

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE: Kawar Yatra-A Symbol of Social and cultural strength

A healthy lifestyle is a way of living that helps maintain and improve overall health and well-being. It encompasses balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, mental well-being, and avoiding harmful habits. In today's fast-paced world, adopting a healthy lifestyle is more important than ever to prevent chronic diseases and lead a fulfilling life.

A key pillar of a healthy lifestyle is a nutritious, well-balanced diet. This includes the consumption of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Eating a variety of nutrient-rich foods ensures the body gets essential vitamins and minerals. Limiting processed foods, sugar, and excessive salt intake helps in maintaining a healthy weight and reduces the risk of conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Hydration is equally important; drinking enough water keeps the body functioning optimally.

Exercise is vital for physical and mental health. Engaging in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as walking, cycling, or swimming, five days a week, improves cardiovascular health, builds muscle strength, and enhances flexibility. Physical activity also helps release endorphins, which reduce stress and boost mood. For children and adolescents, outdoor play and sports are essential for their physical development.

Sleep is often overlooked but is crucial for good health. Adults should aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep per night, while children and teenagers require more. Lack of sleep can lead to fatigue, decreased productivity, weakened immunity, and mental health problems. Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and creating a restful environment can greatly improve sleep quality.

Mental health is an integral part of a healthy lifestyle. Stress management, emotional resilience, and positive social interactions contribute to mental well-being. Practices like meditation, yoga, deep breathing, journaling, or talking to a friend or counselor can help manage anxiety and improve emotional balance. Maintaining hobbies and taking breaks from digital screens also promote mental clarity and happiness.

A healthy lifestyle also means avoiding harmful substances and behaviors. Smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and drug use have long-term negative effects on health. Limiting caffeine and avoiding junk food also contribute to better overall wellness. Making conscious decisions and seeking support for quitting harmful habits can significantly improve life expectancy and quality of life.

■ MANMOHAN DHAR

Every year, during the sacred month of Shravan (July-August), millions of devotees known as "Kanwariyas" undertake a vibrant and deeply spiritual journey - the Kawar Yatra. Clad in saffron, carrying ornately decorated pots (kawars) filled with holy Ganga water, they traverse miles barefoot to offer the sanctified water to Lord Shiva, usually at prominent Jyotirlinga temples like Baidyanath Dham, Kedarnath, or Kashi Vishwanath. But beyond its religious fervor, the Kawar Yatra emerges as a powerful symbol of social bondage, unity, and collective consciousness.

Kawar Yatra is a sacred Journey of Devotion and Discipline. It is not merely a physical pilgrimage - it's a profound act of devotion and self-discipline. Devotees refrain from non-vegetarian food, alcohol, and even abusive language during their journey. Many vow silence, others fast, and all walk with unflinching faith. In this austerity, there is shared sacrifice, and in shared sacrifice, there is bonding. A true depiction of Unity in diversity, Kawar Yatra can very easily be glorified for its vibrant inclusive nature. Rich or poor, young or old, rural or urban - caste and class melt away on this path. A daily-wage worker might walk shoulder-to-shoulder with a software engineer; an elderly pilgrim may be helped by a teenager. These spontaneous acts of kindness and camaraderie transform the journey into a living, breathing lesson in social unity.

The collective singing of bhajans, the chants of "Bol Bam," "Bam Bam Bhole" and the collaborative setup of camps across towns and villages weave together a rich social tapestry. Communities come



alive to serve Kanwariyas with free meals, shelter, and medical aid - often regardless of religious boundaries. This voluntary service fosters empathy and social obligation, binding society in a moral and emotional thread.

In an era marked by increasing individualism and digital isolation, the Kawar Yatra stands as a quiet rebellion. It forces people to unplug, interact, share, and coexist - not virtually, but physically. The crowded roads, the chants, the rhythm of walking together - all become a

medium for reclaiming community living in its rawest, most spiritual form.

But, Of course, with scale come challenges - traffic congestion, civic management, and sometimes over-enthusiasm leading to unruly behavior. But it's important not to generalize the entire movement based on the actions of a few. Responsible civic planning, disciplined participation, and spiritual awareness are key to preserving the sanctity of this sacred journey.

