly environments and inclusive policies that support autistic individuals.

#### Promoting Neurodiversity and Inclusion

To foster a more inclusive world, it is crucial to raise awareness about ASD and educate people about neurodiversity. Schools, workplaces, and public platforms should actively work to dispel misconceptions and create environments that welcome autistic individuals. Providing accurate information about ASD and emphasizing acceptance can help shift societal perceptions. An inclusive education system is essential, with adaptive teaching methods and support programs tailored to autistic students. Training teachers and school staff to be more sensitive to neurodiversity can significantly improve the learning experiences of autistic children. Similarly, workplaces must implement policies that accommodate neurodivergent employees. Many autistic individuals excel in areas such as analytical thinking, problem-solving, and pattern recognition, making them valuable assets to various industries. By fostering supportive work environments, companies can benefit from the unique skills that neurodivergent employees bring. Promoting these initiatives not only empowers autistic individuals but also contributes to a more innovative and inclusive society. When neurodiversity is embraced, everyone benefits from fresh perspectives and new approaches to problemsolving.

#### The Importance of Early Diagnosis and Intervention

Early diagnosis and timely intervention can significantly improve the quality of life for individuals with ASD. Identifying autism during childhood allows for targeted therapies and support systems that help autistic individuals develop essential skills for communication, social interaction, and daily living. Speech and language therapy plays a crucial role in helping autistic individuals develop both verbal and non-verbal communication abilities, enabling them to express themselves more effectively. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is another widely used method that reinforces positive behaviors while reducing challenging ones, promoting greater independence.

Occupational therapy helps autistic individuals improve motor skills, sensory processing, and daily functioning, making it easier to navigate their environment. Special education programs tailored to the strengths and needs of autistic students ensure they receive the support necessary for academic and personal growth. With early intervention, autistic individuals can build confidence, develop independence, and enhance their overall well-being, allowing them to lead fulfilling lives.

Dispelling Common Myths About Autism Several myths about autism persist, leading to misunderstanding and stigma. One of the most harmful misconceptions is the false belief that vaccines cause autism. This claim has been thoroughly debunked by scientific research, which confirms that autism is influenced by genetic and environmental factors rather than vaccinations. Another widespread misconception is that autistic individuals lack intelligence. In reality, autism affects people differently, and many autistic individuals have exceptional cognitive abilities. Some of history's most brilliant minds, such as Albert Einstein and Nikola Tesla, exhibited traits associated with ASD, demonstrating that autism does not limit intelligence or creativity. Rather than viewing autism as a limitation, it is essential to recognize and nurture the unique strengths of autistic individuals. Encouraging social connections, creating autism-friendly environments in schools and workplaces, and offering adequate support can help autistic individuals achieve independence and suc-

Autism Spectrum Disorder should not be regarded as a disability but rather as a unique form of neurodiversity that enriches society Instead of seeing ASD as a challenge, it is crucial to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths and potential of autistic individuals. By fostering awareness, building inclusive educational systems, creating supportive workplaces, and promoting social acceptance, society can ensure that autistic individuals have the opportunity to thrive. Embracing neurodiversity benefits everyone, fostering innovation, creativity, and diverse perspectives. A truly inclusive world is one where every individual, regardless of neurological differences, is valued and given the opportunity to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life.

## Gender Empowerment for Rural Revitalization

#### DR. BANARSI LAL

romen make significant contributions to the rural economic across the globe. Achieving gender equality is a key step towards achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals and can enhance rural revitalization. Women's empowerment can improve agricultural productivity, dietary quality and maternal and children nutrition. In many settings women face more constraints than men in accessing key productive resources such as land and to services such as credit, extension and social protection, they face wage discrimination in rural labour markets. Women constitute around half of the world's population but in fact they are the largest excluded category in many aspects of life. They have only 1/10th of the global income. About 70 per cent of women are still living below the poverty line. They constitute almost invariably a small minority of those holding elected office. The data reveals that they were around 10 per cent of the world's parliamentarians in 1980 which rose to 14.8 per cent in 1988, came down to 12.7 per cent in 1997 and 19.5 per cent in 2011.

