

EDITORIAL

Why Did This Happen?

Who failed here—the system or a particular Inspector of Police? It is, for sure, a failure of the system. “When the fence starts eating the crop, who will protect the field?”

The police are responsible for maintaining law and order. If they fail, they are accountable to their higher officials, who, in turn, are accountable to the government. To avoid situations that could lead to criticism or disciplinary action, some officers may adopt a harsh approach and act with excessive force.

The politicisation of crime and criminals is one of the major problems in our society, and the same appears to have happened in the case of Gade Sai Krishna as well. On several occasions, Sai Krishna was allegedly protected by certain politicians, not out of affection for him but for their own political convenience. Such patronage may have made him more headstrong and emboldened his actions. Our judicial process often takes a long time, and the prison environment sometimes fails to reform offenders, instead making hardened criminals even more dangerous.

The first and foremost issue is the process of posting Inspectors of Police. On what basis are these postings made? Allegedly, many appointments are influenced by the recommendations of local MLAs and MPs. It is also alleged that some police personnel pay money to these public representatives to secure favourable postings. If this is the case, how can we expect an Inspector to act impartially and sincerely? Naturally, he may feel compelled to act in the interests of the politician who supported his appointment.

At the same time, politicians may choose to be lenient towards criminals for electoral considerations. Caught between political pressures and professional responsibilities, police officers can become confused and conflicted. In such circumstances, some personnel may resort to sudden and excessive violence.

In this particular case, the Inspector is known for being strict in maintaining law and order and for taking action against ganja peddlers. He has allegedly earned a reputation for dealing with offenders firmly. However, in this instance, it appears that he may have crossed the line. If that is proven, he must be held accountable. At the same time, the incident has created political repercussions and provided an opportunity for the opposition to target the ruling Alliance.

If everyone adhered to the rule of law, such situations could be avoided. Political interference in policing should be minimised, and the practice of influencing or corrupting police personnel through political patronage must be prevented. If police officers are allowed to function independently, they are more likely to follow the law because the responsibility for their actions rests with them. However, when politics interferes with policing, accountability gets lost in the maze of political interests and power struggles.

— Editor

A Silent Health Challenge in Tribal Communities

Sickle Cell Anemia in Tribal India and the Fight for Early Care



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Sickle Cell Anemia is one of the most common inherited blood disorders affecting millions of people worldwide. In India, the disease poses a significant public health challenge, particularly among tribal populations living in remote and underserved regions. Despite advances in medical science and increasing awareness, many affected individuals continue to suffer due to late diagnosis, inadequate treatment, and lack of community support.

Sickle Cell Anemia is a genetic disorder caused by an abnormal form of hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen throughout the body. Instead of maintaining their normal round shape, red blood cells become rigid and crescent-shaped or “sickle” shaped. These abnormal cells can block blood vessels, reduce oxygen supply to tissues, and lead to severe pain, anemia, infections, organ damage, and even premature death.

India is estimated to have one of the highest burdens of sickle cell disease in the world. The disorder is particularly prevalent among tribal populations in central and southern India, including the states of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. Studies indicate that the sickle cell trait prevalence

among certain tribal groups ranges from 5 to 35 per cent, while the disease itself affects thousands of children and adults.

In Andhra Pradesh, sickle cell disease is predominantly found among tribal communities inhabiting the hilly and forested regions of Alluri Sitharama Raju District, Parvathipuram Manyam District, and parts of Anakapalli and Eluru districts. Communities such as the Konda Dora, Bagata, Valmiki, Gadaba, Savara, Jatapu, and other tribal groups are known to have a higher prevalence of the sickle cell trait. The geographical isolation of these communities often limits access to healthcare facilities, resulting in delayed diagnosis and poor disease management.

The impact of sickle cell disease extends beyond health. Children frequently miss school due to recurrent pain crises and hospital visits. Adults often struggle to maintain employment because of fatigue and chronic illness. Families face financial hardship due to medical expenses and loss of income. In many villages, the disease remains poorly understood, leading to stigma and social discrimination.

Fortunately, sickle cell disease can be effectively managed if detected early. One of



the most important preventive measures is screening. Testing individuals for the sickle cell trait before marriage or during adolescence helps identify carrier couples who may have a risk of giving birth to affected children. Newborn screening programs can detect the disease soon after birth, allowing timely treatment and regular medical follow-up.

Genetic counselling is another critical intervention. Families should be educated about inheritance patterns and reproductive choices. Community awareness campaigns can help people understand that sickle cell disease is inherited and not caused by infections, curses, or supernatural factors.

Regular medical care significantly improves the quality of life of affected individuals. Vaccination, nutritional support, folic acid supplementation, adequate hydration, prompt treatment of infections, and medicines can reduce complications and improve survival. Strengthening healthcare services in tribal areas through mobile medical

units, telemedicine, and trained community health workers can ensure that patients receive timely care.

Society also has a vital role to play in reducing the burden of sickle cell disease. Educational institutions can conduct awareness programs among students and parents. Voluntary organizations, including the Red Cross, Rotary, Lions Clubs, and tribal welfare organizations, can support screening camps, health education, and patient assistance programs. Blood donation remains critically important because many patients require blood transfusions during severe complications.

The lifelong free blood transfusion support being provided by the Andhra Pradesh Red Cross, a service that is rare and highly impactful for Sickle Cell Disease patients.

Community leaders, teachers, religious leaders, and local self-help groups can help dispel myths and encourage families to undergo screening and seek medical care. Media organizations can contribute by regularly highlighting the impor-

importance of early detection and treatment.

