

## DIGITAL LITERACY

In the 21st century, digital literacy has become an essential skill, as technology permeates nearly every aspect of our lives.

Digital literacy encompasses the ability to effectively and critically navigate, evaluate, and create information using a range of digital technologies.

This skill is crucial for personal empowerment, professional success, and active participation in the digital age.

At its core, digital literacy involves a variety of competencies. Firstly, it includes basic technical skills, such as using computers, smartphones, and other digital devices. This encompasses understanding how to operate operating systems, use software applications, and manage digital files.

Familiarity with internet browsers and search engines is also fundamental, enabling users to access and retrieve information efficiently.

However, digital literacy extends beyond mere technical abilities. It also involves understanding how to evaluate the credibility of online information.

In an era of information overload and widespread misinformation, the ability to discern reliable sources from dubious ones is vital.

## Parents must teaching children how to do household chores

■ SURJIT FLORA

It was once believed by sages that work is an integral part of human existence. However, refraining from employing children has also evolved into a symbol of social standing.

While these facilities may appear beneficial during childhood, they are unable to address the complexities of life. As children enter puberty, they often spend more time outside the house for study or work. This can present a challenge for parents, as their children may not contribute to household chores.

Make it enjoyable for them It seems that the younger generation is more enthusiastic about lending a hand. The abundance of praise throughout the text helps to boost their confidence and make them feel good.

So, parents should prioritize teaching their children, both daughters and sons, the essential skills of housecleaning, house maintenance, and home finance.

It is perfectly acceptable for a daughter to learn skills such as using a hammer, climbing a ladder, or building a shed. Similarly, there is nothing wrong with a son learning tasks like washing dishes, ironing laundry, or cleaning a toilet.

However, in my opinion, involving your children in your work so that they can observe the process and acquire valuable knowledge and skills is the most effective approach. If you have multiple children, it's a great idea to rotate the chores among them. This way, they can all contribute equally and learn the responsibilities equally well.

Introduce them to the world that they will be living in. If you want anything, you have to earn it. It is not right that you, as a parent, are responsible for cleaning, cooking, and cleaning the home.

All of you are required to make a contribution since you all share the same dwelling. Take personal responsibility for your actions. You are responsible for picking up your own filthy clothing and placing them in your bucket.

During the week, you are responsible for doing your own laundry. If a dish or glass is unclean, you should clean it.

Taking turns, move the vacuum around the living room in a circular motion. When it comes to emptying the dishwasher, take turns doing it. Shared responsibilities are not considered to be duties.

The younger generation prefers to have their meals prepared for them. That's the reason why many individuals choose to dine out instead of cooking at home. Now it's incredibly convenient. There's no need to leave your home anymore.

With just a few taps on your phone, you can order everything online. You can take care of everything from food to groceries to banking.

Maybe we've overlooked the fact that choosing to eat at home promotes beneficial health, while dining out can increase the risk of illness.

As a parent, teaching your children how to cook is an incredibly valuable gift. The skills you teach them will prove invaluable as they navigate through life. While consuming spicy food from outside can impact our overall well-being, home-cooked meals digest easily.

It is important for a mother to teach her children how to do household chores.

This instills a sense of confidence in them, empowering them to tackle any challenge that comes their way, even if it means venturing outside their comfort zone. Thus, their married life also proceeds with happiness.

Teaching children housework skills empowers them to solve their own problems. Additionally, reducing social media usage will lead to a greater sense of satisfaction from one's work.

Children will develop the skills necessary to nurture and sustain relationships. Having a healthy heart and mind is crucial for overall well-being.

Start with straightforward tasks when they are young. Experts generally recommend involving children between the ages of 4 and 5 in the process of toy cleaning. Let's transform it into an enjoyable game.

It is crucial to instill the value of organizing their own clothes in their drawers once they reach a certain age.

When preparing dinner, it's important to ensure that the table is clean and organized. It's crucial to keep in mind that children will inevitably make mistakes as they learn and develop.

It's important to approach them with patience and avoid being overly critical.

Additionally, mentor them in the art of cooking. It's impressive how soon you can begin involving them in this activity. Shall we start by baking cakes together?

It's crucial to impart basic cooking skills to young teenagers, such as making eggs, pancakes, and using the BBQ. From there, individuals can gradually broaden their culinary skills.

will also help strengthen the connections within your family, while boosting your children's self-confidence as they develop new skills.

