

SACRED RESPONSIBILITY

India, a land of immense spiritual and cultural heritage, is home to thousands of pilgrimage sites that attract millions of devotees every year. From the snow-clad peaks of Amarnath to the Ghats of Varanasi, from Vaishno Devi in Jammu to Tirupati in the south, these sacred places are not only spiritual landmarks but also repositories of history, architecture, tradition, and community identity. However, the growing footfall, environmental degradation, and lack of long-term preservation planning are threatening the sanctity and sustainability of many of these revered sites.

The recent tragedy at Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, where heavy rains and poor planning led to the loss of innocent lives, underscores the urgent need to treat our pilgrimage sites not just as tourist destinations, but as sacred public spaces that require protection, regulation, and reverence. It is imperative that governments, shrine boards, local communities, and devotees come together to reimagine pilgrimage site management with a focus on preservation, safety, and ecological balance.

One of the foremost challenges facing pilgrimage sites today is uncontrolled overcrowding. Many shrines witness massive surges in visitor numbers during specific seasons, festivals, or auspicious dates. Without proper crowd management, infrastructure planning, and emergency preparedness, this can result in stampedes, health hazards, and infrastructural collapse. Digital tools such as e-registration, crowd monitoring, and staggered time slots for Darshan should be widely implemented to regulate pilgrim flow.

Preservation must begin with eco-sensitive zoning, strict building norms, and sustainable infrastructure like bio-toilets, renewable energy, and solid waste management systems.

Preservation also entails cultural and architectural conservation. Many pilgrimage sites house centuries-old temples, monasteries, mosques, or churches that are deteriorating due to neglect or haphazard renovation. Restoration must be carried out under expert supervision using traditional materials and methods to maintain the authenticity of these structures. Government agencies like the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) must partner with local shrine boards and heritage experts to ensure this.

Importantly, the role of local communities and pilgrims themselves cannot be overstated. Preservation is not just a technical process but a social and spiritual duty. Locals must be empowered through training, employment, and awareness programs to act as custodians of the sites. Pilgrims must be educated about maintaining cleanliness, respecting traditions, and minimizing their environmental footprint. Financially, pilgrimage sites often generate significant revenue through donations and tourism. These funds should be transparently and effectively utilized for preservation efforts, infrastructure development, and welfare of the workers and residents who serve these holy places. Accountability and transparency in shrine management are critical to building public trust and sustaining preservation efforts.

Combating the Malnutrition Menace

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Malnutrition is considered as a diseases of human society that begins in the womb and eventually lasts till death. It is a serious public health challenge. According to WHO, malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and or nutrients. Diet is a crucial element in the natural history of many public health-related diseases and owing to the multiple factors that eventually determine the dietary habits ,a comprehensive approach is the need of the hour. Most of the developing nations are experiencing a rapid transition in their socio-economic ,demographic, nutrition and health care delivery system-related parameters, owing to which they are experiencing under-nutrition, poverty, communicable diseases etc..Nutrition is the intake of food in relation to the body's dietary needs. Malnutrition results from the intake of inadequate or excess food. Malnutrition can increase the sustainability of the diseases, reduce immunity, reduce productivity and impair physical and mental development. Hunger is a global challenge. There are about 800 million people in the world who do not have enough food to live a healthy life. The highest numbers of hungry people are in Asia while the highest prevalence of hunger is in Sub-Saharan Africa. Poor nutrition causes around half of deaths of children under five years old. About 100 million children in the world are underweight. Malnutrition is an outcome of poverty and inequality. It has been observed that in 2017 around 1.5 billion people suffered from micro-nutrients deficiencies.2.6 billion people were overweight (30 per cent of global population).Hunger is mainly circumscribed to the specific areas, namely those ravaged by conflicts, droughts and extreme poverty. Obesity is found everywhere and it is increasing alarmingly around the world. The growing rate of obesity is happening at a huge socio-economic cost. Obesity is a risk factor for many non-communicable diseases such as heart attack, diabetes, stroke, cancer etc.

