

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined



Oceans of India

India's White Knight

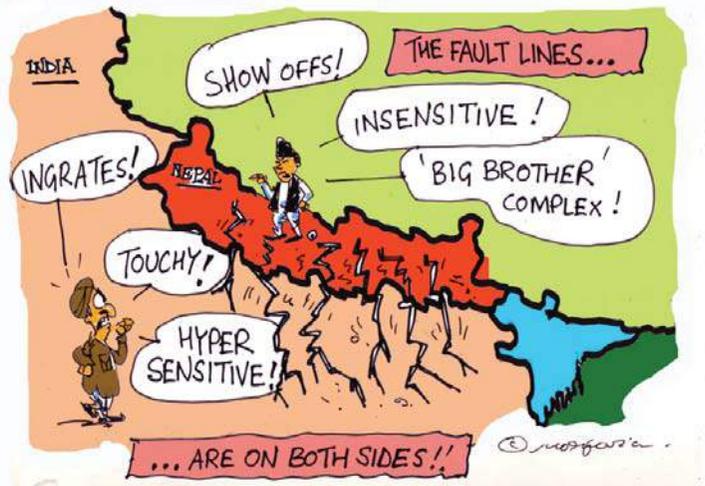
Mining the lifelines

Empty sea syndrome

KNOW INDIA BETTER
A wild serenade

FACE TO FACE
Chaitanya Tamhane

MORPARIA'S PAGE



INJURIES CAUSED BY PLATE TECTONICS - II



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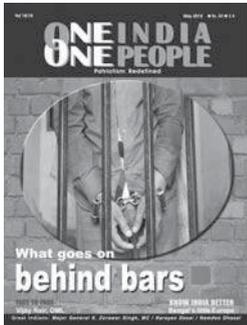
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

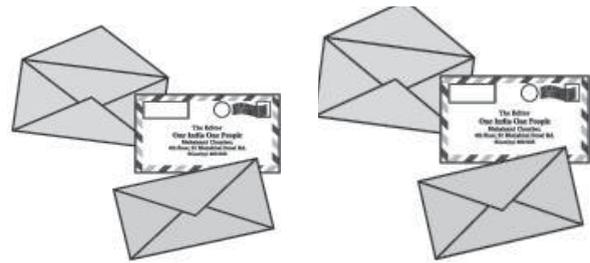


A rejoinder

In response to Mr. Bharat Hate's letter ("Set history on the right track", May 2015 issue of One India One People), I would like to thank him for reading my article with interest. The contribution of Sir Nana Jagannath Sunkersett to the railways of India cannot be ignored. He not only offered his *wada*, but also money, logistics and was one of the first Indian directors of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway.

However, every article has a theme and subject. I had been specifically asked to write on the colonial legacy of Indian Railways and how much of that legacy the Indian Railways is still carrying and about the interesting discoveries made during my walk. Hence the article focuses on the relics and legacies and you have to take this fact into cognizance.

There is no question of conveniently or deliberately ignoring Nana. The letter writer is not probably aware of the fact that I am the only English language journalist today who has been close to today's generation of the Sunkersett family, with Surendra sir, Uday etc. I have been every single year documenting the family's visit to Mumbai CST station on July 31 to garland and clean up Sunkersett's bust at the



station on his anniversary. The letter writer may also be happy to note that it was because of one of my articles in *Mumbai Mirror* that Nana got the required sanction from the municipal commissioner of Mumbai for land at Wadala. The writer should also read my book *Halt Station India* which documents Nana's contribution. It would be in the interest of all if the letter writer does a simple research or at least a basic google search before drafting letters. For the convenience, here are a few links of articles about him written by me in whichever newspaper I worked for:

- <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-family-honours-railway-patriarch-nana-juggonath-sunkersett>
- <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-indias-first-train-trial-run-turns-161-today>
- <http://www.mumbaiirror.com/mumbai/cover-story/City-has-no-space-for-memorial-to-the-man-who-helped-build-it/articleshow>
- <http://www.mumbaiirror.com/mumbai/civic/After-Grant-Road-skywalk-opens-fears-for-Nana-statue/articleshow>

– Rajendra Aklekar, Mumbai

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INDIA.

The ocean holds unknown treasures!

Taking care of our oceans should be a priority though for reasons different than the normal ones, says V. Gangadhar. He urges the Modi government to clean up the oceans to retrieve many 'lost treasures'.

A newly-married youth with literary pretensions took his wife to the sea shore because the bride had never seen the ocean. Keen to impress her, he approached the ocean, waved his hands dramatically and quoted these lines from Lord Byron's poem 'Childe Harold IV', "Roll on thou and dark-blue Ocean, Roll!". As the little woman gazed wondrously she exclaimed, 'O, Henry, they obey you! They are rolling!'"

Call it the power of the ocean or the power of Byron's verse. You cannot question the awesomeness of the ocean. What do our epics and *puranas* say? During 'Samudramanathan', When the *Devas* churned the milky ocean, many wonderful things emerged like the divine cow Kamadhenu, goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, and the *Akshaya patra*, the divine vessel from which food never ran out!

We are tempted to say, "Those were the days!" Today such gifts would be regarded as harmful leading to environmental pollution. The oceans are heavily polluted with all sorts of dangerous waste, chemicals and so on. Even divine action may not be sufficient to clean up the oceans or even the sacred rivers which boasted of the sacred touch of divinity. Even the most rabid Hindutva or BJP bhakht (acolyte) would hesitate to bet on the ability of Union Minister Uma Bharati, who has been given the tough task of cleansing the holy river Ganga. How will she approach the tough task of cleaning the oceans, the smaller seas as well as numerous rivers, lakes and ponds?

