

TOURIST APPRECIATION

National Tourist Appreciation Day is a fantastic opportunity to recognize the positive impact that tourism brings to local economies and communities worldwide. While it's true that hosting tourists can sometimes bring challenges, the benefits far outweigh the inconveniences.

Tourism injects vital funds into local businesses, ranging from hotels and restaurants to shops and attractions. These additional dollars not only support these businesses directly but also have a ripple effect, benefiting other sectors like museums, sports activities, and entertainment venues.

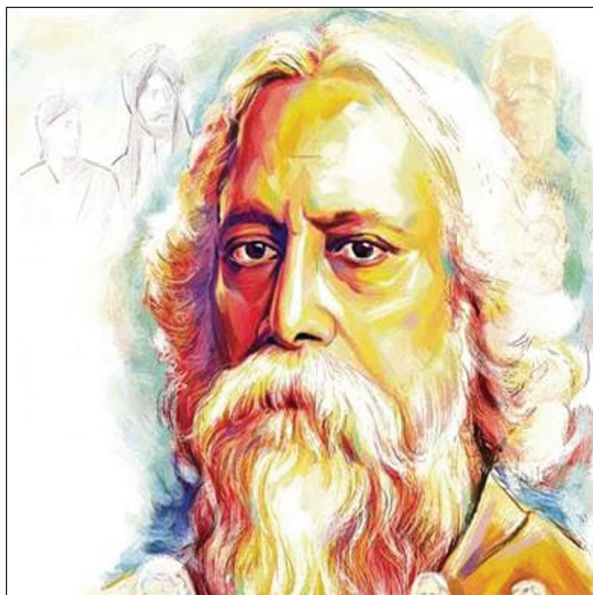
For many businesses, particularly those in tourist-dependent areas, the revenue generated during peak tourist seasons is essential for maintaining profitability throughout the year. This underscores the significance of tourists as valuable contributors to the local economy.

National Tourist Appreciation Day serves as a reminder of the importance of embracing and celebrating tourists for their contributions.

Businesses and local governments can use this day as an opportunity to show appreciation to tourists through special events, discounts, or marketing campaigns.

By recognizing and celebrating National Tourist Appreciation Day, we can foster a greater understanding of the significant role tourism plays in supporting local economies and preserving cultural and natural heritage.

Remembering "Gurudev" Rabindranath Tagore



SUNIL VAID

Rabindranath Tagore, born May 7, 1861, Calcutta (now Kolkata), was a patriot, Bengali poet, short story writer, song composer, play Wright, essayist and a painter who introduced prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali Literature. He was highly influential in introducing Indian culture to the World and is generally regarded as the outstanding artist of 20th century India. In 1913 he became the first non-European to receive the Nobel prize for Literature. He was given the title of Gurudev by Mahatma Gandhi.

The versatile genius, who was much ahead of his time, wrote in his mother tongue Bangla. But he did not limit his message to the people who lived around him. His creative works introduced a powerful dose of love and internationalism.

As a story-teller, he is second to none. His lucid, lyrical prose and grasp of the human psychology are unique. He is the foremost lyricist of his language and the most celebrated composer. He wrote more than 2,000 songs, and these are widely considered to be the best creation. His songs are an integral part of the Bengali culture and collective psyche. His novels are also some of the best in Bangla. He wrote lovely plays and was a painter of note. Tagore was a committed anti colonialist. He had deep understanding of the World at large. He visited more than 30 countries and had personal ties with scientists and literary giants of his time. He was not a revolutionary in a political sense, but he influenced his people by renouncing his Knighthood after the Colonial Army killed Indians in Jallianwala Bagh in 1919.

Reflecting on the plight of his country under foreign rule, Tagore understood, just as Gandhi ji did that violence cannot serve the purpose of humanity. He was deeply aware that India needed more than change of political regime. Therefore, he opted for a self-reliant economy. In the region that is now Bangladesh, he initiated projects of local self-government, developing co-operative systems. Tagore made the Bengali middle class feel that he was essential part of their national ethos. The emerging middle class, including students and intellectuals, regarded him as one of them. In no way could they think that Tagore was alien to them because of his religion. His songs and poetry inspired the people of India and Bangladesh (erstwhile East Bengal) culturally and politically. Never before had a poet left such an imprint and wielded so deep influence on the psyche of the vast majority of people. While India chose JANA GANA MANA as the national anthem in 1947, Bangladesh has had one of his songs as their national anthem since its birth. Sri Lanka's national anthem was also penned down by Tagore.

