


CURB ILLEGAL MINING

It has been observed that despite clear cut instructions issued by the Court regarding ban on illegal mining and all possible measures in place by the administration and the law enforcing agencies, some elements are still indulged in the illegal practice of looting natural resources by carrying out mining activities to extract minor minerals in major rivers, nallahs and other waterbodies of the Union Territory. Every other day, there is a report regarding seizure of a number of vehicles and other machinery found indulged in illegal practices, but it is really surprising that despite such strenuous approach of the administration, the illegal practice is still going on unabated without any halt. As per reports, Mining mafia is ruling the roost in two major districts viz Samba and Kathua by perpetuating loot of natural resources, without any fear of law or concerned authorities, which are acting as a mute spectator to the same. It has been reported that unabated illegal mining is going on in major rivers and waterbodies of both the districts. Moreover, locals have alleged that along with elements from UT, the mafia from neighbouring State Punjab is also quite active in the area and carry out illegal mining in Ravi, Ujh and Basantar thereby causing a major threat to the environment besides depleting the underground water level. As the Government of Punjab is very strict on illegal mining, which has been restricted in majority of the rivers leaving a few, the mining mafia from Punjab is now moving towards J&K and there is no proper check on their illegal activities. It shows that some officials of the concerned department are definitely hand in glove with the Mafia, active behind such anti-nature activity, which is really is matter of grave concern and needs to be probed thoroughly so that such enemies of the nature and society, who just for few pennies are support such illegal activities, should be booked under the law of the land, thereby eliminating the major support of mafia behind illegal mining, as only action against some drivers and their associates along with seizure of few vehicles will not serve the purpose. There is still time, as if the necessary preventative measures will not be taken in time by the administration for saving the natural resources, the consequences will be detrimental in the coming time.

ENSURE RELEASE OF INDIAN PRISONERS

It is anybody's guess that hundreds of Indian prisoners are languishing in Pakistani jails with many having completed the period of their sentences. There is dire need that the Indian government should take necessary action in the matter and provide justice to those who have been held without any valid reason by the Pakistan government. Reportedly, Pakistan has released the list of nearly 700 Indian prisoners detained in various jails across its territory. The details have been shared under the 2008 Agreement on Consular Access which has provision to share the aforesaid information twice the year on dates including January 1 and July 1. India has also provided similar information to Pakistan giving details of their civilian prisoners and fishermen in its custody. It is necessary that the precedence should be used for providing justice to the prisoners because merely sharing the information will not serve the purpose as the spirit behind the aforesaid agreement is to ensure release of people who have been caught by the neighbouring countries as they crossed over to other side in high seas by losing way and those who are languishing in jails after completing their sentences. According to Pakistan, out of 682 Indian prisoners 49 are civilians and 633 fishermen. The issue is of great concern because not even a single prisoner should be kept in jail after completing his or her sentence and those who have been caught in sea are usually the innocent fishermen and need a sympathetic treatment from both the countries. The government of India should take necessary steps to ensure release of innocent people living a horrific life in the Pakistani jails and also consider the cases of similar prisoners lodged in Indian jails. It is good that India has asked Pakistan to release and repatriate 536 Indian fishermen and three civilian prisoners who have completed their jail terms and whose nationality has been confirmed. The country should mount pressure on Pakistan to ensure early release of such prisoners as this is a humanitarian cause and therefore should be accomplished on priority. It is known to the entire world that India remains committed to addressing humanitarian matters on priority therefore it is Pakistan's prerogative to take a call on the issue and take the decision as soon as possible.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Guru Makes a Student An Ideal and True Person

The parents and the Guru expect that their children have a good character and be successful in life. To achieve this objective they place a number of restrictions on their children. The children, however, believe that such restrictions are imposed to limit their work freedom and to make their life hard and painful. When the parents and teachers ask them to study or to do certain work and punish them for doing bad acts the children, due to ignorance, consider such acts as unpleasant. It is expected of the students to express gratitude and give due respect to their teachers.

During the scholastic period of the students the teachers and the parents want to educate their children properly and freeing them from faults and send them in the service of the nation and the community. They want their children to bring glory and fame to them.

Innumerable Potentials and Possibilities

The human body holds within it innumerable potentials and vast possibilities. These need to be brought out by imparting the students adequate knowledge and giving them true encouragement. The Guru does this

work diligently and with full responsibility and in a systematic manner. It is something like a runner being encouraged by his guide that he could still run faster. Due to such an encouragement and guidance, the runner runs faster than before. The teacher tells him that because of the hidden energy and potentials the runner could still run faster. The teacher encourages him that if he can run that far and faster a prize would be given. The runner then gets enthused further due to the promise and lure of the prize and he puts in all his efforts and energy which makes him successful and a become winner.