The women around the world are striving for gender equality. Women specially in the rural areas are subjected to gender oppression and gender

discrimination. The year 2001 was observed as the "Year of Women Empowerment" in India. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, ill-health etc. are the major problems in our country from the dawn of independence. These factors are impending the socio-economic development of our country. Women are mostly affected by these socio-economic factors. It has been observed that ill-health, unemployment and illiteracy rates are higher among the women as compared to men in our country. It has also been observed that women- headed households suffer more from the poverty as compared to men-headed household. Between 2001 and 2009 the poverty rates for women were double than that of men. They still face injustice from birth to death and discrimination among them is still very common. Every year: three million women die due to gender based violence.

Poverty is the greatest hurdle in the path of development. According to World Bank ,129 mn of the Indian people fall below the poverty line in 2024. The incidence of poverty customarily is more in rural areas as compared to the urban areas and also the poverty in SC and ST households is more as compared to general castes. The Human Development Report has noted that gender equality is essential for empowering women and eradicating the poverty from the society. From time to time the Indian government has been emphasizing on empowerment of women. The only motive behind these endeavours is to bring them into the main stream of development. Different policies, programmes and plans are laid to raise the economic status of women. Article 15 of the constitution prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex while the directive principles of state policy urges that states shall direct its policy for securing an adequate means of livelihood for women and securing equal pay for men and women. In many five years plans, emphasis was given on women empowerment.

It has been envisaged to organise women into self help groups and thus empower them to equip with skills in different trades to make them econom ically independent and to increase access to credit by setting up development bank for women. It has also been envisaged that the women programmes and policies need to be redesigned. It has also been designed to provide marketing channels for them. The various programmes like Indira Mahila Yojana, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh etc. have been launched by the

Indian government from time to time. Prevalence of patriarchy norms,

stereotyped gender biased and preference for son's right to inherit parent's property have deprived girl children from their right to property. In general, the son enjoys the inheritance father's property. Women cannot claim equality with men unless she has the same right as men hold and inherit. Ironically, the land reforms measures undertaken by different state governments are also silent about the women's right to property. In present era, growing modernization has escalated social aspirations and family tension, resulting in growing single women and women-headed households in the form of divorce, deserted and

The reports indicate that about 16.23 million of women headed households are existing in India of which 72 per cent are residing in rural areas. Therefore empowering the rural headed households would enable them to fight against the income and poverty. The sweets of women welfare benefits are mostly enjoyed by the highly literate women and those who belong to upper strata of urban society. Women specially the rural women are deployed for the unpaid activities. Only about 15 per cent women are working in the organised sectors. Women employment

opportunities are characterised with seasonality, unskilled assignments, discrimination in wage etc. in unorganised sectors. In the arid and semiarid areas, the women specially belonging to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and impoverished households work hard in order to mitigate hunger and poverty. The data reveals that 43 per cent of

working women constitute almost half of total earnings of their families and 18 per cent families entirely dependent on their earnings. Women accessibility to savings and

credit facilities improves their gender economic status. Women accessibility to saving and credits from banking and non-banking sectors is low particularly for the rural women. The empowerment of women largely confines to the few literate and employed urban women and the rural women remain beyond the reach of empowerment.

Even it has been observed that the bank officials hesitate to sanction loan to the rural women thinking them to be too poor because the ownership of assets usually rested with men. Women are meagerly represented in the business because they lack of savings, credits and investment facilities. The Self Help Groups(SHGs) formulation is really a stepping stone for the economic empowerment of rural women. These

types of schemes really enable the rural women for the small saving and help them to carry out small investments in income generation activities at the rural level. The women Sarpanches, Panches and village level workers of ICDS can further help for strengthening these types of schemes. Credibility among the women, difficulty in regular deposition of money, uncertainty about the benefits of activities etc. are the major hurdles in the formation of self help groups. The income from the small income generating activities would definitely help to substantiate the rural household activities and food security.

The women have a decisive role in the eradication of household poverty. Empowering women with the property rights and banking facilities for the loans would contribute for the household income. The income in the hands of women can contribute more in the household economic status than the income in the hands of men. The economic empowerment of women would certainly help for the social upliftment and eradication of poverty specially from the rural areas. There is need to close gender gap in access to assets. resources, services and opportunities to combat rural poverty and promote agricultural and rural development.