There is dire need to eradicate all forms of malnutrition and achieve the target of zero hunger. It is estimated that world population will reach to 9 billion by 2050.In a world of 805 million people, one in nine persons lives in chronic hunger. Every year around five millions children under the age of five die due to malnutrition. Out of ten, four children are malnourished in the poor countries of the world. It is estimated that world produces enough food to feed every person on the earth. No one in the world should have the experience of hunger. A zero hunger world by 2030 is possible". Malnutrition revolves around agriculture because investment in agriculture supported by education and health can turn around this problem. With the climate change food crisis is a challenge for the entire world. Zero hunger can save the lives of 3.1 million children a year. Well-nourished mothers have healthier babies with a stronger immune system. Proper nutrition in early life could mean 46 per cent more in lifetime earnings. Zero hunger can help to build a safe, prosperous and healthy world. There is need to find new and scientific ways by the farmers to produce quality food and diversify their crops.

Food is a common element for all the human beings on the earth. In India during the marriage ceremonies lot of food is prepared out of which many times lot of food is wasted. Such food can be preserved and distributed among the poor and needy people. A scheme can be launched in which certain percentage of the salaries can be deducted from the employees of various organisations who voluntarily want to donate for food bank and such money can be utilized to feed the poor people. There is need to create awareness on various aspects of agriculture and food security such as biodiversity, climate change etc. People should save the food and eliminate food wastage. There is a need to concentrate on zero hunger: With the elimination of under nutrition in the children GDP up to 16.5 per cent can be increased. Iron deficiency in the population can boost 20 percent of the workplace productivity. India's food grain production has been

on the rise despite year-to-year fluctuations since the Green Revolution of the 1960s. After the Green Revolution, increase in production is due to introduction of yield-increasing technologies, supportive services and infrastructure. The country's total food grain production was 50 million tons in 1950-51 which was 291.95 million tons in 2019-20. Food-sufficiency does not reflect food security for the entire population of the country though it makes the country food secure at the micro-level. Food security needs to manifest in all its dimensions, covering all regions and all economic strata of society. The per capita availability has also been risen during the same period from around 395 grams per day to nearly 491.9 grams per day despite unabated increase in population. It has been observed that one third (34.3%) children in India are stunted, two children out of five are underweight, three fourth of them are anemic and one out of every three undernourished children in the world is from India.

The Zero Hunger Challenge was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in 2012.The Zero Hunger vision reflects five elements from within the SDGs which taken together can end hunger; eliminate all forms of malnutrition and build sustainable food systems. In order to get the zero hunger society, deep transformation is required in agriculture and food systems. Sustainable food systems can deliver food security and nutrition for all. There is need to promote the climate-compatible agriculture practices including diversification in agriculture. In order to end the rural poverty, there is need to enhance the income of small-scale producers. They hold the key to feed the growing population in a sustainable way. There is also need to minimize the food losses during production, storage and transportation. The mission of the Zero Hunger is to bring together all stakeholders to communicate the importance of food security, nutrition and inclusive, sustainable and resilient agriculture.

Malnutrition is both a driver and outcome

of poverty and inequality. Under nutrition can lead to hidden hunger; wasting and stunting which causes irreversible damage to individuals and society. Obesity among the children is increasing in all the regions. There is dire need to ensure the nutritious food among the people to have a healthy society. There is need to mitigate the problem of malnutrition in India. The country appears to be not only self-sufficient in food grains but also having marginally surplus as well. But the issue whether the present level of nutritional intake is adequate or not is still being debated. India has been regularly exporting rice and wheat since December 2000 and the government started offering grains for exports to prune the excessive stock-holding. India has since become the world's second largest exporter of rice and seventh that of wheat. The subsequent drought and increased domestic grain utilization in its wake slowed down the exports but even then the export surplus has continued to persist. India accounts for 33% of the total poor people in the world. Time and again India evolved strategies to tackle rural as well as urban poverty. The real issue is not the availability of food but of its affordability by the poor. There is need to adopt multisectoral approach by involving the Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), various national and local institutions, civil society organizations, private sectors and citizens to end the malnutrition from the society. We all need to make collective efforts for a healthy diet. Zero hunger encompasses the eradication of all forms of nutrition. Our objective should not only to feed the people but also to nourish the people. Food system should be transformed in such a way so that all the people can consume safe, healthy and nutritious food.A comprehensive approach is the need of the hour to manage the problem of diseases associated with either excess or deficiency of specific nutrients.

