

Time to be aware

■ MOHANJI

When you keep analyzing, ‘Why did this happen? Why does this person behave like this, or why is this person not smiling? etc.’, this leads to paralysis.What’s paralysis? Stagnation. What’s stagnation? You’re stuck in one place, one thought, or one time. So, please understand this very clearly. Stagnation happens when you over-analyze. There is nothing called ‘why’ in life. If you have a question, ‘Why’, one-word answer – karma. Very simple. If you’re asking, ‘Why is this happening in my life?’ It’s simple – your karma.Whether you are satisfied with this answer or not, it’s the truth. Everything in your life – from birth till death is defined. The whole journey is defined.Then what’s your purpose and freedom? To be aware of the subtle, which is running the show. If you are aware of the sukshma, you come out of karma because you don’t own anything. Ownership maintains karma.This ‘me’ and ‘mine’ – ‘me’ means the personality; ‘mine’ means the possessions. These are the two factors which are very binding with ownership. Ownership brings them.Can we own anything? This breath, this life, or situations – nothing we can own. We own nothing. The place of birth, lifestyle, the experiences of life – everything is happening. Think about it.

Sadvahvna Divas: A healing touch

■ SHYAM SUDAN

Sadvahvna divas is celebrated across the entire nation on 20th of August every year. Sadvahvna is an excellent operation launched by Indian army to give a healing touch to the victims of militancy in every corner of jandk .Basically it was a missionary work launched by Indian army for the infrastructural development especially in education institutions and other institutions of public welfare. Under this operation various education institutions got the benefits of infrastructural development. As we know in jandk which is the most disturbing erstwhile state of our country there were an urgent need of such kind of healing policy .However education department is continuously working for the development of various education institutions by giving sufficient grants and financial aid. But as we know topographically this region has a very vast area in which there is need of some extra efforts for the development of various education institutions. Under operation sadvahvna the main focus of the army was to provide sufficient quantity of teaching materials and other infrastructural aids .moreover in other fields like in health sector army has contributed a lot with the introduction of this historic operation. This operation of public welfare has changed the condition of these sectors at great extent. Besides that it also play a significant role in strengthening the bond of public with Indian army .No doubt it was the need of the hour during the peak of militancy in this region.Millions of children got the benefits of this operation through its various services. Those children who belongs to inaccessible regions of jandk got the opportunity to visit at different corner of our country by the famous india tour scheme under Sadbhavna. Sadvbhavna as the name indicates goodwill was the scheme of true goodwill of public of this region. Through its various camps and other important events people got the benefits at large .where there was no facility of health, this scheme has changed the condition of suffering of public by organizing various medical camps of emergent nature. Role of our army is always of great savior and protector who usually came forward at the time of public need and in crisis. With the successful completion and initiatives of this operation army has proven this faith of public. No doubt the whole credit of this operation goes to the efforts of Indian army .we will remain indebted to Indian army for this kind of goodwill scheme.

Independence Day, a mile stone

■ SUNAINA MALIK

As a matter of hard reality, we cannot weigh the significance and pricelessness of our freedom from British rule because we have not lived that period of freedom struggle and we have not seen our mother India in painful chains of slavery. It was the time , when Indians were treated as dog , it was the time , when water was more valuable than blood of Indians , it was the time when food was snatched from hungry mouths of Indians , it was the time, when heavy lagan was imposed on poor and starved farmers, it was the time when malnurtured Indians move in rags, it was the time, when Indians were deprived of higher education . It was the time, when Indians were limited to clerical jobs only, it was the time when Kohinoor was snatched from the crown of mother India , it was the time when Britishers robbed of India from all its raw minerals wealth it was the time, when labourers were not properly waged, it was the time when Indians were non judiciously put behind bars and strangulated, it was the time of high conspiracy against Indians and it was a high time of divide and rule over innumerable communities of mother India. Cruelty, injustice and inhumane treatment by Britisher dictators had burnt a gruesome fire in the hearts of Indians and gave a start to freedom struggle of India. Exploited Indians did not calm down and continued their struggle against British Empire , a Empire, whose sun never set. Love for free India and consistency in freedom struggle had left no option for cruel Britishers but to leave India. Our freedom fighters have sacrificed their peace , comfort, money , children and lives for releasing mother India from hateful and impure clutches of Britishers.