In 1901 Tagore founded an experimental School in Rural West Bengal at Shantiniketan (Abode of peace), where he sought to blend the best in the Indian & Western traditions. He settled permanently at the school, which became VISVA-BHARTI university in 1921. Years of sadness arising from deaths of his wife & two children between 1902 & 1907 are reflected in his later poetry which was introduced to the West in Gitanjali (Song offerings) in 1912. This book containing Tagore's English prose translation of religious poems from several of his Bengali verse collections, including, Gitanjali, was hailed by WB Yeats & ANDRE GIDE & won him the Nobel prize in 1913.

Tagore's literary reputation is disproportionately influenced very much by regard for his poetry. However, he also wrote novels, essays, travelogues, dramas and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps the most regarded, indeed, he is credited with originating the Bengali language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic and lyrical nature. Prominent among his works are: Gitanjali, ChokherBal, The post master, kabuliwalla, Gora, Sadhna, ShesherKabita, Gharebaire amongst others.

No doubt, Tagore has changed the dimensions of Bengali literature as it was viewed earlier. Many countries have even erected his statues to pay tribute to the legendary writer. Around five museums are dedicated to Tagore out of which three are in India and remaining two in Bangladesh. Remembering Tagore and his contributions and going back to Tagore's writing, should help us root ourselves in nature and not in culture alone and understanding that, in a way, culture comes from our natural contents and roots. In the diversity of our culture be it food, dress or language as embodiments of knowledge.

He spent his last years in severe pain and in 1937 he went into comatose condition. After a lot of suffering, he died on August 1941 in the Jorasanka mansion where he was brought up. Tagore belongs to India, Bangladesh & in the truest sense to the World. His love for humanity was depicted in his works as he believed in universal humanity. He stressed on the concept of compassion and living in the benefit of others. Even after 160 years of his birth, we feel his presence.

DR BANARSI LAL

The interdependence between human livelihood and nature means that any change in quality, quantity and movement of water has social, economic and environmental consequences. Water accounts for more than 70 per cent of Earth's surface. Its inadequacy can be either man-made or natural occurrence but its effects are devastating on health, dignity and prosperity of billions of people across the globe. It is indispensable for the existence of animal and plant ecosystems and is an essential element in the development of economic activities of any nation. Ambient water quality is essential for humans and health of ecosystem and has become a global challenge in both developing and developed nations. It is the most vital resource for the existence of life on earth. No other natural resource is having such an overwhelming influence. Earth three-fourths surface is covered by the oceans. With increasing population, requirement of clean water and withdrawal of freshwater for life-sustaining purposes has intensified and thus its access and conservation has become a burning issue. Safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene are important in order to prevent and protect the population from outbreak of infectious diseases. WHO report on drinking water suggests that contaminated water and poor hygiene can serve as the breeding grounds for water-borne diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, dysentery etc. Freshwater constitutes a very small proportion of this enormous quantity. About 2.7 per cent of the total water available on the earth is fresh water of which 75.2 per cent lies frozen in Polar Regions and another 22.6 per cent is present as ground water. Rest of water is available in rivers, lakes, atmosphere water and soil and vegetation. India is having 2.5 per cent of the world's geographical area, 4 per cent of the world's water resources and 17.5 per cent of the world's population. It has been observed that less than one per cent of the world's fresh water on earth is readily available for human consumption.