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Rain God creating havoc in J&K

■ BAIRAJ CHAWALGAMI

Inder Davta- the rain god according to Hinduism seems not comfortable rather is angry with Jammuties. It has been raining heavily and the incessant rain and it is raining cats and dogs and putting live in Jammu in particular and Jammu region in general out of gear. The continuous rains from Monday night put people of Jammu region to inconvenience and trouble. The incessant rains caused mayhem and havoc in whole Jammu region. Continuous and torrential rains have caused floods in all most all regions of Jammu putting life of the people to trouble. Major roads in Jammu region are closed as there are flood like situations in whole Jammu region.

Jammu and Kashmir national highway stands closed because of heavy rains that lead to landslide in Ramban/Ramsoo stretch of the national highway. The Jammu-Pathankot Road is closed as the main bridge at Kathua has been damaged. Besides the Tawi bridge near Bhagwati Nagar has collapsed resulting into inconvenience to the vehicle operators as well as to commuters. All most all low-lying areas as well as plain areas of Jammu municipal corporation are witnessing water logging and in many such areas rain water has entered the houses of the people leading to trouble and inconvenience to the residents of these areas. All most all roads of Jammu are water logged and the already poor road infrastructure of Jammu is witnessing water logging causing disruption in the public, private transport and thus the vehicular traffic has been disturbed causing trouble and inconvenience to the commuters.



The pot holes in the roads of Jammu are full of rain water and the roads are also flooded with rain water and so it is difficult for the transport operators as well as private vehicles to ply on the Jammu roads which are already poor and shabby.

The rain water has entered into the houses of people in Udheywala, Anand Nagar , Tomal, Lower Muthi, Akalpora, Ajit Colony, Trilokpura of Gole Gujral ,Lower Roop Nagar, Sarwal, Janipur, New Plots, Krishna Nagar , GMC near Jewal some areas of Talab Tillo , Bhoiri, Jammu university compound etc, putting the inmates of these areas and other areas

to trouble. The water level of nullas, rivers and rivulets are rising.The main river of Jammu the Tawi River is flowing near danger mark and if the rain will not stop there will be major flood in Jammu and it may result in destruction and even loss to the lives of the people. Incessant and torrential rains have wrought havoc in Jammu and unfortunately 13 people have died due to rains and landslides. It is very unfortunate and disturbing that more than 33 yatries of Mata Vaishno Davi have been killed near Adi Kumari and 14 people have got injured due to landslide by heavy rains. In total40 people were killed in the Jammu region due to

incessant rains, flash floods and landslides. Their killing is a question mark on the slackness of the local administration? One wonders why have the authorities allowed the yatries to undertake arduous pilgrimage to Trukuta hills in which stands Vaishnav Davi shrine. The torrential rains have caused flood like situation in Jammu. Due to continuous rains, it is becoming difficult for the people to venture out. Government has issued advisory for the people and cautioned then not to go near the rivers and not to venture out after 8:00 PM. The Jammu has plunged into complete darkness as electricity has got disrupted and with-

out electricity people are facing untold sufferings. The water supply has mostly been affected and people are suffering for the want of drinking water. All schools, government and private offices have been closed as a precautionary measure to avoid any untoward incident. The rains have impacted and affected the education of the children as the schools are off and on being closed by the government. The roofs of some school building collapsed and thank God no casualties were reported. Traffic on Jammu-Srinagar Highway and other major roads remain suspended. The call, mobile internet outage across all service providers in Jammu and Kashmir has been badly affected. Internet services have been closed from Wednesday morning thus obstructing phone communication. Restrictions, have been imposed on the movement of people during night hours. Relentless heavy rain has not only caused havoc and mayhem in Jammu region only but in Kashmir valley heavy downpour has been reported and in Srinagar also there is fear and threat of floods due to over flowing of the Jhelum- river. Bridges, electricity poles and culverts have collapsed putting traffic out of gear. In fact, the routine life of the people in Jammu as well as Kashmir has been badly affected. The recruitment campaign for constables in different security organisations including BSF has been halted for a day because of flood like situation. In Doda, Kishtwar, Baderwah, there are floods as the rivers are flowing above danger mark. The telecom services in the UT have been affected causing inconvenience to the people. On a cursory look it seems that the Weather god is angry with the people of Jammu region, but