Her famous urging of the Hindutva mob "*Aur ek dhaka de do*" outside the Babri Masjid will not work in 'Operation Clean Ganga'. The shrewd Uma Bharati may well persuade Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ask Human Resources Development Minister Smriti Irani to switch portfolios with her. Keen to please her Boss, Smiriti will grab the proposal, order the vice chancellors, scientists and academicians to

clean up the oceans. She in turn will blame Rajiv Gandhi for neglecting Uttar Pradesh based Ganga which flowed by Amethi and by this time Modi would have gone on yet another foreign tour covering Iceland, Papua New Guinea after cancelling the trip to Luxembourg where recently the male Prime Minister married his male deputy. This would be a strict 'No No' for 'secular' India, and he could not go against the RSS, the VHP and, the Bajrang Dal. Still, the oceans would remain filthy and polluted.

But the NDA government will not give up. It will set up a special fact-finding committee to probe and find a solution to the issue. It will consist of BJP scientists, 'new science' text book writers and Hindu ritual experts who would perform special *yagnas* which would make the deep oceans give up their lost riches. The team will board a new Science Vessel and roam the oceans to look for buried gold, silver, precious stones, silver and gold ingots underneath. These would be retrieved and given to Irani. The other riches obtained from under the milk ocean would be used judiciously by senior leaders like Arun Jaitley.

There could be miracles as the NDA has completed one year in office. India and Pakistan will resume their cricket series (on shore and off shore) and revenue from oil sales will be shared. Under the guidance of the UAE authorities, India and Pakistan will draw the cricket series to avoid any communal clashes. Popular TV anchors will switch over to cricket commentary creating cricket commentary engineered riots. ■



The writer is a well-known satirist.

Even divine action may not be sufficient to clean up the oceans or even the sacred rivers which boasted of the sacred touch of divinity. Even the most rabid Hindutva or BJP bhakht (acolyte) would hesitate to bet on the ability of Union Minister Uma Bharati, who has been given the tough task of cleansing the holy river Ganga.

Coastline India

*India's enviably long coastline needs the umbrella protection of a sound coastal resource management system. This alone will ensure a sustainable and productive coastline, which replenishes resources even as it is consumed, says **Dr. Anupam Ghosh**.*

THE coast is an interfacial or transitional zone where sea meets exposed landmass, or the reverse i.e., the zone where exposed landmass meets the sea. Except the land-locked countries, countries around the world and islands have coasts. Continuity of such coasts comprising exposed coastal landmass is known as 'coastline'. In case of islands too – be it nearer to the coast (like Talsari in Odisha, or Hope Island in Andhra Pradesh, and many likewise) or offshore, like Andamans or Lakshadweep, there has to be a 'coastline'.

The very natural wealth of any maritime nation or island is coast, and its natural components that sustain its natural activities is called the 'Coastal Ecosystem'. Seen from a considerable height, the apparently serene coastline is actually a series of unique coastal ecosystems that act as the 'life support systems' on earth.

The coastal ecosystem absorbs carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere and releases oxygen (O₂) that living beings like us breathe. So, from that point of view, coastal ecosystems of a coastline act as 'nature's industry' that provide 'service' to sustain life on earth – the 'coastal ecosystem service'.

What are the capital services that coastlines provide?

The components of a coastal ecosystem are: (a) Aquaculture (culture fishery & oyster production); (b) capture fishing (mostly demarshall) activities; (c) Agriculture; (d) Coastal Eco-Tourism; (e) Open sea and coastal activities like snorkeling, scuba diving etc. (f) mangrove generation for checking of erosion; (g) corals and coralline algae for mitigating ocean acidification; (h) offshore wind and (i) uninterrupted sunlight along the coastline are un-explored coastal and offshore energy



The coastline of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

(non-conventional) resources.

Coastal Resource Management (CRM) is an appropriate management of coastal and marine resources so that these resources can be sustainably available for future generations - even after being exploited by the present generation.

Mainland India comprises 9 coastal states among which West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are located in the eastern part facing the Bay of Bengal. A part of Tamil Nadu state located at the extreme south of India faces the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, Kerala, Karanataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat are located on the western side of India, facing the Arabian Sea. At the mainland, the coast of Puducherry (Pondicherry), facing the Bay of Bengal, and the coast of Daman & Diu facing the Arabian Sea, both belong to the Union Territory (UT) administration – so do the two major islands of India - Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep & Minicoy in the Arabian Sea. Apart from these big island clusters, there are 667 islands geographically located in the Bay of Bengal and 508 islands located in the Arabian Sea. Many of these islands are uninhabited though. The total length of the Indian coastline

is reported to be 7516.6 km. But changes constantly happen with the perpetual erosion and accretion (deposit of coastal sands and soil), which are a part of natural coastal changes. This also has an effect on the coastline.