Untired struggle and sacrifice of lives of freedom fighters has enabled us to mark our existence as independent nation in this world . It is our independence which has enabled us to raise our GDP from mere 3% in 1947 to 8% in 2022. It is our independence which has enabled farmers to bring green revolution in country in 1965, it is our independence which has enabled us to become 5th largest economy of world, it is our independence which has made India a country with world largest railway network, it is our independence which has enabled us to make our army as 4th largest army in the world, it is our independence which has enabled us to become an atomic power in 1971 , it is only our independence which has enabled us to mark our presence in space ,it is our independence which has enabled us to raise our electric power production from 1362MV in 1947 to 395600MV in 2022, it is our independence which has enabled us to raise our life expectancy from 32years to ,72 years, it is our independence which has enabled us to raise our literacy rate from 12% in 1947 to 74.64% in 2022 and over all it is only our independence which has established India as world largest democracy in the world In the conclusion , I just want to say our country's freedom is the precious gift given to us by our freedom fighters . let us present a heartfelt gratitude to our freedom fighters on the eve of our 77th independence day.

Exquisite Pines of Jammu & Kashmir

■ G L KHAJURIA

The state of Jammu & Kashmir is cocooned land-mass at the northern-most extremity of the plains of the Punjab which virtually touches the lower ridges of the hills and further spreads over a vast tract constituting thereby what is called as the region of outer hills. Varying in their heights something from 600 m to 1250 m above mean sea level (M.S.L) are the rugged ones, which go parallel to one another, enveloping small narrow valleys.

The Jammu region which begins from the boundaries adjoining Punjab and Himachal Pradesh across river 'Ravi (Lakhanpur). The stretches over the last reach of Indo-Pak border (Poonch) in the east-West encompassing Kandi belt of herbs, shrub and other broad leaved trees of emissive importance and with the altitudinal gains the rich 'chirpines' 'blue pines' and their allied intermingle . From Jammu, uprising towards higher reaches of Udhampur; Kud, Patnitop on the one hand and Trikuta hills of Katra,Reasi to the north west are having the richest varieties of pines which give Kaleidoscopic glimpse when viewed airily in their ambience. Not only, that these pines are of serene, scenic and splendour and these are as well of tremendous importance in a variety of ways. The 'Pride Chenab valley, de facto, is a bountiful and predominantly the richest forest area in the entire state. The entire terrain is a rare combination of inner and outer hills of 'Shivaliks' ranging from 1,200 m to 3600 m above mean sea level (M.S.L.) and further there is consistent rise in elevation to what is most conveniently called the middle Himalayas. The narrow valleys give way to the small rivulets which drain into 'pride Chenab, the Tawi and to the deep gorges and other emerald waters. The landscape and valleys with ever-flourishing vibrant, salubrious and shimmering pines largely intermingling

with fast flowing nectar-clear waters over the millennia past .However, the Chirpme part is briefed down as under .

►'Chir Pine.': All the pines are belong to 'Gymnosperms ' part of plant Kingdom having the characteristics of cones-bearing and so is with chir pine. This falls under coniferae family and lakes its start from lower elevation to higher ones (4000 to 6000 feet) from the MSL. The chir is long-leaved pine botanically spoken as 'Pinus roxburghii is a large living - tree with clear straight bole and thick bark as a defence against forest fire. The leaves are in bundles of three needles obscurely trequetrous, light green, cones are solitary or 3-5 together and the seeds are long, obliquely obraceolate, compressed with a membranous wings which helps in their pollination as it is through wind.

Chir pines are spreaded over the outer hills of shivaliks ranging from Basohli -Billawar; Udhampur; Reasi ,Kalidhar; Sudarbani , Rajouri, Nowshera and Poonch. The tree is of ample importance is so far as extraction of resin is concerned, apart from fulfilling the demands of locals in respect of timber, small wood and fuel. The resin extracted from the chirs finds its emissive value after the segregation of resin and turpentine oil which is useful in many pharmaceuticals for the manufacture of multihued important medicines.

Chir pines are mostly prone to forest fires during summer spells more due to the gathering of the needles which rather cover the forest ground. The locals have their urge, to good grass and so these forests are engulfed by fire and spell the doom and large chunks of chir forests are subjected to forest hazards.

An idea was mooted much earlier for collection of the dry needles which find its usefulness in the manufacture of card-boards as this practice is mostly prevalent in other chir bearing states of UP etc. This shall serve twin purposes; first the forest fires shall be

minimized, improve local economy and boost-ing card-board manufacturing. This is unambiguously, a workable solution in averting forest fires, apart from opening new avenues for the industrial uses.

