

POLL DIN ENDS IN JAMMU

If one is asked to choose Lok Sabha constituencies where people vote on positive issues Jammu will surely figure in the list. Under no circumstances have the people of the constituency or the region resorted to mayhem or negativity while deciding whom to vote for. The people may come across as mild-mannered and suave but they are sure that they prefer peace and tranquillity to mayhem and agitation. The not-so-fierce campaigning for the constituency that would see a direct fight between the INDI Alliance and the BJP concluded on Wednesday evening. Though the area is generally peaceful there is always an apprehension of Pakistan pushing in terrorists or activating their sleeper cells in the bordering Rajouri-Poonch area to disturb peace and disrupt elections on the day of polling. Nevertheless, the armed forces have taken note of it and are keeping an eye of the activities of disruptive elements.

Jammu has its set of grievances and problems and the candidates seeking to represent the people of the constituency representing 18 assembly segments in the district of Reasi, Samba, Jammu, and Rajouri have aired it during their campaigns. People aspire for a more developed Jammu, and jobs for the youth. However, as against Kashmir, there is no culture of looking back and carrying on the burden of the past. People value peace and they look forward to appreciating each developmental work that comes to the region and aspiring more and not always cribbing about what they didn't get. Besides, the voters keep in mind that the national elections are for electing a Prime Minister and a national government; it's not about local elections to speak of civic issues. True to the spirit of democracy, 22 candidates are contesting from this seat though Congress party's Raman Bhalla and BJP's Jugal Kishore Sharma (incumbent MP) are considered to be the closest rivals. Will Sharma be able to score a hat trick?

The Mysteries of Afterlife

SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

The Upanishads, ancient philosophical texts that form the foundation of Hinduism, offer profound insights into the nature of existence, consciousness and the ultimate reality. Among the myriad themes they explore, the concept of the afterlife occupies a significant place. Delving into the Upanishadic thoughts on the afterlife unveils a tapestry of ideas, reflecting deep contemplation on the nature of existence beyond the mortal realm.

The Transient and the Eternal: Central to the Upanishadic understanding of the afterlife is the distinction between the transient, ephemeral aspects of existence and the eternal, unchanging essence of the self (Atman). These texts assert that the physical body is subject to birth and death, bound by the cycles of samsara (the cycle of birth, death and rebirth), while the Atman transcends these cycles, being eternal and indestructible.

The Doctrine of Karma: Integral to the Upanishadic worldview is the doctrine of karma, which holds that every action, thought and intention produces consequences that shape one's future experiences. According to this doctrine, the quality of one's actions determines the nature of their existence in this life and beyond. The Upanishads emphasise that the consequences of karma extend beyond the confines of a single lifetime, influenc-



ing the soul's journey through successive rebirths.

The Journey of the Soul: The Upanishads envision the soul's journey through samsara as a process of spiritual evolution aimed at realising its true nature and attaining liberation (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death. This journey is characterised by the accumulation of karma, which propels the soul through various life experiences and incarnations. Each lifetime presents opportunities for growth, learning and self-realisation,

ultimately leading the soul closer to its divine source.

The Concept of Rebirth: Rebirth, or reincarnation, is a fundamental tenet of the Upanishadic philosophy. It is believed that the soul undergoes multiple births, inhabiting different bodies and experiencing diverse life circumstances based on its past actions. The Upanishads describe the process of rebirth as governed by the law of karma, wherein individuals are born into specific situations that reflect the consequences of their previous deeds. Liber-

ation from the cycle of rebirth is attained when the soul transcends its attachment to worldly desires and realises its essential unity with the divine.

The Ultimate Goal: Moksha: At the heart of the Upanishadic teachings on the afterlife lies the concept of moksha, or spiritual liberation. Moksha represents the culmination of the soul's journey, wherein it breaks free from the cycle of samsara and merges with the ultimate reality, known as Brahman. Achieving moksha involves transcending the ego, relinquishing attachments and realising the eternal truth of one's identity as Atman, identical to Brahman. In this state of liberation, the soul experiences eternal bliss, beyond the confines of time, space and individual identity.

Conclusion: The Upanishads offer profound insights into the nature of the afterlife, presenting a holistic worldview that encompasses the transient nature of earthly existence and the eternal essence of the self. Through the exploration of concepts such as karma, rebirth and moksha, these ancient texts provide a framework for understanding the soul's journey beyond mortality and its quest for spiritual realisation. Ultimately, the Upanishads invite us to contemplate the deeper mysteries of life and death, guiding us towards the realisation of our divine nature and the attainment of ultimate liberation.

(Writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF FOMO

SHAINY SHARMA

Ever found individuals befuddling when they see photos or updates from parties, gatherings, or events they were not invited to or witness their colleagues or peers receiving accolades, promotions or career advancements... Well such situations may evoke FOMO in individuals who feel stagnant or unproductive in comparison.

"FOMO," or the Fear of Missing Out, arises from a perceived discrepancy between one's own experiences and the experiences of others. Whether online or offline, the fear of missing out can exert a powerful influence on individuals' emotions, behaviours and decision-making processes, thereby highlighting the need for self-awareness and coping mechanisms to navigate the pressures of modern life. Now a days it is a prevalent phenomenon among Generation Z (Gen Z) and other demographics. It can be a double-edged sword, driving ambition while fostering anxiety. There is no denying the fact that Gen Z have grown up in a digital age which is characterized by constant connectivity and instant access to information promoting products, experiences and lifestyles that appear glamorous and desirable.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X and Facebook have become integral part of their daily lives, shaping their perceptions, behaviours and social interactions in profound ways.