The Kawar Yatra is not just a pilgrim-

age - it's a moving metaphor of India's cultural strength, its innate unity, and its enduring spirit of brotherhood. As saffron-clad devotees march across plains and mountains, they don't just carry water for Shiva - they carry hope, harmony, and the invisible threads that hold society together. In a divided world, the Kawar yatra reminds us that faith, when rooted in humility and shared purpose, can be the strongest form of social bondage - not the one that shackles, but the one that binds hearts.

The World of Mushrooms

■ G.L. KHAJURIA

The mushrooms are as varied and countless as are or flowering plants, herbs and shrub from lowest strata to higher one. These are both palatable and non-palatable, poisonous, and non-poisonous fungi mostly manifesting their wild existence. These mostly subsist on dead, dying and diseases(3D'S) trees both in standing and felled from of logs, the forest. These as well exhibit their growth in a multipored form at various sites in and around the forest areas. Some of the palatable mushrooms exists on coniferous trees such as kail and chir in the form of beehive and most of them are palatable.

In rainy season, some forms of fungi emerge out from ground, and around termite mounds when there is lightning with thunders which are spoken as 'khumbaan' in dogri parlance. This variety of fungi is most serving as well multiceinal properties in form or the other. These exists both multi-medinone both in the wild and around, habitation in rural areas, The tribal people are expert in identifying both the palatable and non-palatable mushrooms and they mostly have such mushrooms as their most favored and delicious dishes they subsist on this type of mushrooms.

Around 2,000 species of mushrooms have been identified out of which as many as 25 have been classified as edible. In delicacy, mushrooms are difficult to resist and that is why this variety forms the predominant part amongst other dishes displayed during important functions, particularly marriages. Its delicacy is peerless and non-resistible. These form the prominent



part for the vegetarian in breakfast, not lunch or dinner and is evergreen dish which in a way is not ignorable.

Mushrooms are of delicious taste and can be taken in a variety of ways: Mushroom with tea, coffee, in toasts with sauce.

The significance and awareness regarding nutritive value of mushrooms still remains obscure and unidentified. These are warrant their awakening promotion, propagation encourage their cultivation,

and this is not only by the farmers alone, but any person which is having an inclination towards gardening, floriculture, and horticulture etc.

Modern field in home gardening within and around home is of course, much ahead never people of all ages are keenly enthusiastic in raising multihued variety of ornamental plants (Flowering-cum-vegetation foliage), them what hinders for mushroom culture which invigorate

and makes one possessed us with garden-oriented.

Globally, mushroom cultivation took its initiation far back around 17th century in France. Now it has become a leading industry in many other countries like US, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Britain, Australia, Italy, Canada, Korea, China, Taiwan, and Japan and so many other countries. In a sense, mushroom cultivation has taken a worldwide phenomenon across the

globe. Apart from vast, interest in its cultivation, it improves the economy in a bigger way this yielding hefty dividends for professional cultivators.

In our country, the full potential of mushrooms cultivation remains to be tapped as yet. In many parts of your country mushroom cultivation is viable due to the ideal atmospheric condition us for example in Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, mushrooms can very conveniently be cultivated in nine months of the year under natural conditions. The availability of technical know-how has however made the mushroom growers to cultivate not only in their backyards but indoors under proper climate conditions.

In the recent times, the technology of mushroom cultivation has been considering improved and diversified to cover a wide range of species suited to different geographical areas of the country.

At present, three varieties of edible mushrooms are being cultivated on commercial basis. These varieties ate European mushroom (Agaricusbisporus), oyster mushroom (Pleurotusspp) and the paddy straw mushroom (Poluartell spp). The scientific know-how for their cultivation on commercial basis have however, been for its intion. The temparata valley of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, W.Bengal, Tamil Naidu are ideally suitable around the world.

In winter, mushrooms can conveniently be grown in the plains of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu.

In order to ensure good cultivation of mushrooms, complete darkness is no pre-requisite as the

mushrooms don't need sunlight at any stage in their cultivation. Manure is oftenly used in wooden trays which should be carefully kept on cemented floors with overhead roof and water availability nearby.