For example, while the total length of the Indian coastline, made on the basis of summation of data of the coastal state/UT island-wise is found to be 7516.6 km (Source: Annual Report, 2012-2013, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India), this differs with that of the total length of the Indian shoreline determined as 8413.9 km by the Space Applications Centre, ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation), Ahmedabad, and Central Water Commission of the Ministry of Water Resources, Govt. of India)



Coastal Resource Management

By straightforward definition, Coastal Resource Management (CRM) is an appropriate management of coastal and marine resources so that these resources can be sustainably available for future generations - even after being exploited by the present generation. Unless it is implemented throughout the nation's coastline, CRM is just a concept. It has many dimensions; (a) to explore, find and categorise all natural resources available in the coastal zone; (b) to determine the method of exploration of resources in such a manner that such marine and coastal resources could be explored for an indefinite period of time; (c) to examine the possibility and suitability of exploration of non-conventional energy and food availability from the coastal ecosystem; (d) to implement the socio-economic ventures in order to create, renew and protect the 'natural wealth' available in the coastal ecosystem; (e) to modify the existing way of 'coastal tourism' practice by converting the same into 'coastal ecotourism' practice; and (f) to find ways of capacity building of the existing non-conventional energy along the coastline.

The unexplored sectors

In addition to the conventional sector of fishing from the coastal and offshore waters and culture of other aquacultural produce like clams, oyster, pearl and so on that are used as both local and exportable food items, the following sectors require immediate action:

Checking coastal erosion at Visakhapatnam Port Area.

- Development of coordinated coastal agriculture, aquaculture and forestry
- Development of coordinated mangrove plantation and research
- Development and management of coral protection areas
- Production, development and distribution of offshore wind and solar energy, in addition to, and without disrupting the existing infrastructure of exploring the wind and solar energy; this has to be done in the style (with required modification, if any and where appropriate) of conventional thermal and hydro-power generation.

A maritime nation having a lengthy coastline can safely create provisions for employment in a big way. This, if implemented in a proper manner, could mitigate India's big problems of economic growth and societal development. India would then be an example to the world. But the first and foremost requirement is political will. ■



The writer is the Chief Scientist of Asian Marine Conservation Association (AMCA). He has served as an adviser to late Prime Minister, Chandrasekhar Singh in forming the Task Force for combating oil spill pollution problem during the Gulf War in 1991. The views expressed by the author are personal and not of AMCA.

World Oceans Day

World Oceans Day has been unofficially celebrated every year on June 8, since its original proposal in 1992 by Canada at the Earth Summit held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was officially recognised by the United Nations in 2008. Since then it has been coordinated internationally by The Ocean Project and the World Ocean Network with greater success and global participation each year. We citizens of this Earth pledge to honour the world's oceans, celebrate the products the ocean provides such as seafood as well as marine life and appreciate its intrinsic value on this day.

India's White Knight

A waterway, river or sea is not an obstacle but a means of trade and communication. Also, in the modern world, the guarding of ocean territories is a big responsibility of a country's naval force. The Indian Navy has built up an enviable reputation for not just protecting the country's territorial sovereignty, but also playing a crucial role in ensuring safety in the neighbourhood, says Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma.

INDIA has a maritime tradition dating back to the Vedic period. A tidal dock was built at Lothal on the Gujarat coast during the Indus Valley civilisation and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* has a chapter on the state department of waterways. India had regular sea trade with neighbouring countries, which also helped in cultural influences both ways. We had developed the direction finding instrument, the *Matsya Yantra* and availed the use of the monsoons for journeys to Africa and back. The Chola kings had a near monopoly over the trade in the Indian Ocean and collected toll from all ships, which amounted to a significant revenue. Due to wars with neighbouring states, the Chola strength, both on sea and land declined, and the supremacy over the Indian Ocean passed on to the

Arabs and later to the European powers. India had faced invasions from the North West routes and the Mughals paid little attention to the Navy. The singular exception was the Maratha Navy of Shivaji whose Sarkhel (Admiral) Angray had won a resounding victory over the British fleet. He enforced his authority on the coastal trade but lacked an ocean going Navy. The British were able to thus establish an empire in India.

A brief history of the Indian Navy

The East India Company had established a Marine Corps to protect their ships in 1612. In 1830, it was renamed as Her Majesty's Indian Navy. Manned by British officers and Indian sailors, it took part in the First Opium War in China in 1840 and in the Second Burma War in 1842. It was renamed as the Royal Indian Marine in the First World War and took

part in mine sweeping and operational tasks. Sub Lieutenant D. N. Mukherji was the first Indian to be given a commission in 1928. In 1934, the force was renamed as the Royal Indian Navy (RIN). It took part in the Second World War and two officers Lt. (later Vice-Admiral) Krishnan and Engineer Lt. (later Vice-Admiral) D. Shankar were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). The title 'Royal' was

dropped after Independence. India's share after Partition came to about 33 vessels and was inadequate for a large peninsular country. The Indian Navy drew up plans for a balanced force. It could not be implemented in full due to lack of funds.

In 1961, the Navy took part in the liberation of Goa and destroyed the Portuguese frigate *Afonso de Albuquerque*. Due to

land-based conflicts with Pakistan and China, the Navy was given low priority for funds and was directed not to undertake any offensive operations in the Indo-Pakistan War in 1965. It was later decided to strengthen the Navy too. The change in its capabilities was demonstrated in the 1971 War by the bombardment of Karachi and blockade of East Pakistan.

The Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean washes the shores of three continents, 30 littorals and 1282 islands. The region has 40% of world's oil and gas reserves. It accounts for 20% of the global sea trade. Two thirds of the world's oil and gas cargo pass through this ocean. The cargo between Atlantic and Pacific Oceans has to transit through this region. India has 15,000 kms of land border. The peninsula has 11 major, 20 intermediate and 200 minor ports. Nearly 95% of trade by volume and



The Indian Navy

72% by value are by sea routes. The Indian Ocean region remained peaceful for two decades after the Second World War. Presently, it faces challenges of political instability, conflicts, piracy, drug traffic and maritime terrorism. Protection of these sea routes and demarcation of our maritime boundaries are priority tasks.