a deep look and thinking forces us to admit that all climatic changes are due to the greed of the human mortals. People have cut trees, shrunk the rivers, encroached the banks of water bodies. We have disturbed the ecological and environmental balance and have done harm to the wild animals. People have without any remorse fell tree. In fact, people have disturbed the natural environment and the nature has started to punish us and that is the real thing., We should not play with the nature and overuse the natural resources as it is bound to recoil on us thus causing incessant rains, floods and landslides. In the name of development the government had blasted mountains and rocks to make roads and this has resulted into landslides at times causing the loss of innocent lives. People should not play with the natural environs and should not exploit it for selfish ends rather we should try to safeguard natural environment if we really want to save people from climatic changes. We have disturbed the natural environment and we are playing with the nature and misusing natural resources and the God in its turn is punishing us by resorting to floods, landslides and sometimes draughts. Humans should not exploit nature rather try to safeguard the natural environment and habitat so that nature on its part will not punish us.

Let us pray to rain God Indra to be benevolent and stop the torrential rain so that Jammuites will heave a sigh of relief. Enough is enough, the incessant rain should now stop it is our prayer to Inder Davta. Hoping that God who is most merciful and benevolent will protect us from natural furies.

Natural calamities caused due to cloudburst, flash flood

■ ISHER SINGH JASROTIA

This is in reference to the natural calamity due to cloudburst, flash floods, land sliding mudslides in 3rd week (15th to 27th of August 2025) across the districts of J&K (UT).

That since 1969, this is for the first time that such a huge loss of life and property has been caused from 14th to 27th of August 2025, due to continuous raining especially in the District Kathua (the largest District in the State).

In the early 1969, we used to see that here was heavy rain in the beging of June 2025, when had been intense heat (the beginning of summer season) and due to heavy rain, all the Khaderu used to be with flash flood carrying trees and causing great loss.

Similarly the cloudburst at Kishtwar on August 14, 2025 is also such a great calamities wherein more than 60 persons have lost their lives and more than 60 are missing.

Great loss has been occurred at Lakhampur at Bridge of Madhopur which connect J&K with Punjab. The building wherein the personnel of CRPF were staying was flooded away. The personnel of CRPF were evacuated by Helicopter and the army personals and NDRF were deployed there.

Similar loss has occurred at Tawi Bridge



which was damaged flowing beyond the danger mark on August 26, 2025. The houses down to the Tawi Bridge have been damaged and the people have been made houseless.

Now there has been propaganda that damage of Bridges of Sahar Khad (Khaderu) which was recently built under the control of BJP Government. There has been criticism against each other i.e both the Political Parties i.e Congress Govt. and BJP Govt. Whatever the cause of damage of the said bridge Bridges of Sahar Khad (Khaderu) on August 24, 2025 may be, it is loss of public property and great inconvenience to the people in general.

It has become common practice of the political parties to propagate false propagating whenever there has been calamities. There has been great hindrance to the public in large, some persons have to go to the Hospital in delivery cases, some have to attend the important function related to exigencies of services. Similarly there is propaganda by both Parties Congress and BJP regarding the damage of the said bridge at (Sahar Khad) Kathua which was built recently. The Congress persons are blaming the BJP regarding the dismantle of old bridge at Sahar Khad which was strong enough, should have not been dismantled and the same could be used now when both

both bridges have been damaged (one is totally damaged and the other is also is not fit for traffic. The National Highway traffic was diverted to take the route of Pathankot to Jammu via Nagri, Keerian, Bagthali.

So many people have been caused great loss due to the damage of their houses due to cloudburst and flash flood and some have lost their life.

It is admitted fact and as has been observed in every election, whether in Parliament election or the State Assembly election, the false promises made with the public are forgotten after the election is over. The statement given by the minister of Congress on the agenda of article 370, as to why he is not speaking on it, whereas the same was put in its manifesto before the General Election.

There is dire need to change the mindset of the people, not to fall prey of the false propagandas of those leaders especially those who beg votes in the name of religion, community and vice versa.

Now whatever may be the loss cause to the people due to cloudburst, flash flood are irreparable and cannot be compensated.

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