But the Guru does not stop at this point. He encourages the runner further. In doing so it is not the runner only but also the Guru who feels proud of the achievement. Both feel proud of each other which is something like a self-rewarding victory. In this way, the teacher brings out the hidden potentials and energy of the student in the open and makes him an ideal and true hard-working responsible person. This is the significant role of the Guru in refining the character and potential of the student.

Shri Sudhanshuji Maharaj

Appetite & longing for ‘Home’

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

East or west home is the best is not only a theoretical postulation but is very much practical and real as well as universal. Everybody loves his or her home and likes to remain in home. Parting with the home is very unpleasant and painful phenomenon and Kashmiri Pandits are experiencing the loss of home from over three decades and do not see the possibility of returning to their homes and hearths in Kashmir. Many uprooted Kashmiri Pandits have constructed houses out of compulsion in Jammu and other parts of India. The construction of the houses was and is the need of the time as these unfortunate people have to pass their days under some roof and hence many of them were compelled by the circumstances to construct houses. But these houses do not compensate the loss of their homes and cannot be called homes because home is where heart is. Displaced Kashmiri Pandits have a great appetite and longing for their homes and want to return to their deserted homes in Kashmir but the so called crusaders of the Jihad do not like their coming back to their homes and successive centre and state now UT governments have failed to make return and rehabilitation in their place of birth in their homes a success. Majority of homes of Kashmiri Pandits had been burnt and vandalized and thus these hapless people feel the loss of their homes and in their heart of hearts feel urge to return to their homes because love and liking of the home is the deep rooted feeling and consideration of the majority of the exiled Kashmiri Pandits. No doubt many of them have constructed their own houses in Jammu and elsewhere in India but they are no substitute for their homes and cannot be called homes but houses. Therefore the loss of the homes is hardly compensated with the construction of the houses in Jammu and other places in India and these unfortunate people do not feel at home in these houses constructed under compulsion. So the displaced Kashmiri Pandits do not feel at ease in their houses constructed at heavy costs. Thus they yearn to return to their sweet homes in Kashmir as the memory of their homes remains ever present in the minds of these people and they long to return to their homes and hearts which stand deserted by the community under the threat of gun and stand vandalized by the terrorists. The uprooted Kashmiri Pandits have constructed the houses in and outside Jammu under the compulsion of the circumstances and these constructions of the houses have laid much economic burden on them as many of them are living on the government doles. They were thus not in a position to construct their own houses but have been left with the no option but to construct their own houses in and outside Jammu division. However, appetite and longing to return to Kashmir and embrace their homes so that the appetite and longing will be satisfied and their dream of return to their homes will be possible. The construction of the houses under compulsion has been a big financial burden upon the majority of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits because they are living from hand to mouth and are making both ends meet with great difficulty. But in spite of the construction of the houses in Jammu and other parts of India ,these houses proved to be houses only and could not turn and transform into homes though the displaced Pandits have spent much hard earned money on the construction of the houses but still these houses cannot be called as homes by any stretch of imagination. The houses so constructed lack the ease and warmth of the homes and the Kashmiri Pandits living in them lack the sweetness of homes in spite of having many comforts in them. The houses as such con-