The role of the Indian Navy

- To deter or defeat external aggression in cooperation with the Army and Air Force.
- To ensure security of sea trade routes in cooperation with the Coast Guard.
- To ensure stability in India's maritime zones of responsibility.
- Provide maritime assistance (including disaster relief) in India's neighbourhood.

Territorial integrity

The primary role of the Navy is to deter, in conjunction with other Armed Forces, any threats or aggression. The Indian Navy has acquired the capability of exercising sea control as demonstrated in the 1971 War. With two Aircraft Carrier Groups, one each for Western and Eastern fronts, it can challenge and destroy enemy forces before they come near our coast. The Carrier Groups are supported by replenishment ships and destroyers equipped with the latest versions of Brahmos and Barak missiles. Modernisation is a continuous process. Acquisition of six submarines by Pakistan and establishment of a naval base at Gwadar with assistance from China will require to be countered by additional forces of the Indian Navy. We were caught off guard during the Kargil War and Barak missiles had to be imported from Israel as an emergency measure. A new factor is the build up of submarine forces by many countries including Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. The modern non-nuclear submarines have enhanced underwater endurance of up to eight days and carry an impressive array of missiles.

The recent launch of the first of the new batch of Scorpene class submarines will help in building up Indian Navy's submarine strength which was affected by a series of accidents in recent years.

Security of sea routes

Security of choke points which are narrow channels is important for the international community due to the high

volume of oil traded through them. The Strait of Hormuz, leading out of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Malacca and Sunda straits linking the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, and Babel-Mandab connecting the Arabian Sea with Red Sea leading to Suez Canal are critical for the international energy market. Even a temporary blockade of these choke points can cause serious damage to industrial production. Attacks on merchant ships can be by state or non-state agencies. USS Cole was attacked in 2000 and French tanker, Limburg, in October 2002, off the coast of Aden, Yemen.

The international community has sent ships to patrol the area to deter the pirates. There has also been a nascent regional response to the piracy incidents and three information sharing centres were planned to be established in Yemen, Djibouti and Kenya. An estimated 150,000 Indian

nationals serve in the International Merchant fleet, and several Indians have been taken hostage during acts of piracy. The Indian Navy carries out regular patrolling. This builds confidence amongst the users and enables the fleet to learn about the environment. The neighbouring countries have appreciated the lead given by it. The piracy in the straits has declined since 2005 due to patrolling by the littoral states. There have been continuous efforts by various countries to ensure uninterrupted transportation of oil. China is planning to build pipelines from Gwadar in Pakistan and from Myanmar to China to avoid the Straits of Malacca.

Coastal security implies check on pirates, terror groups, smuggling and drug trafficking. There should be no interference with exploration or exploitation of off-shore oil and minerals from the sea in India's Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends to 200 nautical miles. The fishermen should have complete security to carry out their work.

Coastal security

Coastal security implies check on pirates, terror groups, smuggling and drug trafficking. There should be no interference with exploration or exploitation of off-shore oil and minerals from the sea in India's Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends to 200 nautical miles. The fishermen should have complete security to carry out their work. A three tier system has been evolved for coastal security comprising Marine Police, Coast Guard and the Navy, the Navy being responsible for coordination. The

attack on Mumbai alerted the Government of India (GOI) against similar events. It has been reported that the Marine Police has been handicapped by a lack of budget for fuel and maintenance support for the vessels. There could be hesitation on the part of police personnel to embark on sea mission.

Sea faring requires training and familiarisation with the sea. The Coast Guard too needs to have more platforms. The



Indian evacuees from Yemen cling to the rescue boat taking them to INS Tarkash

proposal to install electronic identification kits is possible against non-state agencies but not against state sponsored groups. These devices can be duplicated or tampered with. An effective measure is to enlist the cooperation of the coastal communities as is done in other countries, notably in Europe. During the Second World War, every German spy who landed on the coast in UK was caught by the people and handed over to the police. During the 1965 war, all the paratroopers dropped by Pakistan in Punjab were rounded up by the people. We should aim at a similar outcome in the coastal region.

Promote stability in the region

The Navy is the best force for quick and meaningful action in the region since it can transport men and material quickly to the desired place. In 1983, the Navy planned Operation Lal Dora against a feared coup in Mauritius. It was able to avert a coup in Seychelles in 1986. In 1988, a group of Maldivians assisted by mercenaries from the rebel Tamil secessionist gained control of the capital. India responded to the request from the President of Maldives. The paratroopers established control over the capital. The coup plotters fled in a hijacked ship. Peace was restored. The international community appreciated the quick response by the GOI.

Humanitarian aid

The Navy plays an important role in providing humanitarian relief in times of natural disasters. The Indian Navy launched massive disaster relief operations in 2004 to help Indian states, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia after the tsunami. Twenty

seven ships and over 5000 naval personnel were deployed. This was one of the largest and fastest force mobilisations undertaken by the Navy. Rescue teams reached neighbouring countries within 12 hours of the tsunami. During the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict, the Indian Navy evacuated 2,286 Indian nationals, 436 Sri Lankan and 69 Nepali citizens from war-torn Lebanon. In 2006, Indian naval doctors provided medical facilities in Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia and East Timor for more than 100 days. In 2007, Indian Navy supported relief operations for the survivors of a cyclone in Bangladesh and in 2008, Indian Naval vessels were the first to launch international relief operations for victims of cyclone in Myanmar.