Additionally, the bond with family members will strengthen.

You won't experience any mental exhaustion. When children take on more responsibility, it can have a positive impact on their parents' workload.

When the entire family engages in activities together, it brings about immense joy without breaking the bank.

(The writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton)

# Floriculture: A Blooming Industry in J&K

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Flowers have been an integral part of our society and were cultivated for various purposes ranging from religious, social and aesthetic. A demand in the loose and cut flowers has made this sector as one of the most important sectors. Commercial floriculture has higher potential area per unit area than most of the field crops and thus, a lucrative business. This sector is gaining momentum across the globe because of change in the lifestyle of the people, increasing concern over environment and improving purchasing power of the people. Many youths are coming forward to start the entrepreneurship in floriculture by using the modern technologies. The aesthetic value of flowers, their increasing use in the social events and potential of generating more money are attracting many new entrepreneurs towards floriculture industry. This sector has been considered as a viable sector recently because of increasing urbanization and changing socio-economic status of the people. The demand for cut flowers and loose flowers is increasing and there is need for the researchers and extension agents to concentrate on the future of this sector.

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is bestowed with natural beauty and located between 32.17 and 37.06 North latitude and 73.2 and 80.36 East longitude in the Himalayan region. It has 1069 mm average annual rainfall in sub-tropical Jammu region and 660mm in temperate valley respectively. The average temperatures of these two regions are 24.5 and 13.3 centigrade respectively. J&K is endowed with ample natural resources including soil, water, climatic condition, diversity, topography, rich natural flora etc. which are conducive for the cultivation of a wide range of flowers. J&K is considered as the paradise on the earth because of its natural glamour. The UT has undergone many changes through the ages, influenced by the different kinds of cultures, religions and rulers during various periods of history. It is this scenic beauty and bountiful nature that lured the Mughals and they were impressed by the natural beauty and they

established many gardens in the valley along their main sites and journey routes. Beautiful gardens in J&K are being enjoyed by the tourists across the globe. Keeping the demand of flowers in view there is need to increase the production and quality of flowers in J&K. Government organizations are creating awareness on commercial floriculture among the farmers and some farmers especially the youths are showing keen interest in commercial floriculture.

Union Territory of J&K has huge potential in floriculture industry due to varied agro-climate and ecological conditions. Different types of commercially important flowers can be produced in the region and J&K can lead in quality flowers production in India because of congenial atmosphere for floriculture. Jammu is said to be the city of temples and there is a good numbering of floriculture consumer. Floriculture sector in J&K can strengthen the economy of J&K and some new employment and income opportunities can be created especially for the youth in the region. More efforts are needed to transform the burgeoning floriculture industry in J&K. Presently the contribution of India in world floriculture industry is about 0.6 per cent which is meager at international level. This industry is growing annually at a rate of 7-10 per cent. There is great scope of orchids, gladiolus, marigold, rose, gerbera, lilyum, tulip, chrysanthemum etc.in J&K. Some model units of floriculture need to be established in J&K and those units should be replicated in other areas. In J&K every year new farmers are added up in the floriculture industry and their numbering is increasing year-by-year. The competition is also increasing annually because of the quality of flowers. There is need to make some proper marketing channels for flowers. Markets should be regulated for the floriculturists of the region. Additional efforts are needed for the value addition in the floriculture and some new innovations need to be adopted by the floriculturists to make this sector more lucrative. Presently farmers are doing the commercial farming of marigold and gladiolus in Jammu region but some other floriculture crops can also be taken as enterprises by

the farmers. There is scope in increasing the productivity of flowers and for that purpose latest technologies need to be adopted. There is uneven performance of floriculture sector in J&K because of promotion of floriculture in certain specific pockets of the region. Off-season flowers can also be produced by the adoption of protected cultivation technique. In Jammu region of J&K area under marigold and gladiolus is rapidly increasing annually because of high net returns. Farmers need more information on production technologies and marketing management under floriculture crops.

Floriculture has been identified as the sunrise industry in J&K .New technologies and trends in floriculture have revolutionised the floriculture industry. Entrepreneurship in floriculture can give new avenues of income and employment in J&K. Landscaping has become an integral part of gardening, adding aesthetic value to a place, reducing pollution, protecting the environment and promoting eco-tourism. Floriculture requires higher level of information, economics and technology; the consultancy services in preparing the project reports, to prepare the market survey report, evaluation studies etc. National Horticulture Board under the Ministry of Agriculture has introduced many new schemes to encourage the floriculture industry. J&K has lot of scope of floriculture industry.