As stated earlier, many mushrooms have been founded perched upon Kail and other coniferous trees in the forest. These are exhibited on decaying/decayed stumps which are of umbrella- shape and come under a wide range fungi which corm a distinct type such as load stools, buff balls and these are found associated with lichens and ferns, microscopic yeast and are non-flowering being evolved much earlier than flowering plants.

Owing to the fact that there are lacking chlorophyll, these subsist on decayed matter which is abundantly found on ground of forest areas.

Mushrooms are meat-eaters too. Bio logistics have found that mushrooms trap microorganisms and others whom they can capture/trap and conveniently consumed by the mushrooms. This is the magic of nature alone well understands. How a vegetarian becomes non-vegetarian and vice-versa which is much beyond human imagination like us and other bio-forms, the meat-eating mushrooms have of course, been provided by nature certain enzymes which help in the digestion and assimilation of their intakes. That way these mushrooms act as scavengers in the wide varied biodiversity and the mushrooms have their role to play with in a broader spectrum in balancing the ecosystem and the worldwide sustainability.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator of Forests, J&K)

MSMEs Driving Economic Growth in Jammu & Kashmir

■ VINOD CHANDRASHEKHAR DIXIT

The MSME sector in Jammu & Kashmir is showing positive growth, particularly in employment generation and registrations. According to IBEF, Jammu & Kashmir leads in employment generation under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP). In every developing economy Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role. A growing economy has to be backed by strong MSMEs which not only helps in generating employment and exports but also act as nursery of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Indian economy thrives through the means of enterprise creation as one of the prime movers of the economy. In this direction, "Make in India and Made in India" movement is integral to entrepreneurship development across the country. Therefore, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role for strengthening the Indian economy.

In order to recognize the vital role that MSME businesses play in economic growth, development, and job creation worldwide. The vitalrole of MSMEs is in fostering global collaboration, encouraging innovation, and supporting entrepreneurs across sectors. It highlights the need to build stronger networks that empower small businesses to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. MSME's are the backbone of India's economic landscape, pivotal in employment generation, entrepreneurship promotion, and economic development. MSME is the growth engine for the UT of J&K as well as national economy, contributing significantly to the GDP, employment creation and wealth. There is no doubt that the industry-centric policies, provisions of financial assistance, handholding to new and existing enterprises have encouraged MSMEs and other



industries in J&K.

The MSME sector in Jammu and Kashmir plays a vital role in the state's economic landscape. It encompasses a wide range of enterprises, from traditional handicrafts and agriculture-related businesses to modern manufacturing and technology-driven startups. The government's support through various initiatives, including financial incentives, skill development pro-

grams, and access to credit, fosters entrepreneurship and economic development in the region. This sector contributes significantly to job creation and industrial growth, making it a cornerstone of Jammu and Kashmir's economy.

MSMEs are of great importance in India's economic development, serving as engines of growth and drivers of socio-economic progress. These enterprises are inte-

gral to job creation, particularly in rural and backward areas, contributing significantly to the reduction of unemployment and poverty. MSMEs are a vital component of the global economy, representing approximately 90% of businesses, contributing to over 70% of employment, and accounting for about 50% of the world's GDP. In emerging economies, formal MSMEs contribute up to 40% of national income (GDP). By understanding the importance of MSMEs and the positive impact their support can have, people are empowered to contribute directly to the growth and sustainability of these businesses, fostering economic diversity, local entrepreneurship, and community development. The MSME sector in India makes a contribution of around 30% to the nation's GDP. Moreover, it contributes about 40% to the total exports of India and provides more than 110 million job opportunities in the country. The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector in India, formally established by the MSMED Act of 2006, encompasses businesses engaged in manufacturing, processing, or preservation of goods. MSMEs in J & K has served as significant sources of employment, particularly in economically disadvantaged regions. They provide opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour, thereby contributing to job creation and reducing unemployment rates.

It is to be appreciated that UT of Jammu & Kashmir has taken many such initiatives in form of policy and schemes which are aimed at reducing the cost of doing business, enhance ease of doing business and help MSMEs achieve scale and improve competitiveness. The exploring MSMEs in J & K serve as an opportunity to highlight their significant role in sustainable development and economic progress, thereby raising public awareness of their contributions.