Recently, the Indian Navy evacuated stranded Indians and citizens of 28 other countries from Yemen in war like conditions. INS Mumbai was unable to enter the port and waited at the anchorage. Twelve small crafts were used to ferry 30 people at a time. Earlier, it had conducted similar evacuation from Iraq, Libya and Ukraine.

Conclusion

The Indian Ocean is a critical and dense waterway since two thirds of the world's fossil fuels and trade between Atlantic and Pacific regions moves through these waters. The Indian Navy has learnt to dominate the seas and carries out patrolling for safety of the sea lanes in cooperation with the littoral states. The Indian Navy's dynamism has paved the way for maritime cooperation. It has the capability to guard against an attack on the sovereignty of the country. It has rendered prompt help to friendly states against coups and insurrection and with humanitarian aid in disaster relief. It has moved from the earlier strategic domain of Red Sea to Malacca Strait to the Pacific at the historic moment of withdrawal of Soviet Navy from this region and an understanding has reportedly been concluded with USA.

The Indian Navy lives to its credo in war and peace- *Anything, Anytime Anywhere.* ■



Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.) served in the Army for 30 years. Post retirement he served the telecom industry with multinational and Indian corporates. He is also a freelance journalist and has interests in national security issues.

Did you know?

This is the season of mangoes and while we stuff ourselves with the wide variety available in India, let's pay tribute to the king of mangoes, the Alphonso! Considered one of the most expensive varieties, the Alphonso is grown mainly in the western region of India in the districts of Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri and Raigad in Konkan. Within this variety, the Devgad Alphonso mangoes are considered one of the best cultivated Alphonso strains. There is some controversy over the origin of the Alphonso variety. It is believed that it is named after Afonso de Albuquerque, a nobleman who helped establish Portuguese colonies in India, while many dispute this and believe that it was introduced first in Kerala, as the climate was believed to be more suitable for mass cultivation. Whatever be the origin, let's reap the benefits of the fruit in these brief few months that the Alphonso is available to us!

Empty sea syndrome

Overfishing and unsustainable practices are causing fish to disappear from the world's oceans at unprecedented rates. **Pooja Rathod and Tiasa Adhya** interact with fishermen in Malvan along the Maharashtra coast to learn about the impact of trawlers and the exploitation of dwindling marine resources.

Pannas... don hazaar saahashe... paan she satta!" The bidding calls started at ₹ 50 and reached ₹ 5,000. The monsoon month of July notwithstanding, trade was brisk inside the fish auction market in Malvan, a small town along the Maharashtra coast. As we pushed our way through the crowd to get a glimpse of what the bids were for, myriad marine creatures came into view. We saw basket after basket holding marine crabs with eggs that should have hatched in free waters. Cartons of juvenile anchovies, ribbon fish, sole, mackerel, pomfrets, sharks and rays – none of which exceeded even a metre in length – were also being sold. It continued to pour and the fishermen continued their bids until the last demand. The remaining stock was then either sold as poultry feed, to the pet food industries or simply discarded in the sea. These were juvenile fish, too tiny to be important, or fish that were economically of little value but had unfortunately made it into the nets. Ironically, it was the monsoon season – a time when marine life like fish, crabs and prawns breed and hence should not to be caught. At this time of the year (June-July), all kinds of mechanised fishing are prohibited by law. Ideally, strict adherence to this law would ensure sustainable fishing livelihoods.

The 'Census of Marine Life', a decade-long international survey of marine life, completed in 2010, by a global network of researchers from more than 80 nations, estimated that 90 per cent of the oceans' big fish have disappeared due to overfishing. Bluefin tuna have disappeared from the seas of Northern Europe. Halibut suffered a similar fate in the North Atlantic during the



Photo: Pooja Rathod

19th century. The fishing trawlers in the Irish Sea bring back nothing more than prawns and scallops. In West Africa, fish stocks are being wiped out, depriving subsistence fishermen in Senegal, Ghana and Angola. Despite this, in Southeast Asia, even juvenile fish are being caught to become prawn feed or chicken feed. What is the picture like back home? The fish catch in Maharashtra has halved in recent years, from 449,000 tonnes in 2002 to 244,000 tonnes in 2010.

Digging deep

We needed to have a dialogue with local fishermen, whose lives have been tied to the seas for generations, to get an insight on why they choose to fish during the ban. Fishing in the monsoon can also be expensive and life threatening on account of the harsh weather and uncertain tides. When we spoke to some gill netters, the fishermen told us how the trawlers, usually owned by rich businessmen, allowed very few or no fish to make their way to the shallows where the artisanal fishermen worked. Trawlers fished far too close to the shore though the law prohibits them from fishing within sight of the shore, a zone reserved for artisanal fisherfolk. They claim that there is often 'trawl traffic' on the sea on account of the sheer numbers of trawlers working in a given area. Hundreds of trawlers frequently work from four days to a week, until they obtain enough catch. The artisanal fishermen said that monsoon was the only time when sufficient numbers



Photo: Alex Hofford, Greenpeace/Marine Photobank

of fish are left alive to reach shallower waters. The trawlers swept everything, they said, like a vacuum cleaner – if a fish is missed by one trawler, it is caught by another. “At this rate, we won’t have any fish left in the sea within this decade,” said one fisherman with remorse. Most complained of a rapid decline in high-value fish like king mackerel and pomfret. Young fish are caught these days and therefore do not survive to breeding age. Low value fish like ‘croakers’ are now preferred by middle-income customers, as the other fish are either unavailable or too expensive.