As the human population grows, the demand on freshwater resources will also grow. Presently the world is facing a freshwater crisis. If per-capita consumption of water resource continues to rise at its current rate, humankind could be using over 90 per cent of all available freshwater within 25 years leaving just 10 per cent for the rest of the world's species. Each year, there are around 250 million cases of water borne diseases with around 5-10 million deaths. It is not only people who are threatened by water shortages and pollution, freshwater ecosystems which harbour the world's greatest concentration of species are

Water for Sustainable Development

among the most vulnerable on earth. Around half of the world's wetlands have been destroyed in the last 100 years. Two-fifths of the fish are freshwater species and of these around 20 per cent are threatened, endangered or have become extinct in recent decades. Presently the freshwater demand is increasing not only because of demographic pressures but also because of improved living standards, urban and industrial growth. The world's thirst for water is likely to become one of the most important issues of the 21st century. Global water consumption raised six fold between 1990 and 1995-more than double the rate of population growth and continues to grow rapidly as agricultural, industrial and domestic demand increase. In some areas, water withdrawals are so high relative to supply that surface water supplies are literally shrinking and ground water reserves are being depleted faster than they can be replenished by precipitation. Due to overexploitation of ground water, water tables are dropping and some rivers often become dry before they reach the sea. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nation "Nothing can be more important than the provision of irrigation facilities in all the villages of the country, because this constitutes the basis for agricultural growth. In the absence of irrigation facilities, agriculture is nothing more than a gamble". Irrigation facility is one of the most significant factors contributing to agricultural development. Despite various schemes and programmes of the government to extend facilities for irrigation only around 40 per cent of the net cultivable land has been irrigated so far while remaining 60 per cent area is rain fed.

Freshwater is available as rainfall, surface water, ground water and atmospheric moisture. All these sources vary over place and time both seasonally and from year to year. Over exploitation of water resources, degradation of water recharge structures, paucity of funds, depleting water resources due to failure of monsoon and competing demand on the available water resources are the factors that cause concern on the supply front. On the demand side, factors such as growing urbanization, increase in population, change in life styles etc. also increase the complexity of the problem. Presently many Indian cities do not have sources of water and in future, it would have to be transported over large distances as the water is found more away from the cities.

The country's present and future situation can be gauged by the trend in water availability. It has been observed that irrigation alone accounted around 83 per cent of the total water use in 1997-98 on

the demand side and it is likely to slow down to 69.5 per cent by the year 2050 due to the impact of technological advancement in irrigation. Demand of water for domestic, industrial and thermal power generation is expected to increase sharply. The limited ground water sources have not been able to keep pace with recharge and discharge to renew the balance. The amount of water available per person in India has decreased steadily over a period of time. It is predicted that the world in the year 2050 will be largely different from what it is today. Water sector will undergo dramatic changes in the years to come. We have no option but to depend on the available sources of water and have the responsibility to save and conserve them without fail.

Widespread aquifer depletion in the ground water areas, water logging in the canal regions and soil salinisation due to sea water ingress in the coastal zones are undeniable symptoms of an imminent water crisis in India. The water crisis has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. We have glaring instances of water sharing conflicts not only between the states but also among the farmers or other water users. We have not heard of river water disputes till the middle of 20th century. Disputes over river water are of recent origin. It is predicted that rivers and their water distribution will become one of the most politicised ecological issues in the near future. Water is scarce even for drinking purpose. India already is facing an alarming situation. Its fragile water resources are stressed and depleting while various sectorial demands are growing rapidly even as about 200 million people in the country do not have access to safe drinking water and nearly 1.5 million children under five die each year due to water-borne diseases.

The droughts conditions in several parts of the country are on the rise and disputes over sharing of the water resources are becoming grimmer. If the available freshwater resources in India are not managed properly India will face a severe water crisis. At present, six of India's 20 major river basins already fall into water scarce category. It is expected that by the year 2025, five more basins will be water scarce. According to estimates, by the year 2025, India will face a severe water shortage leading to serious struggles and it is also expected that within a few decades availability of water in the country will be about 1700 to 2000 cubic metres as per person as against the world average of 5000 to 9000 cubic metres per person. India is heading towards a freshwater crisis due to improper management of water resources and environmental degradation which has led to lack of

access to safe water supply to millions of people. The freshwater crisis is already evident in many parts of the country varying in scale and intensity depending mainly on the time of the year. Ground water crisis has been caused by human actions. The most tragic part is that water is a finite natural resource and so far no technology has contributed successfully to produce water for mass scale. Environmentalists like Sunderlal Bahuguna are not wrong in saying that the acute scarcity of water may force the powerful nations to wage a new global war for the control of the depleted sources of water. New strategies for water management and development are urgently needed to avert severe national, regional and local water scarcities. Major institutional policy and technological initiatives are required to ensure efficient, socially equitable and environmentally suitable management of water resources. Farmers co-operation is must in the process of water management. Recently government of India launched a scheme called as the Pardhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayi Yojana (PMKSY) under which irrigation will be ensured to each farmer of the country and special emphasis will be given on the micro-irrigation to increase the water use efficiency at his farm.