(The writer is Chief Scientist and Head of KVK Reasi SKUAST-J)

# Solution to water crisis: A confluence of traditional knowledge and modern technology

### ■ DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

he water crisis is one of the most serious issues in today's world. Increasing population, uncontrolled industrialization, and climate change have severely impacted the availability of water. To deal with this crisis, we need a combination of traditional water conservation techniques and modern science and technology. Water conservation means managing water resources wisely so that there is no shortage of water in the future. India has only 4% of the world's fresh water, but 18% of its population is facing a water crisis. To solve this problem, participation of government and communities is necessary. Schemes like Jal Shakti Abhiyan and Neeru-Chettu in Andhra Pradesh have helped in increasing the availability of water.

Local communities can make better use of water by adopting their traditional knowledge and new technological measures. Hiware Bazaar model of Maharashtra: Groundwater level was increased in this village using traditional and modern techniques. Water availability increased here by rainwater harvesting and cleaning of wells. Johad system of Rajasthan: Construction of small ponds (johads) improved the groundwater level and reduced the problem of drought. Chal-Khal system of Uttarakhand: These small reservoirs store rainwater and help in groundwater recharge. Adoption of traditional methods and new technologies is necessary for efficient use of water. Zabo agricultural system of Nagaland: This method collects rainwater and uses it for farming, which reduces the impact of



drought. Tanks of Rajasthan are small water reservoirs built for rainwater harvesting, in which modern filtration technology is also being added now. Aeri (pond) system in Tamil Nadu: This system stores rainwater and helps in irrigation and drinking water supply.

For water conservation, it is important to maintain a balance between forests, rivers, ponds, and soil. Oran (sacred forest) areas in Rajasthan protect water sources and biodiversity, preventing desertification. Under the waterfall restoration project of Meghalaya, forests and catchment areas are being revived, thereby conserving water sources. The Narmada Seva Yatra initiative in Madhya Pradesh aims to promote water conservation and environmental improvement by planting trees along the Narmada River. Pani Panchavats of Maharashtra and Gram Sabhas of Jharkhand are ensuring equitable use of water resources.

Climate change and erratic rainfall can increase water scarcity. In such a situation, traditional water conservation systems can prove to be helpful. Drought relief work in Bundelkhand: Reconstruction of ponds and rainwater harvesting is reducing water prob-

lems in the region. In Ladakh, artificial glaciers are created in winter so that water is available from them in summer. However, this method is facing challenges due to rising temperatures. In Gujarat, drip irrigation and multi-cropping are adopted for water conservation in the Wadi system. Climate change, industrial pollution, uneven water distribution, and ignoring traditional systems in government schemes are the major obstacles.

Communities should be empowered to manage water resources so that they can use water sustainably. Pani Panchayats in Maharashtra: These panchayats ensure equitable distribution of water to farmers. In Jharkhand, under the Gram Sabha Act, village assemblies are managing small reservoirs. Pani Panchayat in Odisha: This scheme promotes water management with community participation. Cities are given more water, leading to shortages in rural areas. For example, water for Chennai is taken from nearby villages, causing problems for farmers. Himalayan glaciers are melting rapidly, reducing the flow of rivers like the Ganga and increasing the water cri-

Traditional water conservation systems are not given much importance in government schemes. Many industries release wastewater into rivers and ponds, contaminating

water sources. Traditional water conservation systems should be given legal status. Partnerships between scientific institutions, government agencies, and local communities should be strengthened. HT Madras is providing technical assistance for rainwater harvesting in rural areas. Participation of local people should be increased in water management plans. Conservation plans should be made by linking water, forest, and land together. Strategies to reduce the effects of climate change should be made by combining modern technologies and traditional knowledge. Urban water recycling: Systems should be developed to reuse wastewater in cities.

Water conservation is not possible only through government efforts, but the participation of communities is also very important in this. Water resources can be efficiently managed by combining traditional knowledge and modern technology. Water conservation can be made more effective by linking AI-based monitoring systems with schemes like Jal Shakti Abhiyan and MNREGA. This will help in dealing with the water crisis and ensure water security for the future. Water conservation can be made effective by adopting legal recognition, scientific cooperation, local participation, water recycling, and climate adaptation measures.

To tackle the water crisis, we need to strike a balance between the learnings of the past and the technologies of the future. Traditional water conservation systems give us knowledge of sustainability and local adaptation, while modern technologies can help in efficient management of water resources. If we work by combining both, a sustainable solution to the water crisis can

be achieved. "Drop by drop the pot fills"-even" a small effort towards water conservation can bring a big change in the future.