Chir pines, as thus has great promise in afforestation programmes and is widely planted in its natural habitat. Many sites of its natural habitations are, however deficient in organic matter, water holding capacity, nutrinitual availability, micro-fauna and are lacking in almost all over the chir bearing areas. So, it is pertinent to have necessary desirable physical, and biological characteristics necessary for the plants growth and survival of our planted seedlings on such sites thus well suited to site.

►Blue pines also called as'Pinus wallichiana' in botanical parlance and 'Kail is spoken locally is a large majestic tree having slate-coloured smooth bark with leathery young stems. Like chirpines. Its leaves are also in bundles each groove is having five needles which are slenderical, triquetrous, glaucous on the inner faces, cones are generally 2-3 together on penducles. Seeds of this species are blackish , ovoid, acute and compressed and the trees catches heights from 6000-10000 ft from (MSL) sometimes intermingling with deodar and at places with chir pines etc. The wood is as good as that of deodar, which is pinkish-brown, moderately hard, resin-dutes are smaller than those of chir ines. The sapwood yield resin far superior to chir pines and its leaves are used as a stuff for cushions and the bark of the tree is used as slate for roofing of temporary huts and its seeds are oftenly eaten by the local inhabitants.

►Giant Himalayan Pine: This pine, unambiguously, occupy its unique placement in the Himalayan region-the most magnificent and majestic . Deodar botanically nomenclaturised as Cedrus deodar is a large tall gre-

garious tree, the largest and longest ever-lived tree in India renowned for its greatest beauty , whose branches are horizontal having pyramidal crown. The tree ranges a height from 7000-8500 ft from MSL and intermingles amongst blue pines, spruce, fire and Moru oak. The tree is of ample importance in so far as its timber value is concerned, which is prominently used in multitude construction. The cedar oil extracted from its stumps finds multitudinous uses in our pharmaceuticals for the remedial measures of various luses.

►Chilghoza Pines: This pine is spoken as Pinus gerardiana in botanical parlance and is mostly confined in Paddar valley of Kishitwar and thence in the higher reaches of Kashmir. A cluster of such pines were spotted by the author whilst being on tour to Padder Valley in august last year atop Atholi near Mata Jawala ji temple. However, of course, the most important articles of food are well known throughout Northern part of India as chilghoza which is basically the seed of this pine tree which is highly relished like other dry fruits viz Kazu etc. This pine is also confined in the most parts of Afghanistan. The seeds are around 0.8 inch in size and are long ablanecoloid and terete.

►Pindrow Pines: Pindrowor Morinda as is locally spoken is found in the higher reaches of coniferous and is botanically nomenclaturised as Abies pindrow, also named as silver oak, is a gigantic pines which homes in bears and most of the other fauna in the altitudinal variations amongst other vibrant and salubrious forest ranging from lower to highest strata in the ramified eco-system.

Conclusively, therefore, the pines in their varied ramification form a sort of green gold in the higher reaches of our mountainous region and other uplands of our state which is also called as the paradise on the earth.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator, J&K forests).

Empowering Kashmiri Youth: Channelizing Potential towards Positive Change

■ ABID HUSSAIN RATHER

The former president of India, Indian aerospace scientist and statesman, famously known as missile man of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam has aptly said that children and youth are the pictures of a nation's future. They are our hope for tomorrow. In other words we can say that for a brighter tomorrow, a nation needs to empower its youth. Youth empowerment is a process, to encourage youth by all means. It is an effort towards making a course for them to sustain and adapt as per situations. It is the process of involving the youth and the young population in the decision-making of a community. In the picturesque valleys of Kashmir, a region often synonymous with political turbulence, there lies a wellspring of untapped potential - its youth. The population size of young people in J&K is about 2.50 million, so focusing on youth and channelizing their potential towards positive change is of paramount significance. While the challenges faced by Kashmiri youth are undeniable, there is an urgent need to shift the narrative from conflict to empowerment, from despair to hope. By channelizing their energies towards positive avenues, we can create a brighter future for both the region and its young inhabitants. Youth empowerment in Kashmir is vital for fostering stability, development, and positive change. By engaging and empowering young people through education, skill-building, and meaningful opportunities, the region can tap into its youth's potential to drive social progress, economic growth, and a more inclusive society. Empowered youth are more likely to contribute positively to their communities, participate in decision-making processes, and create a sense of hope and optimism for the future. This can help address various challenges and contribute to a peaceful and prosperous Kashmir.