To add to the existing problems, ‘purse seine net fishing’ was introduced into Maharashtra recently. These conical, purse-like nets are capable of scooping entire shoals of fish using a technique that resembles the drawing of purse-strings. It costs around ₹ 15 lakh to set up such nets and while earlier, there were just two nets in use, today, as many as 600 are deployed in Maharashtra alone. What chance do local, traditional fisherfolk have? Ironically, it is the Maharashtra Government, which provides subsidies approaching 75 per cent that is responsible for this unsustainable fishing practice that is emptying the seas all along the Konkan coast. Fishermen in Sindhudurg district have asked for a ban on purse seine net fishing along the district’s coastline and when the state government agreed, boat owners using purse seine nets went to court. But the fishing community in Malvan is not giving up. They continue to oppose the purse seine fleets, which land up off the Maharashtra coast not just from Goa but from other southern states as well... all ignoring the monsoon fishing ban.

Yes, the Coast Guard fines boat owners they catch, but such fines are minimal when compared to the high value of stock in their holds – ₹ 30,000, as against the landed fish value of ₹ 2,00,000.

The bitter truth

What are the driving forces behind the destructive ambition of the trawlers? The answer is obvious: customers who flock to the coasts. When we travelled along the coast to see the magnitude of this oceanicide, we were stupefied. When fishing is banned in Goa, suppliers to hotels and restaurants travel to Maharashtra, Kerala and even Tamil Nadu. In fact, hoteliers now claim they do not even need to refrigerate fish, since they get fresh fish (illegally) this way. While a piece of kingfish is out of the reach of the economically weak, as one smallish bakery owner reported, elite customers are willing to shell out as much as ₹ 1,500 for each portion. While the red snapper has steadily made its way into the menu of most restaurants, brackish water breeders like the rabbitfish are being consumed by locals. The per kilogramme price of prawns, pomfrets and kingfish has tripled over the past decade. Do the hoteliers perceive a decrease in the fish stock? No. Because the middlemen traders serve as genies in a bottle for



Photo: Kieran Kelleher/Marine Photobank

them, producing what they want, when they want it... while stocks last!

Isn’t the increase in the price of fish an indication of the difficulty that trawlers have in obtaining them? We wish this reality would sink in.

A friendly Goan told us how the Russian tourists in Goa have influenced shark fishing, which has increased over the years. The Russians tend to favour restaurants that offer shark-fin soup. Around the world, up to one hundred million sharks are finned alive, then thrown back to die awful deaths.

This article is not a clarion call to stop eating fish. Rather, we urge the fish-eating public to exercise responsibility in their purchase habits. In West Bengal, hilsa has such a high demand that overfishing is the order of the day and juvenile fish have become targets. Researchers say the hilsa might soon enter the “endangered” category of wild species. Last year, global fish consumption hit a record high of 17 kg. per person per year which means that in comparison to 1950, people are eating four times as much fish as they once did, all in the face of depleting fish stocks and rising human populations.

Reports scream at us every day – fewer than 100 cod have been found in 13 years in the North Sea, large areas of seabed in the Mediterranean and North Sea resemble a desert, West African fisheries have declined by 50 per cent in 30 years. The tropics might witness a decline of 40 per cent by 2040, which would adversely affect as many as 400 million coastal people in Africa and Southeast Asia. When communities lose their fish source it is more than just livelihoods that are at stake... it’s nutrition, too. It’s not too late to restore the health of the oceans. Local fishing communities have always been sustainable. But the industrial scale at which fishing is currently practised is killing off the last of the planet’s wild animals that humans continue to hunt in large numbers.

Perhaps ours will be the last generation to do so. ■

(The article has been reproduced from Sanctuary Asia, Vol. XXXIV No.1)

Ocean sediments and the stories they can tell

*The oceans are the last sink and repository of data for climate change. The undisturbed sediments or microfossils in the ocean tell many stories, says **Dr. Rajani Panchang**, who studies them to arrive at credible climate data.*

THE first thing that I am asked as an oceanographer is “Wow! Do you dive? Have you seen whales?” and most of the questions that follow are those on marine life. There are mixed reactions when I tell them I send instruments into the oceans from aboard a ship, to bring back cores of sediments, so that I can study past climates. I cut these cores into slices, each of which represents a different age in time, and look at them under the microscope so that I can tell how climate was when man did not exist; how it changed with advent of man and industrialisation. I claim sediments reveal the truth that humans can lie about. This is where the story gets interesting.



Man's last sink

How many of us can imagine the oceans as the last sink?

For instance, how many of us know that everything that enters our drain, ends up in the ocean, and gets preserved there as proof/proxy forever. These layers and layers of marine rocks have a story to tell – the history of evolution of Indian climate and life too! The oceans are huge basins that continue to accumulate sediments over hundreds, thousands to millions of years without a break (unless and until they get folded into a mountain like the Himalayas, and are brought up above land. It is a fact that the mountainous Himalayas and the entire deserts of Rajasthan, were once under the sea).

Why look at sediments when we have the Indian Meteorological Department for climate prediction? A majority of the Indian agriculture is completely dependent on monsoons. Climatic variations also drive current patterns that affects fish catch. In several ways, the Indian economy is dependant on climate, and thus climate prediction is a major factor in management of natural resources. One needs long term climatic data in order to accurately model and predict climates. However, systematic instrumental records of climate (i.e. temperature, rainfall, wind, etc.) are available only for the

Foraminifera are marine microfossils that have a shell made up of calcium carbonate, and are used in studying past climates and environments.

past 150 to 200 years. Some studies suggest that western India is hit by drought every 77 years. With this periodicity, 200 years of available records will hold just 2-3 cycles of drought, which is highly insufficient for modeling, cross-checking and predicting the timing, quality and quantity of monsoons. One major cause of poor prediction capabilities is lack of local, long term climatic data. Thus, undisturbed marine sediments hold the clue to this problem.