It has been observed that flowers have high demand within and outside of J&K.J&K has good soil and weather conditions which are conducive for the growth of flowers. All these factors indicate that there is immense scope of floriculture in J& K. Now the farmers are becoming aware about this rising industry. If we look our economy, our agriculture, horticulture and floriculture have attracted the attention of big investors. In Reasi, Jammu and Samba marigold crop is highly concentrated and farmers grow it at commercial level. Farmers are needed adequate credit facilities so that they can purchase quality inputs and get assured irrigation in their crops for better returns. Soil and water testing techniques facil-

ities should be provided to them. Adequate power supply is also required to irrigate their fields and for other power related field activities. Broad research and extension activities also need to be intensified to promote the floriculture industry in J&K. Cold storage facilities also need to be increased to get better returns from this industry. Literature in local dialect should also be provided to the farmers to upgrade their knowledge on commercial floriculture. Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) should also be increased so that farmers can get the information of scientific floriculture even during the COVID-19 pandemic. During training programmes projected aids can be utilized to create more impact of the activities. Through this technique more interest on floriculture can be created among the rural youths and flowers production can be increased. This will help to enhance the income of the farmers. Specific trainings on seed production should be imparted to the farmers so that the cost of cultivation can be reduced in the floriculture sector. Adequate staff is also required to impart the technical skills and assess the feedback of the farmers in this sector. Public Private Partnership (PPP) can also be initiated in this sector. Special projects on floriculture should be launched. Proper packaging and post-harvest techniques should be provided to the farmers. Special exposure visits for the floriculturists should be arranged so as to learn new technologies under this sector. Rural migration should be discouraged so that the labour can be made easily available in the rural areas. Support prices should also be there for the flowers crops. Floriculture can prove as a significant crop for socio-economic transformation in J&K. In order to make the presence felt in the market, a lot needs to be done in terms of improving the infrastructure ,providing the technical knowledge, having a quality control, mechanism, sale and promotion centres and better policies.

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# From Ration to Nutrition: Re-orienting Fair Price Shops for Nutrition Security

■ SANJEEV CHOPRA

Chaman Prakash, a Fair Price Shop (FPS) dealer in the Pratap Vihar Block of Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, has been distributing food grains for the past 11 years. As the only FPS dealer in the area, he serves over 1,500 households. His reputation as a trusted figure in the community became especially vital during the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, when beneficiaries relied heavily on their Public Distribution System (PDS) entitlements. Prakash is among 5.3 lakh dealers nationwide who act as last-mile food grain delivery agents, ensuring food security for more than 80 crore individuals through the PDS. These FPSs are licensed and managed by state governments and receive compensation through dealer margins based on per-quintal transactions at their shops.However, food grain distribution through FPSs is concentrated over a 7-10 day period each month. For the rest of the month, these shops remain underutilized, providing no additional income opportunities for the dealers. Such sub-optimal utilisation of physical and human resources in the FPSs threatens the economic viability and sustainability of this essential last-mile delivery network.

Over the past decade, the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) has implemented various initiatives to modernize FPSs. Electronic Point of Sale (e-PoS) devices have been installed in all FPSs, and nearly 100% of

transactions are now biometrically authenticated through Aadhaar. The process of linking the e-PoS devices with electronic weigh scales so as to ensure correct weightment of the foodgrains has also been initiated and due for completion by end of 2024. States have been encouraged to develop Model FPSs under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)with amenities for beneficiaries such as waiting areas, seating arrangements, and drinking water. State Governments are also empowered to provide extra services at the FPS such as Common Service Centre (CSC) services and Business Correspondent (BC) services to create additional income streams for FPS dealers. In January 2024, the DFPD launched a pilot program to onboard FPSs onto the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), an initiative aimed at expanding the customer base of FPSs and enhancing their viability. However, the economic sustainability of FPSs continues to remain an area of concern for dealers and government alike.