Various studies and research too have



consistently shown a strong association between social media usage and FOMO among this generation, the consequences of which extends beyond mere discomfort and impact mental health, self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. Individuals plagued by FOMO due to the constant exposure to curated content and the pressure to maintain a certain online image may experience increased stress, anxiety, depression and feeling of loneliness

as they constantly compare their lives to others' highlight reels.

To mitigate the negative effects of FOMO on Gen Z, it becomes utmost important to promote digital literacy, encourage healthy social media habits and foster offline connections and experiences. Now this can include multiple practices such as practicing mindfulness or journaling that promote gratitude and positive thinking. Setting boundaries for

screen time and cultivating meaningful relationships and activities that are not dependent on social media validation. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive online community can help alleviate feelings of FOMO by emphasizing authenticity, empathy and acceptance.

Not only this but practicing the art of Digital Detox will allow individuals to reconnect with themselves and prioritize meaningful offline interactions and relationships. This will result in emphasizing the importance of quality over quantity when it comes to social connections and encourage face-to-face communication, genuine conversations and shared experiences with their friends and loved ones. Also, encouraging them to engage in activities such as sports, art, music or dance will not only provide opportunities for personal growth and development but also reduces dependence on social media for validation and self-worth. Practicing such activities will encourage the Generation Z to seek support from trusted friends, family members or mental health professionals if they're struggling with feelings of FOMO or its effects on their well-being.

Remember, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) raises stress hormones, inflammation and dysregulates an individual's nervous system. One needs to learn to self-love and be protective of their time and energy. In the hyper connected world, it does take courage to be with own thoughts so, try to be one...

(The write is an educator; views are personal)

Jallianwala Bagh: A turning point in India's freedom struggle

Sukhdev Singh

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre or the Amritsar massacre, a peaceful socio-political gathering of the native population dealt with a violent administrative response on 13th April 1919 by the then British Government killing above 1000 children, women and men firing 1650 gunshots, received strong criticism and gave the Indian freedom movement a clear direction for complete freedom from the foreign rule. The incident underlined the secular and all-inclusive character of the freedom movement. While in other parts of India, there were religious conflicts, in Amritsar the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had decided to celebrate their religious days (eid ul-fitter on April 01, Ram Nowmi on April 08 and Baisakhi on April 13) together to communicate the message of united freedom struggle against the foreign rule. The dead bodies of those, including Hindus, killed by the police while they were protesting against the arrest and deportation of the two local leaders Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr

Satyapal to some unknown place, according to the local narratives, were kept in the Khairuddin mosque before their final funeral rites. Earlier on the occasion of Ram Nawmi on April 9, 1919, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims drank water using the same tumbler. These events caused fear among the British rulers.

In the background of what happened on April 13, 1919, was the rising unrest among the people caused by the post-world-war inflation, heavy taxes and other repressive policies of the British Indian Government.

During the world war between 1914 and 1917, though the British forces were supported by the British-India Government and principalities, the Gadhries in Punjab had planned a mutiny by the Indian soldiers serving in the British Indian Army for February 1915 on the lines of 1857 mutiny, opposing the colonial Government anti-people policies which due to weak planning could not succeed. Yet, given a strong anti-colonial-Government atmosphere in Punjab and Bengal, in particular and

in India, in general, on ardent advocacy by the then Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer, the British India Government passed a 'Defence of India Act 1915' curtailing the civil and political liberties.

In 1918, suspecting revolt with support from Russian Bolsheviks, the Government appointed a committee headed by Sidney Rowlett to assess the German and Bolshevik links to the militant movement in India, especially in Punjab and Bengal. On the committee's recommendation, the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, popularly called the Rowlatt Act, was passed on 21st March 1919 further limiting civil liberties and granting special powers to the Government enabling up to 2 years' detention of purported political agitators without trial. Breaching their promise for post-war political reforms in exchange for India's resources the Government hurriedly passed the Act, ignoring opposition by the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council, who all resigned in protest. Muhammad Ali Jinnah

wrote to the Viceroy: "I, therefore, as a protest against the passing of the Bill and the manner in which it was passed tender my resignation ... a Government that passes or sanctions such a law in times of peace forfeits its claim to be called a civilised Government".

The Act, seen as a betrayal, enraged the Indian leaders and citizens. Mahatma Gandhi gave a call for Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act urging for a peaceful participation in Hartals (strikes), economic boycott and non-cooperation. The anti-Rowlatt Act sentiment was so strong in the whole country, especially in Punjab, that in response to the Satyagraha call on April 6 "practically the whole of Lahore was on the streets".

Following the events on April 9 and the detention of the local leaders Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr Satyapal on April 10, 1919, a large crowd gathered to demand the release of Dr Satyapal and Dr Kitchlew.

In the protest, 20-25 Indian and four British were killed while others were injured. The atmosphere

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in Amritsar was so tense that on April 11, Marcella Sherwood, an elderly English missionary was attacked by an angry mob in the Kucha Kurrichhan. Although she was rescued by some residents in the same street, enraged at the assault, Brigadier General R.E.H. Dyer, ordered every Indian passing through the street to crawl its length on his hands and knees as a punishment. He also authorised the indiscriminate public whipping of locals. The local leaders of the freedom movement, in a meeting held on April 12 at the Hindu College, planned a peaceful public protest gathering on April 13, the day of Baisakhi, in Jallian Wala Bagh spread over 6-7 acres of vacant land surrounded by residen-

tial buildings.

By April 13, most parts of Punjab under put under martial law. Civil liberties were curtailed and the assembly of more than four people was banned. The orders of banning public meetings and gatherings were not being widely and properly communicated. After celebrating Baisakhi many people relaxed in the Bagh, waiting to join the peaceful protest against the arrest and deportation of Dr. Satya Pal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew. Rest as they say is history.

(The writer is retired professor of Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar and member, governing council, INTACH, New Delhi; views are personal)