Education: The Beacon of Hope

Education is the cornerstone of progress. By prioritizing quality education, we can equip Kashmiri youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in a globalized world.

Investments in modern infrastructure, vocational training centres, and scholarships can create an environment where young minds can flourish, paving the way for innovative contributions to various fields. Empowerment through education can also help counter negative influences and ideologies, providing a path towards economic independence, improved livelihoods, and social cohesion. By investing in education and offering opportunities for skill development, Kashmiri youth can become agents of positive change, driving progress, and stability in the region.

Entrepreneurship: Fostering Innovation

Encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit among Kashmiri youth can lead to self-sufficiency and economic growth. Government incentives, incubation centers, and mentorship programs can help transform creative ideas into viable businesses, generating employment opportunities and redefining the region's economic landscape. Entrepreneurship offers avenues for economic self-reliance, job creation, and community development. It empowers Kashmiri youth to take charge of their futures, contribute to the local economy, and address challenges with innovative solutions.

Cultural Preservation: A Source of Identity and Unity

Kashmir has a rich cultural heritage that spans centuries. By promoting art, music, literature, and traditional crafts, young Kashmiris can connect with their roots and find a sense of identity and purpose. Cultural festivals and events can serve as platforms for showcasing their talents and fostering unity within the community. Cultural preservation also offers opportunities for skill development, such as traditional crafts, music, and performing arts, which can be turned into entrepreneurial ventures.

Sports and Recreation: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds

Engaging in sports not only promotes physical well-being but also cultivates discipline, teamwork, and leadership skills. Investing in sports facilities, organizing tournaments, and support-

ing local athletes can create a positive outlet for the energy and enthusiasm of Kashmiri youth. Furthermore, investing in sports infrastructure and training programs can create opportunities for local athletes, coaches, and support staff, contributing to economic development. The success of Kashmiri athletes and sportsmen like Pervez Rasool and Umran Malik on a national and international stage can inspire and motivate other youth to pursue their dreams.

Community Engagement: Building a Stronger Society

Involving young people in community service and volunteerism instills a sense of responsibility and empathy. By participating in initiatives such as environmental conservation, healthcare outreach, and disaster relief, Kashmiri youth can contribute to the betterment of their society and gain a deeper understanding of their role as change-makers. This engagement not only allows them to contribute their unique perspectives and ideas but also fosters a stronger connection to their community and its well-being. Through community-based programs, youth can develop leadership skills, collaborate with diverse groups, and gain practical experience that prepares them for active participation in shaping the region's future.

Mental Health Support: Nurturing Resilience

The psychological toll of conflict and uncertainty cannot be underestimated. Establishing accessible mental health services and awareness campaigns can help Kashmiri youth cope with stress and trauma, enabling them to harness their potential and pursue their aspirations with renewed vigor. By prioritizing mental health, we empower Kashmiri youth to overcome adversities, unlock their potential, and become agents of positive. Mental health support support not only enhances their overall well-being but also enables them to focus on personal and academic growth.

Communication and Connectivity: Bridging Divides

Modern technology offers unprecedented opportunities for connectivity and communica-

tion. By providing access to the internet, online education, and platforms for expression, Kashmiri youth can transcend geographical boundaries and engage with the global community. Furthermore, enhanced communication platforms facilitate the exchange of ideas, cultural exchange, and collaboration, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among Kashmiri youth. By harnessing the power of communication and connectivity, young individuals can be provided with the means to express themselves and explore new horizons.

In conclusion, channelizing the energy and potential of Kashmiri youth towards positive avenues requires a multi-faceted approach. Through education, entrepreneurship, cultural preservation, sports, community engagement, mental health support, and enhanced connectivity, we can empower these young individuals to shape a prosperous and harmonious future for themselves and their region. It is pertinent to mention here that the government of Jammu & Kashmir has rolled out a pioneering initiative - Mission Youth to provide a platform for holistic implementation of all youth engagement and outreach initiatives, and to bring the interests and empowerment of youth to the centre of policy making. It has established around 4,290 youth clubs since its inception in 2021 where volunteer youth are trained to work through real challenges and make meaningful change. This mission has been very successful in empowering the Kashmiri youth and has turned out to be a game changer. Further such initiatives are need of the hour that hold the potential to alleviate the persistent trauma and tension of Kashmiri youth that has affected their lives for far too long. By investing in the empowerment of Kashmiri youth, we not only contribute to their personal growth but also lay the foundation for a more stable and harmonious region, fostering a sense of hope, unity, and progress that can lead to lasting positive change.