Another pressing challenge has been the nutrition security of beneficiaries. Currently, DFPD only provides energy-rich cereals (rice and wheat) through the PDS, while a significant portion of the population continues to face nutritional deficiencies. Data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) reveals high anaemia rates: 67.1% in children aged 6 to 59 months, 57% in women aged 15 to 49 years, and 25% in men

aged 15 to 49 years. Additionally, issues of stunting, wasting, and underweight persist among children under five years. Therefore, a dual approach is essential: enhancing income opportunities for FPS dealers while simultaneously improving the nutritional outcomes of the population through dietary diversification.

In order to overcome these two challenges, the DFPD has launched a pilot program to transform FPSs into 'Jan Poshan Kendras' (JPKs) in 60 FPSs-15 each in Ghaziabad, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, and Hyderabad.These kendras will, inter alia, offer a diverse range of nutrient-dense commodities, such as millets, pulses, edible oils, and soybeans, at competitive prices compared to the open market. The JPKs aim to provide additional revenue streams and better margins for dealers while addressing nutritional gaps among beneficiaries and the local population.

The transformation of FPSs into JPKs is built on four key pillars: i) training and capacity building for FPS dealers, ii) access to working capital for FPS dealers through invoice financing, iii) market linkages via B2B aggregators, and iv) promotion of nutritional literacy.

To enhance the capacity of FPS dealers, the DFPD has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) which operates under the Ministry of Skill Development. This partnership aims to provide skill develop-

ment programs focused on financial literacy, digital literacy, nutritional literacy, and business management. Training sessions for the FPS dealers participating in the pilot program were held in two batches during May and June 2024.

Additionally, the DFPD has executed another MoU with the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to create 'FPS-Sahay', a mobile application that allows FPS dealers to finance invoices for purchasing non-PDS commodities. Major B2B aggregators have been invited to join this platform to help establish supply chain linkages for FPS dealers.

Furthermore, FPS dealers are being oriented to serve as 'Poshan Mitras,' offering basic guidance to beneficiaries on the benefits of consuming nutrient-dense foods and creating balanced meals. Through these four pillars, DFPD is laying the groundwork for a sustainable model that benefits both the dealers and the communities they serve.

With this initiative, Chaman Prakash's professional life is poised for transformation, enabling him to diversify his offerings, increase his income, and play a pivotal role in improving the nutritional health of the community. This development will not only enhance his livelihood but also strengthen the essential role of FPSs in promoting food and nutrition security across India.

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# From Nirbhaya to Moumita Debnath: Legal Reforms and the Continuing Struggle Against Sexual Violence

## Adv Prashant Singh Manhas & Adv Sawan Singh Bhau

Introduction: On August 9, 2024, Moumita Debnath, a second-year postgraduate trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, was found dead in a seminar hall in the college campus. Her rape and murder had been verified by an autopsy. India witnessed another episode of mass protest in response to the rape and killing of a trainee doctor in the state of West Bengal. Last time the country was jolted into mass protests over sexual violence against women was in December 2012 triggered by a brutal gang-rape of a medical student in New Delhi. At that time, the social movement demanded reforms in criminal law, in response, the state enacted amendments to criminal laws. But whether these stringent laws create any kind of deterrence in the minds of perpetrators of crime? Did the Criminal law (Amendment) Act 2013 put a tight rein on it, all these things require a matter of detailed discussion. In the instant case, investigation revealed disturbing details: Debnath had been raped and sexually assaulted before being killed via strangulation. As per, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2023, crimes against women in India increased by 4% throughout 2022 with reported cases rising from 4,28,278 in 2021 to 4,45,256 in 2022 in which 31,516 are Rape cases reported, out of which 2.56% of cases convicted to total number of cases for trial. After the Nirbhaya incident, a stringent law was introduced but nothing has changed in the past decade and crime against women has not stopped till today, after Nirbhaya incident, Shakti mills gang rape (2013), Ariyalur gang rape(2016), Unnao gang rape (2017), Kathua gang rape(2018), Hyderabad gang rape and murder(2019), Hathuras gang rape(2020), over the past decade, these are several gruesome rape cases that have deeply shook the society. But till date there has been no declining trend in this graph Penal Provisions relating to Rape The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, expanded the definition of rape, it now covers oral sex, sexual activity per-

formed without consent, and inserting an instrument or any other bodily part into a woman's vagina, urethra, or anus. If a male engages in sexual activity with a woman against her will or without her consent, as defined by clauses one to seven of section 63 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), he is guilty of rape. Even the slightest penetration [Tarkeshwar Sahu v. State Of Bihar (Jharkhand)] of male organ into the female is sufficient to constitute 'sexual intercourse' and the depth of penetration is immaterial [Nathu Ram v. State of Haryana].