Also more crops per drop will be the major objective of this programme. An efficient irrigation system can sustain India's expanding population. Researchers and extension personnel should pay attention in increasing the agricultural production per unit area per unit of water. Water management programmes should be implemented in a systematic way. Immediate steps should be taken for drastic reduction of wastage of water in all sectors and protection of water sources from industrial pollution. A strong political will of the government to frame an appropriate water policy and equally important indomitable conscience of water users to utilize water judiciously are necessary for sustainable utilization of water.

There is need to improve the water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally by 2030. Water security has to be one of the most important targets to be achieved by 2030. Conservation and sustainable availability of clean water is paramount for the survival of mankind on the blue planet.

(The writer is Sr. Scientist & Head, KVK, Reasi Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Jammu).

Reassessing Early Education: Startling Insights From a New Preschool Study

VIJAY GARG

Children Preschool Class: New research indicates that the effectiveness of preschool programs in promoting long-term academic success is unclear, with studies showing a mix of positive, negative, and neutral outcomes.

Early education programs are widely believed to be effective public investments for helping children succeed in school and for reducing income- and race-based achievement gaps. However, a new groundbreaking study conducted by a team of investigators from Teachers College, Columbia University, University of Virginia, University of California-Irvine, and the University of Delaware finds mixed evidence on the long-term effectiveness of today's preschool programs for helping children succeed in school.

The study, "Unsettled Science on longer-run effects of early education," published today in the journal Science, examined published evaluations of well-established, publicly funded preschool programs using rigorous designs. The four evaluations reported a mix of positive, negative, and no differences in the school performance of children who did and did not attend preschool programs in elementary school and beyond.

This study challenges prevalent assumptions within the field, emphasizing the importance of identifying the key factors that foster the development of skills crucial for success in both academic endeavors and life, particularly among children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Mixed Outcomes From Preschool Programs

"Preschool programs have long been hailed as effective interventions, yet our study reveals a more nuanced reality," says senior author of the study Margaret Burchinal, Research

Professor in the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, University of Virginia.

"While many presume their positive impact, rigorous evaluations show a mix of outcomes, including both successes and setbacks and, in some cases, no discernible long-term effects. It's imperative that we design preschool programs to uniformly promote school success, especially for children from families with low income."

Burchinal further emphasizes, "Crucially, for parents, especially those with limited financial means, access to reliable childcare is essential for workforce participation. Equally vital are public preschool programs that not only offer dependable care but also lay a solid foundation for their children's academic success."

Conflicting Evidence and Need for Further Research

Public opinion towards preschool is shaped primarily by two widely recognized randomized trials that found significant long-term benefits from attending preschool, as well as other less rigorous studies that suggest positive short-term effects and, in a few cases, positive long-term outcomes. However, recent high-quality randomized evaluations of public preschool programs have produced conflicting evidence. While these evaluations demonstrate positive impacts on academic skills at school entry, it remains unclear whether these programs improve long-term academic success and beyond.

Two evaluations of scaled-up pre-kindergarten programs showed mixed results. The Boston program improved high school graduation rates, while the Tennessee program led to worse outcomes in elementary school. Two other evaluations found no differences in outcomes between attendees and non-

attendees. This highlights the need for more research on effective preschool practices.