Microfossils as proxies of past climate changes

Some of the best used proxies of past climate are biogenic sediments or microfossils i.e., microscopic remains of life. Foraminifera are the most widely used marine microfossils in studying past climates and environments. These foraminifera are nothing but unicellular, marine organisms which have a shell made up of calcium carbonate. They have a life span of a few months to 3-4 years. When they die, they get buried

within sediments, and behave like any other sediment grain. Just pick up a handful of sand from the beach next time you visit, and come back and observe it under a hand lens or a microscope. You will see millions of beautiful foraminifera constituting the sand grains. These foraminifera are extremely sensitive to their environment and thus different species of forams inhabit different environments. While organic pollution can cause opportunistic species abundances to rise, toxic metal pollution can cause deformation of their shells or cause reduction in their numbers. Different species characterise different environmental conditions. This increases their utility as environmental indicators.

Microfossils have an advantage over other organic and chemical proxies, which change or alter with passage of time. For example, if a factory releases toxic effluents in an estuary, it will get flushed off naturally within a few days. Water samples collected will never hold any evidence for the pollution that occurred. However, microfossil groups like foraminifera, diatoms, ostracods are a proxy for environment during their lifetime. They will incorporate that pollutant within their shell as proof of the event that no longer exists! Once they die,

they get preserved in a sediment layer, which is a time-slice. So even if environmental conditions change and alter the chemical environment or cause organic degradation, the hard shell stands testimony of the time gone by. This study could be glorified as 'Sediment forensics'.

It is only the study of the earth's oceanic archives that has led to the understanding of past ice-ages and the current looming threat of global warming. While long term climatic variability is controlled by the earth's rotation around the sun, its revolution around itself and the inclination of its axis, short term, local and abrupt climate changes are a feedback mechanism of what man is doing to the earth! Climate did change in the past too..... but never so fast as now! ■



The writer is trained as an oceanographer and obtained her PhD from the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa. She is a marine geologist, currently working as a DST Woman Scientist with the Agharkar Research Institute Pune. Her current interests are to delineate signatures of man and natural climate variability from marine archives.

The launch of Sindhu Sadhana

Last year, the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) launched a Research Vessel (ship) RV Sindhu Sadhana, with the aim of research in the sectors of food, energy, minerals, climate and environment. The first indigenously built multi-disciplinary research vessel, this ship is 80 meters long and 17.6 m wide and can accommodate 57 personnel including 29 Scientists and 28 crew members. The research vessel has 10 laboratories that are fitted with state-of-the art equipment facilitating high precision data and sample acquisition.



The National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) with its headquarters at Dona Paula, Goa, is today a multi-disciplinary oceanographic research institute of international repute. It is also one of the 37 constituent laboratories of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi. The major research areas include the four traditional branches of oceanography - biological, chemical, geological/geophysical, and physical – as well as ocean engineering, marine instrumentation and marine archaeology.

Calling the oceans the last frontier of man, Dr. S.W.A. Naqvi, Director CSIR-NIO, mentioned that the oceans are the last frontiers for man and that we know a lot more about outer space than about the oceans. This is in large part due to the fact that most of the countries in this region do not have the infrastructure especially a research ship such as this one to carry out oceanographic observations. The CSIR-NIO is planning to carry out several observational campaigns onboard RV Sindhu Sadhana, which will improve the present understanding of the process in the seas around India and provide additional inputs for forecasting the variations in marine environment. The seafloor information resulting from high resolution mapping and sampling will help in identifying suitable areas for offshore developments and mineral prospecting including petroleum hydrocarbons. Also planned are studies to understand the importance of sedimentary processes in the burial of organic matter and sequestering of atmospheric carbon dioxide in marine sediments which play a significant role in global carbon budget. ● **(with inputs from the NIO website)**

Mining the lifelines

*Illegal sand mining is playing havoc with a major estuary near Mumbai. It is depleting and destroying this magnificent ecosystem at a dangerously fast rate. This is also a metaphor for the destruction of precious biodiversity reserves across the country. We need these resources today as never before, says **Dr. Rajani Panchang**.*

I was coming back after a year and a half and I just couldn't find the approach route to my sampling site. The dirt road I could identify as 'mine' from the past was in a pathetic state, deeply incised by high truck tyres. My attempts to take my Innova on that route were shot down by locals telling me "Madam, *tya reti chya truck chya vaata aahet. Tumhaala naahi zaata yenaar*". (It's the route taken by sand-laden trucks, not meant for you). Hearing this, I was desperate to see what else had befallen my beautiful mangrove bearing mudflats, since I had seen them last in February 2012.