(The author is a member of Kashmir Writers' Association and can be reached at rather1294@gmail.com).

YOUR COLUMN

Should handwriting be considered for awarding marks in exams

Dear Editor,

Students are always advised to work on improving their handwriting in schools. In fact, they are provided cursive writing books, writing exercise and even during vacations practicing writing on daily basis is included in students holiday homework. But, why is there so much value given to handwriting in students' life? The conflict arises when people start comparing or even criticising an individual on the basis of handwriting. This comparison and ensuing criticism have led to the debate on whether handwriting should be considered a criteria to decide marks of any student.

Let us discuss and understand the role of handwriting in a student's life and it's importance for awarding marks in exams-

Handwriting is necessary for students' marks in exams:

Handwriting is a beautiful art. It is not only about putting letters on paper but it also indicates how organised and methodical a person is.

Good handwriting is important even in this era of computer typing and talking writing tools. We should start focusing on handwriting from an early age itself; say 4 or 5 years (Preschool and Kindergarten). It will help the young hands to gather control of their motor skills and also devise their unique writing styles which will develop as they grow up thus adding to their personalities.

When we write, it creates an invisible yet very strong

connection between the brain and content, thus giving us a much better and intense understanding of the matter.

A good handwriting always attracts attention and appreciation, and subconsciously helps in studies as well. Many types of research have shown that there is a constructive association between good handwriting and better academic performances. Scientists have attributed this phenomenon to the fact that writing using pen and paper enhances memory hence adding up to the remembrance which is vital at the time of tests and exams.

Vijay Garg

Ghulam Nabi Azad on Indian Muslims

Dear Editor,

Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) Chiarmman Ghulam Nabi Azad has come out with a statement that majority of Indian Muslims are the ones who are converted from Hindu religion. He has cited the example of Kashmir Pzandits converted into Islam in the Kashmir Valley. Azad has enlightened that there were no Muslims in Kashmir about 600 years ago and there were only Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmir was land of Kashyap, Anant island of Shesha Naga, Srinagar was called as Surya Nagar, Baramulla was named after Varaha, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. There was no history of Islam in Kashmir until 14th century when Muslims came and wiped out Hindus. Christianity, based on the teachings of Jesus Christ who lived in the holy land 2000 years ago, is the world's biggest religion with about 2.1 billion followers worldwide. Islam, on the other hand was founded in 7th century. Azad has reiterated this by saying that

Islam came into existence 1500 years ago. The Prophet Muhammad founded Islam in the year 610. Muhammad and his followers spread the teachings of Islam in Arabian peninsula. If Christianity is the biggest religion, Hinduism is the oldest religion dating back to 4000 years. Hinduism is the third largest religion with the following of 900 million people. Unlike Christianity and Islam, Hinduism has not been founded by anybody. Hinduism is believed to be a way of life also apart from being a religion. Azad has lamented that when Hindus die, they are cremated. "They are burnt in different places. Their ashes are placed in the river which mixes the water and we drink that water", he further adds. True. Ashes are immersed in water. But Azad needs to be reminded that daily hundreds people will be urinating in the water while taking bath. Hundred of people take the water from the rivers after passing stools. While washing, the hand is dived again and again. Does Azad think that people carry with them pitchers whenever they go to river? In these rivers we drink water and bathe. If we think of these, no river waters will be fit for human consumption. The river waters have to be used only for agricultural purpose in that case. However, the silverlining is that he also has observed that the Muslims' flesh and bones become a part of the nation's soil. "They too become a part of this land. Their flesh and their bones become a part of Bharat Mata's soil. Hindus and Muslims both merge into this land. What differene is there between them?", he further elaborates. Azad advocates that religion should not be used as a vote bank in politics. Unfortunately, the religion of the candidates in electoral fray has been playing dominant role in the mind of majority of voters. Religion and politics should not be mixed. It is only a wish. Now religion has become inseparable part of our political system.

K.V Seetharamaiah