Long-Term Impact Uncertain

These four studies paint a somewhat less rosy picture of preschool's ability to enhance opportunities for children than prior studies. The authors argue that the optimistic findings from the earlier widely cited random-assignment studies from over 50 years ago may not carry over to today's programs. Both programs served small numbers of children, and children who lost the entrance lotteries did not have access to many of the safety-net services and childcare options available to parents today. Although most recent evaluations show public preschool programs improve literacy and math skills at school entry, that advantage fades quickly after children enter elementary school. The less rigorous studies of scaled-up programs typically rely on limited information about attendees and nonattendees, thereby making it possible that nonattendees differed from attendees on important other factors - such as parenting beliefs and practices - that could account for findings favoring the attendees.

Recommendations for Future Research

"Our review suggests that researchers should be more cautious when making policy recommendations regarding the effects of public pre-k programs," said. "At present, the best research studies make it hard to predict the long-term effects of these investments. Certainly, we agree that early childhood education is an important area for public investment. Still, we cannot confidently claim that all public pre-k programs produce positive long-term results."

Gurudev Rabindarnath Tagore-An Immortal universal literati

G.L. KHAJURIA

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore - An immortal universal literati was born on 07th May, 1861 in Kolkatta. While he originally wrote in Bengali, later reached out to the wider audience in the west with his translation of poetry that conveyed peace of Soul and harmony with nature. However the Swedish academy on its website says that Tagore writing is deeply rooted in both Indian and western learning traditions.

The British Government in 1915 honoured Gurudev with knighthood as a true patriot of India which he returned it very shortly in protest against British Policies in the country.

The revered Gurudev was profoundly a man of letters with his prolific signature in Geetangli, the Gardener, Hungry stones, the crescent Moon and many more English translations replete with lyrical and spiritual essence.

His writings are simple and directionless a expression combined with rhythmic flow of words harmoniously fused with deep human passion and significance. The thoughts in Geetangli are profoundly Indian conveying spiritual universal message. Gurudev's touching speech on his being

awarded Noble prize reads as under. "I am glad that I have been able to come at last to your country and that I may use the opportunity for expressing my gratitude to you for honour you have done to me by acknowledging work and awarding me Noble Prize.

I remember the afternoon when I received the cablegram from my publisher in England that the prize had been awarded to me. I was staying then at the school shantinikam, about which I suppose to know you. At the moment, we were taking a partyover a forest nearby school and when I was passing by telegram office and post office, a man came running to us and held up telegraphic message.

I had also an English visitor with me in the same carriage I did not think that the message of any importance and I just put it into my pocket, thinking that I will read it when I reach my destination but my visitor supposed he knew the content and he urged me to read it, saying that it contained an important message. And I opened and read the message which I could hardly believe.

I first thought that possibly the telegraphic Language was not quite correct and that I might misread the meaning of it, But but at

last felt certain about it but you can well understand how rejoicing it was for my boys in school and for teachers.

What touched me more deeply than more than anything else was that these boys who loved me and for whom I have had deepest love felt proud of the honour that had been awarded to him and whom they had the feeling of reverence for which I realized that my countrymen share with me the honour that had been awarded to myself.

The rest of the afternoon passed in this manner and when the night came I sat upon terrace alone and I asked myself the question what are reasons could be of my poem being accepted and honoured by the west inspite of my belonging to a different race parted and repeated by seas and mountains from the children of the west.

And I can assure you that it was not with a feeling of exaltation but with a searching of feeling of exaltation but with a searching of heart that I question myself and I felt humbled at that moment.

I remember how my lives interest developed from the time when I was very young. when I was about 25 years I used to live in utmost seclusion in the solitude of an obscure Bengal village by the river Ganga in boat-

house. The wild duck which came during the Time of autumn from Himalayan lakes were only my companion, and in that solitude I seem to have drunk in the open space like wine overflowing with sunshine and the murmur of river used to speak to me and tell me the secrets nature & And I passed the days in solitude dreaming and giving shape to my dream in poems and studies and sending out my thoughts to the Calcutta public school through magazines and other papers, you can well understand that it was a life quite different from the life of west, I don't know if any of your western poets of western poets or writers do pass the greatest art of their young days in such absolute seclusion.

I am almost certain that it cannot be possible and that seclusion itself has no place in the western world. And my life went on like this I was an obscure individual - to most of my countrymen in those days. I mean that my name was hardly known outside my own province, but I was quite content with that obscurity, which protected me from curiosity of crowds.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator of Forest).