The Government of India has recognized the seriousness of the problem and launched the National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission, aiming to screen millions of individuals, provide counselling, and reduce the burden of the disease by 2047. Success, however, will depend on active participation from healthcare institutions, civil society organizations, and communities themselves.

Sickle Cell Anemia may be a hereditary disease, but its devastating consequences can be minimized through awareness, early diagnosis, genetic counselling, and accessible healthcare. By working together, society can ensure that tribal communities and vulnerable populations receive the care, dignity, and opportunities they deserve. A future free from the suffering caused by sickle cell disease is achievable if collective action begins today.

The Theme for World Sickle Cell Day 2026 is “Closing the Survival Gap Equity in Sickle Cell Disease”.

Urbanisation and the Erosion of Rural Culture

Preserving Roots in an Age of Rapid Development



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The history of human civilisation reveals that a village is not merely a place of residence; it is a way of life, a cultural identity, and a social institution. Rural culture has evolved through centuries of coexistence with nature, collective living, traditional knowledge, and strong community bonds. However, in the twenty-first century, rapid urbanisation is posing one of the greatest challenges to this cultural heritage. While the expansion of cities is often celebrated as a symbol of economic progress and modern development, it is simultaneously contributing to the gradual disappearance of rural traditions, local identities, and community-centred lifestyles. For generations, villages served as centres of agriculture, traditional occupations, folk arts, and social harmony. Every village possessed its own unique cultural characteristics, reflected in local dialects, customs, festivals, and community practices. These traditions not only strengthened social cohesion but also provided people with a sense of belonging. Today, however, the influence of urban lifestyles has reached even the remotest rural regions. In many places,

villages continue to exist geographically, but their cultural identity is increasingly being replaced by urban patterns of living. India, like many other nations, is witnessing large-scale migration from villages to cities. Better educational opportunities, employment prospects, healthcare facilities, and improved living standards attract rural youth to urban centres. As a result, many villages are gradually losing their younger population, leaving behind ageing communities and weakened social structures. The hands that once cultivated fields and sustained local economies are now engaged in urban occupations. Although migration often creates economic opportunities, it also alters the social fabric of rural life.

Urban expansion is affecting rural culture in another significant way. Villages located on the outskirts of growing cities are rapidly being transformed into urban settlements. Agricultural lands are increasingly converted into residential colonies, commercial complexes, and industrial zones. Fields that once produced food are now replaced by concrete structures. While rising land values may generate finan-



cial gains for some landowners, the long-term consequence is the irreversible loss of agricultural traditions and rural livelihoods. Technological advancement has further accelerated this transformation. The digital revolution has connected people across the globe, but it has also reduced engagement with local cultural practices. Younger generations are often more familiar with global entertainment trends than with their own folk traditions. Traditional songs, storytelling practices, local art forms, and indigenous knowledge systems are gradually fading from everyday life. The widespread influence of social media and digital content is cre-

ating a cultural environment where global trends often overshadow local identities. The decline of rural culture is not merely a cultural concern; it also represents the loss of historical memory and collective wisdom. Rural communities have long preserved valuable knowledge related to sustainable agriculture, water conservation, traditional medicine, and harmonious coexistence with nature. In an era marked by environmental crises and social fragmentation, many of these traditional practices hold lessons that remain highly relevant. The growing challenges of loneliness, mental stress, and weakening social relationships in urban areas

highlight the enduring value of the community-centred lifestyle that villages traditionally offered.

Across the world, policymakers and scholars are increasingly recognising that development cannot be measured solely by economic indicators, infrastructure projects, or industrial growth. Sustainable development requires a balance between modernisation and cultural preservation. Protecting rural heritage should not be viewed as resistance to progress; rather, it should be understood as an essential component of inclusive and sustainable growth. A society that neglects its cultural foundations risks losing an

important part of its identity. In recent years, several countries have promoted rural tourism as a means of preserving local traditions while creating economic opportunities. Rural festivals, handicrafts, traditional cuisine, and agricultural experiences are being showcased to visitors from across the world. Such initiatives not only support local economies but also encourage communities to preserve their cultural heritage. India possesses immense potential in this regard. Strengthening rural tourism, promoting local products, and supporting traditional artisans can contribute significantly to both economic development and cultural conservation. The education system also has a vital role to play. Students should be encouraged to learn about the history, traditions, and cultural practices of their local communities. Greater emphasis on regional heritage can foster appreciation for the diversity that characterises Indian society. Traditional ecological knowledge, sustainable resource management practices, and rural innovations deserve recognition within educational frameworks. Such efforts can help younger generations understand that modernity and tradition need not be opposing forces. The contemporary world is moving rapidly towards artificial intelligence, digital economies, and advanced scientific innovation. Yet, progress should not come at the cost of

cultural memory. Villages are not simply physical spaces; they are repositories of language, tradition, social values, and collective experience. If rural culture weakens, societies risk losing the diversity and uniqueness that enrich human civilisation. Urban centres will undoubtedly continue to expand as populations grow and economies evolve. However, development should not be defined by concrete structures alone. True progress lies in creating a future where technological advancement coexists with cultural continuity, where economic growth respects local traditions, and where modern aspirations remain connected to historical roots. Preserving rural culture is not about returning to the past; it is about ensuring that the wisdom, values, and identities shaped over generations continue to guide future development. The challenge before policymakers, educators, planners, and communities is not whether cities should grow, but how they can grow without erasing the cultural landscapes that have sustained societies for centuries. As nations pursue ambitious development goals, safeguarding rural culture must become an integral part of the broader vision of progress. Only then can future generations inherit not just modern infrastructure and economic opportunities, but also the rich cultural legacy that defines their collective identity.