structed are symbolic and superficial homes and do not have the ease and affection of homes and therefore these houses cannot be called homes as they lack attractiveness and warmth of the homes. So the majority of the exiled Kashmiri Pandits still long for the return to their sweet homes in Kashmir and the successive governments have failed to embark on the return of the Kashmiri Pandits back to their homes and hearths even after more than three decades of their forced migration. Thus on one hand the government has not made sincere efforts to ensure the return of Kashmiri Pandits back to their homes and hearths in Kashmir and on the other hand the so called crusaders of jihad and the gun wielding and indoctrinated youth did not like that Pandits should return to Kashmir and live in their homes. But they should know that no power on earth can stop Kashmiri Pandits to return to their homes and live with peace and dignity. Kashmiri Pandits know it well that the majority of their houses and other immovable properties stand burnt, damaged and vandalized by the anti social elements, but still Kashmiri Pandits nurse an appetite of returning to Kashmir so that they can live in their homes. The government should provide financial support to the Kashmiri Pandits to construct their houses in Kashmir which can be called homes and thus satisfy their appetite and longing to have their own houses in Kashmir which can be termed as homes and the sweet memories of their homes and embracing and living in these homes will become possible. Majority of the displaced Pandits are eagerly waiting for return to their homes and hearths in Kashmir and their wait and tolerance to be away from their homes is waning and their desire and longing to return and embrace their homes in Kashmir is increasing with the each passing day. The successive governments of the centre and state and now the UT government have done little to embark on the plan of the return and rehabilitation of the Kashmiri Pandits back to their homes in Kashmir notwithstanding the loud claims of normalcy in Kashmir and bringing them back to Kashmir and live in their sweet homes. The government should sincerely work to normalize the ground situation in Kashmir and end terrorism using proactive strategies and give adequate freedom to the security forces to crack on the terrorists so that the terrorists will be on the run and the residual terrorism will be eliminated so that normalcy and peace and security returns the valley so that people and the minority Pandits will live in peace with dignity. Therefore there is need to reverse migration and for this the government, security forces and majority community should work in tandem and coordination so that return of Kashmiri Pandits back to their homes will become a reality and for this all the people and the government and the security agencies should work sincerely to make the mission and program of return of Kashmiri Pandits to their homes and hearths a possibility. The appetite and longing for the homes is so intense that the safe return to the homes and hearths in the native land of Kashmir will become a reality. The appetite and the liking to return to the homes of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir is increasing with each passing day and the uprooted Pandits yearn for return to their homes in Kashmir. In fact the appetite and longing to return to their homes in Kashmir is becoming stronger and the community prays for return to their homes and hearths in Kashmir so that they can experience the warmth and ease of the homes. The write up can be summed up by quoting a line of Kashmiri poetry; 'Ghar Vandahay Ghar Sassa Barhae Nerha Ne Za'.
(The author is a Columnist and Social Activist).

Lavender: A Dynamic Opportunity for Farming Community

■ DR. ASHU SHARMA AND DR. TARIO IQBAL

Jammu and Kashmir is traditionally known for its apple orchards, walnuts, mulberry, saffron, Chinara, pine trees, roses, tulips and ever chanting snow-capped Himalayan mountains. Medicinal and aromatic plants sector is a sunrise industry with plenty of opportunities for new, young, innovative entrepreneurs for starting successful, eco-friendly and natural product industries. A new socio-economic revolution is underway in several parts of Jammu and Kashmir in north India, with farmers and entrepreneurs increasingly taking to the cultivation and processing of lavender. Lavender is a huge sensation in the perfume industry all around the world. The climate of Jammu and Kashmir is highly conducive for lavender cultivation as this plant can grow in cold temperatures and moderate summers. This cash crop has a gestation period of two years before reaching economic productivity. Farmers are slowly switching over from the traditional crops to more rewarding farming of lavender; a purple blossomed aromatic shrub. From a decade, lavender farming has been introduced in Kashmir and parts of Jammu. It is now picking up revolutionary proportions. Lavender farming is now done in all the 20 districts of UT of Jammu and Kashmir particularly in Kathua, Udhampur, Doda, Ramban, Kishtwar, Rajouri, Srinagar, Pulwama, Kupwara, Bandipora, Budgam, Ganderbal, Anantnag, Kulgam and Baramulla districts and have made significant headway in this direction. Cultivation of Lavender has become a popular agricultural startup option. It has increased rural farmer employment, sparked entrepreneurship in the production of aromatic oils and other aromatic products and reduced imports of essential and aromatic oils. At present more than 1,000 farming families are cultivating the lavender on more than 200 acres in different parts of J&K. Each farmer has employed at least five other people. Thus, the mission has already employed over 6,000 families. Women have

been the biggest beneficiaries as they are primarily engaged in harvesting and processing the flower. Besides, several young entrepreneurs have started small-scale business through the value addition of lavender oil and the preparation and sale of dried flowers. The purple blossoms give the fields their distinctive purple tint, and it is these inflorescences that generate the oil, which is commonly used in high-end perfumes, soaps and even food items. Farmers can earn up to five times more money growing lavender on the same plot. This fast developing high-value crop also provides an opportunity for holistic development by providing gainful work to the disadvantaged educated unemployed youth. Krishi Vigyan Kendra's of both the varieties (SKUAST J and SKUAST K) of Jammu and Kashmir UT has a major contribution in adoption of this aromatic crop through their extension initiatives. It aims to bring about transformational change in the aroma sector by implementing targeted interventions in agricultural, processing and product development in order to boost the aroma industry's growth and rural employment. The mission will encourage the development of aromatic crops for the production of essential oils, which are in high demand in the aroma sector. Within the ambit of this mission, it is anticipated that Indian farmers and the aroma business will be able to become worldwide leaders in the production and export of various essential oils in the menthol mint pattern. The current production of lavender is just at the inception stage. It is expected to increase manifold in the coming years. The production of lavender in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir will help import substitution and save foreign reserves. Besides, there is excellent scope for exporting lavender oil as it has good global demand.
(The authors are Scientist at KVK Kathua of SKUAST Jammu; CEO at Pir Panjal Vegetable Framer Producer Company Ltd).