If the rape resulting in death or vegetative state of the victim, the punishment is 20 years to life imprisonment (rigorous imprisonment) or death. As per section 193 of BNSS (Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023) the investigation shall be completed without unnecessary delay and if the investigation relates to an offence against women and children, it shall be completed within two months. Whether aforementioned provisions in law are sufficient to curb the increasing incidents of rape? Can the investigation be completed in 2 months? All these things will become clear in the coming days. RG Kar Medical College Incident: Initially, the hospital administration informed the parents that their daughter was ill, but half an hour later, they reported that she had killed herself. In the hospital where the corpse was discovered, doctors were present. Why were they all unaware that it was either a murder or a suicide? We have already seen that the how the mob sabotaging the hospital building premises and trying to temper the evidence present at the crime, being misled by someone. But at same time the police authority even knowing the fact that the matter is of grave importance, why security arrangements were not strengthened earlier; in such kind of cases the police authorities should be made accountable. Way forward: I think that if the following things are added to the law and society through education then cases like violence against women, rape or other can be reduced:

Stop Sexualizing and Objectifying Women: I believe the film and media industry plays a critical role in perpetuating sexual dominance by consistently sexualizing and objectifying women, particularly through the actions of lead actor figures whom much of the Indian audience idolizes. When these 'actors' exhibit aggressive or degrading behaviour toward women on screen, it normalizes and validates such behaviour in real life. Similarly, actresses who participate in item songs often reinforce this objectification, with lyrics and visuals that reduce women to mere objects of desire. (these roles can be taken up by dancers instead of lead actresses with huge following, solely because girls idolize them). This constant portrayal in hundreds of films shapes societal perceptions, conditioning viewers to believe that women are inherently weak, vulnerable, and dependent on men for survival. The more this narrative is repeated, the more it ingrains the false notion that women are inferior; similar to objects meant to be controlled. Sensitization of Males: Sensitization of males to prevent sexual violence against females is essential. Teaching children about consent, boundaries, and respectful behaviour from a young age can help prevent sexual violence. As I mentioned above, sexualizing and objectifying women and portraying then she is inferior then males, it's a form of indoctrination that begins early. A child may grow up with no sense of inferiority, but as she is repeatedly told through films, ads, and societal remarks that her value lies in her appearance, purity of her body or that she is weaker than men, she begins to internalize these harmful beliefs. Even when women achieve extraordinary feats, such as Manu Bhaker's Olympic victory, the conversation often shifts away from their accomplishments and focuses instead on their physical appearance and marriage. This obsessive focus on beauty and body over capability exemplifies how deep-rooted this conditioning is, feeding into the larger narrative of women's vulnerability. In order to change

the unequal gender relations in families, communities, and social institutions like workplaces and schools, men and women can work together to take specific action. Men's involvement in gender equality initiatives should have a positive impact on all facets of their lives, fostering social inclusion, democracy, and justice. Stop Politicization of Crimes: When we are discussing about heinous crimes, it's essential to approach the matter objectively and avoid politicizing it and focusing only on the legal aspects rather than see with the angle of politics. Strict action should be taken against those who try to add fuel to the fire, whether it is a politician, administrator or a person from any field.

Equality Approach: Sometimes, we have seemed that when the politicians or person related to them suspected or indulged in any crime then the soft approach would be adopted by the authorities towards them and this must be stopped and equal treatment given to the accused of any offence without preventing anyone, whether he belongs to the high-class society or an indigent person. Conviction based on Medical and Forensic evidence: If the semen sample of the accused matches with the sample taken from the vaginal swab of the rape victim, then he should be sentenced on that basis. There is no need to prolong the trials in heinous crimes, if it is proved from the medical and forensic evidence that this person is involved in it, the sooner the culprit is punished, the better it is for the society. Conclusion: Even after the 2013 criminal law amendment, making the existing laws stringent enough to possible deter the perpetrator has less or zero impact on rising graph of rape crimes. Thus, a bottom-up approach is required which has to be back by the efforts of all i.e., media, civil society, NGOs, activist groups and other institutions to ensure that we will have progressive society that respect sanctity of women.

(The writers are advocates of J&K and Ladakh High Court, Jammu)