Pendulum of Secularism always vibrating

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

While the concept itself has deep historical roots, the term secularism itself dates only to the 19th century, when it was coined by British reformer George Jacob Holyoake. Andrew James William Copson (Chief Executive of Humanists UK and the President of Humanists International who worked a lot for civil and human rights organizations) in his book 'Secularism' relies on the concise definition offered by French scholar Jean Bauberot, who sees three essential components to a secular society: 1. The separation of religious institutions from the institutions of the state. 2. Freedom of conscience for all individuals circumscribed only by the need for public order and the respect of the rights of other individuals and 3. No discrimination by the state against individuals on the basis of their beliefs. While traversing on the Indian horizon, we find in 1948, when the newly independent dominion of India was debating the nature of the Constitution of India, Prof K T Shah, debated to include the word 'Secular' in the Constitution. On the inclusion of the term 'Secular', Dr. B R Ambedkar said it is against the very grain of democracy to decide in the Constitution what kind of society the people of India should live in. It was agreed on the nature of State adhering to Secular Principles; hence the word 'Secular' was dropped from the preamble of the Indian Constitution. Later on we find the insertion of words "Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic

Republic" for the words "Sovereign Democratic Republic" and for the words "Unity of the Nation", the words "Unity and Integrity of the Nation" substituted to the Preamble of the Constitution vide 'The Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976.' If we really want a secular society, standing by the Preamble, then we would have to stop identifying ourselves primarily by religion, caste or language, and start thinking of ourselves primarily as equal citizens of one nation, both in theory and in practice. However, given the rise of communal hatred and violence in recent years, it is perhaps fascinating that we look at secularism in terms of inter-community relations. In doing so, we will be able to shift our focus from 'Secular State' to something that is much more promising, 'Secular Society'. Notwithstanding its inspiring history and indubitable uniqueness, we observe, Indian secular pendulum is always vibrating and has not succeeded in bringing various communities together. Un-ethical and religious debates and commentaries on TV Channels by some paranoids and mustering of votes by exploiting the sentiments of people by political hawks on religion and caste base are not less than catalysts to radicalized ideology. There remain strands of history and expressions of culture that are invoked every now and then to pitch one in hostile opposition to the other. For the past some years, India, a multicultural state, is being leveled as a majority state and this ideology has inherited the tensions in these competing visions

of Indian nationhood. In the current political climate, it is harder to bridge the widening gap between the communities that is based on created hostility by vested interests towards each other and is an issue that lies outside the ambit of secularism. The set of Judgments in the Bommai case in 1993, ruled that secularism is part of the basic structure of the constitution and cannot be amended, that it is derived from the Hindu principle of tolerance 'Sarva Dharma Sambhava' ensuring the equality of religions, that no religion will be at risk in a secular India because the government should not be aligned to religion, and finally that there is an essential connection between secularism and democracy. To a mind boggling question, who is the custodian of the future of Indian secularism and who are responsible to save the idea of a pluralistic and tolerant India from becoming a casualty of narrow sectarian politics? Our traverse takes us to the fractured society that has to decode the underlying lust for power among the tainted political faces that harp on the immaturity of voters, who are not in a position to understand the value and power of their vote. Stringent sanctions required to be imposed on those who promote religious polarization. Although section 123 of the 'Representation of the People Act of 1951' forbids politicians from campaigning on religious themes, it is hardly followed by politicians as ECI is a mute spectator and puppet in the hands of ruling dispensations and issues weakly dealt by law enforcement

agencies. For these reasons it has been unevenly enforced. This is possible only by those who constitute that society through reasoning and sensitivity as to what is best for society in keeping with generally accepted values of tolerance and social responsibility. The recent barbarian events that have occupied the information vessels speaks that we are at the cusp of one of the most defining moments of secularism, and where we go from here depends on whether we are willing to rise above manufactured animosities and invest in an ethically informed understanding of the other, or embrace sectarian populism. The acceptance of coexistence together with equal status before the law can certainly be a first step. Fissiparous tendencies, whether they belong to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians or others, are very dangerous and wrong. They belong to petty and backward minds. No one who understands the spirit of the times can think in terms of communalism. In Conclusion, I can vouch, fissiparous tendencies, whether they belong to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians or others, are very dangerous and wrong. They belong to petty and backward minds. No one who understands the spirit of the times can think in terms of communalism. The correct notion of secularism means a state that honors all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities; that as a state it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion. Till then the Pendulum of 'Secularism' will always remain 'Vibrating'.

Witnesshood leads to detachment

■ MOHANJI

Question: Sensations in the body and how do you accept these without judgment?
Mohanji: In one word, the answer is witnesshood. Let us compare your body to a car. What is the purpose of the car? Utility; for travel, from one location to the other. What is the utility of the body? To experience the earth, and various aspects of the earth; the journey is from birth to death. When you are going through various sensations, various emotions, various experiences, when you have various expressions, just witness them all, because that's not the end. They come and they go; witness them, enjoy them, appreciate them, so that you will always be stable. You don't have to be involved in it. At the same time, you can experience it. Experience life as it comes, with gratitude; look at everything gratefully, even anger, hatred, jealousy; look at everything as flavours of life. But you're not any of them. You have nothing to do with them. They're just experiences, various flavours you are experiencing. It does not matter what the cause is, take the experiences as neutral, as they are happening. They come; they go. You're watching. Witness hood leads to detachment. Detachment leads to release. Release leads to silence of the mind. This journey is truly wonderful.

PROGRESSING J&K
Under the special enrollment drive 'AAO SCHOOL CHALEIN', Kashmir schools witness 19.02% hike in student enrollment
126 CAL Centers established, 13000 disabled children provided medical aid, assistive devices to attract more students towards Govt. schools

Reflecting the improvement in education standards of Government schools, student enrolment in government-run-schools has increased by more than 19.02 percent in the ongoing academic year in Kashmir. In the recent years, School Education Department has recorded an unprecedented thrust, particularly in the elementary segment. The Samagra Shiksha has come as a boon, unleashing a series of initiatives seeking universal enrolment and retention, reduction of social, regional and gender gaps, mainstreaming of the children with special needs and promotion of quality parameters. As per official figures, the highest percentage of new admissions was recorded in South Kashmir's Kulgam district wherein the student enrolment has increased by 19.2 percent. "Before the enrollment drive, there were a total of 44,559 students enrolled in government-run-schools. However, after the drive, the district has recorded new 10,156 admissions," official data reveals. Similarly south Kashmir's Anantnag district recorded a hike in student enrolment by 21.78 percent. The district has also witnessed 19,436 new admissions this academic session. Likewise, in Bandipora district student enrolment increased by 8.9 percent followed by Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district with 5.3 percent, frontier district Kupwara with 19.2 percent, Baramulla with 17.8 percent, Shopian with 3.8 percent, Pulwama with 4.8 percent and Srinagar with 3.3 percent. Earlier the situation was different as the net enrolment ratio was at lowest at both elementary and secondary level in government schools in J&K as per the School Quality Education Index (SEQI) 2019 report of the National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog. Various initiatives launched by the school education department attracted students from private to Government schools. More so, over 1.50 Lakh Teachers were covered under elementary teacher training, 126 CAL (Computer Aided Learning) Centers were set up in the Upper Primary Schools besides 13000 disabled children provided medical aid and assistive devices. "Free textbooks are provided to students of 1st to 8th standards each year. Seasonal Centers at various Bahaks (highland pasture's) were established for the children of the migratory population besides NRBC centres were established for out-of-school children (drop out or never enrolled)", official data reveals. Other major interventions like extension of Mid-day Meal scheme to middle schools has tremendously helped in increasing the enrolment of these schools. The SED has also enrolled around 1143 school dropouts in schools afresh besides enrolling 965 Children With Special Needs (CWSN) and 28295 students have switched from private schools to government schools. Under the Special Enrollment Drive "AAO SCHOOL CHALEIN", 118176 students were enrolled in government schools of Jammu and Kashmir during the winter session. The drive emphasized on strengthening of pre-schooling of children in the age group of 3 to 5 years with focus on increasing overall enrollment in government schools by re-enrolment of dropout students and the children who have never been enrolled in school. The School Education Department (SED) is holding hold a door-to-door campaigns to enhance the learner enrollment across the schools in Jammu and Kashmir.