A pristine estuary

My first trip to this huge estuary, south of Alibag held an itinerary of sampling the luxuriant mangrove bearing tidal flats of one of the most pristine estuaries of Maharashtra. Whilst estuaries are the finest nurseries and most productive breeding grounds in the world, the mangroves therein are the most diverse terrestrial ecosystems. These two ecosystems together form the most protected wetland ecosystems all over the world, in India classified under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Act Category I. The importance of mangroves as natural coastal barriers from oceanic calamities went up manifold in India ever since the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. But their economical value for the enormous renewable natural resources they offer is humongous! They are habitat to some of the ecologically as well as economically important fish varieties. The most exotic fishes, crabs, prawns, lobsters, oysters and shell fish are harvested in the estuaries and associated tidal flats. Mangroves offer forest resources in timber for building and fuel, honey, wax etc. They accrete sediments and protect soil erosion. The tidal flats adsorb pollutants and cleanse the coastal waters of every kind of industrial or domestic effluents, especially heavy toxic metals. This also naturally protects reefs, algal banks and navigation channels from siltation. And what most are ignorant about is the fact that mangrove tidal flats are the biggest sinks of organic matter preservation, viz., the future sites of coal and fossil fuel!

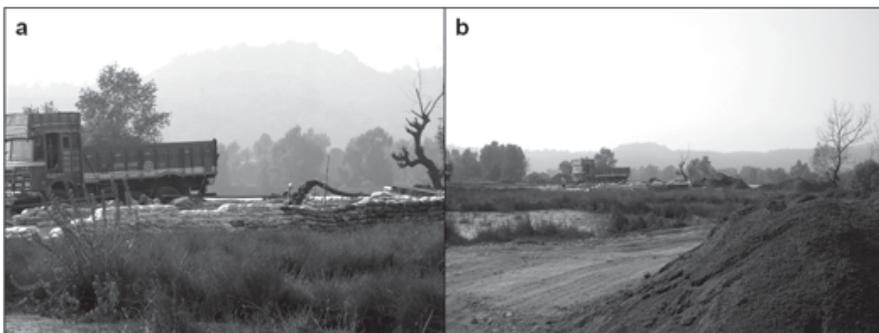
When I had arrived at the jetty at the mouth of the estuary, the fishing community drying out small fish gave me a hostile look. A lady asked me, "*Aata tumhaala kaay pahije aamchya potaavar paay devoon?*" (Now what do you seek from us at

the expense of our living?). When I explained to them I was there to study the relationship between climate change and its influence on fish resources, they complained about the drastic decline in fish catch. They said, "*About 10-15 years ago, there was so much fish in the estuary that we all built homes for ourselves. Now the state is such that we do not find enough in the estuary to even suffice two square meals, forget selling fish! Big boats and trawlers go out into the sea; we cannot even afford the fuel to do so.*" The estuary looked so vast and rich, that if I had not been witness to the meager haul that several fishing boats returned with, I would not have believed this lady! I spent the first 3-4 days wading across the densely vegetated mangrove flats in the lower and middle reaches of the estuary. But in the upper reaches, the story was different. I literally had to hunt for an intact tidal flat to sample. Most of the tidal flats had been dredged and mined!

Sand mining and the destruction it wreaks

As I approached the banks of the estuary, to my horror, I could see hundreds of sand bags stacked one above the other and a couple of trucks already loaded with thousands more! I was actually witness to sand being mined from tidal banks with the help of suction pumps. Gallons and gallons of slurry was being sucked into large diameter pipes and directed onto huge sand sieving nets we see at conventional construction sites. This sand is transported to different destinations for construction purposes. My local help and my husband signaled to me to desist from taking photographs (which I still did steal!) as the workers at the mining site looked uneasy at the arrival of unwelcome guests.

We continued travelling west along the southern banks of the estuary, looking for an intact stretch of mudflats to sample. But the sight I had witnessed continued to haunt me. One of my local helpers, in his early 20s said to me, "*Its normal! Even my younger brother goes to help on the sand dredge. It pays about 500 rupees a day, better than our fish catch. Anyway the fish catch in the estuary has reduced drastically*". When I asked him if fish got slaughtered in the suction dredge, he casually answered, "*Oh yes they do!... especially small fish and shrimps. But that's normal.*" He was so casual



Reclaimed tidal banks around the estuary being used for dredging, storing and transporting mined sand. Also seen is a hose pipe through which sediment slurry is being sucked and poured onto a sieve. Some standing marsh and mangroves vegetation still evidenced.

about it that I realised that the local denizens did not appreciate the importance and functioning of their own habitat. When I explained how benthic habitat mining was leading to the collapse of the entire ecosystem, I could see a slight guilt on his face about something he could do nothing to help.

In November 2013, I was once again trying to reach the same sampling location in the upper reaches. The sight of the badly battered approach road was disheartening, but could not hold me back. I literally coaxed my driver through the narrow lanes lined by typically small but beautiful Konkani homes, past reclaimed farmlands to reach the same site. The mangrove lined marsh-land fringing the estuary that existed 20 months ago, was no longer there! The entire area had been cordoned off. All the marsh-land had been reclaimed to create landings for several dredge vessels, stacking sand bags, loading trucks and to put up hutments of labourers involved in the trade! The easternmost end of this reclaimed landing had been converted into a semi-permanent jetty kind of a structure, housing at least a couple of cranes and winches for mechanised loading of sand into trucks. Within a minute of taking this view in, I knew it was safest for me to get back into my vehicle and leave.

The next day, I hired a motor boat upstream. The idea was to estimate the losses done. This estuary has a very wide span and houses dense mangroves. After travelling about 15 km inland, the peaceful picturesque ride was interrupted by 15 to 20 suction dredges operating right in-stream. With the extremely muddy waters drawing my attention, the implications to what I was witnessing started playing in my mind. These floating systems were using 2 to 50 horsepower motors to suck up sand and gravel from the river bottom, through an 8-10 inch hose pipe. The sand was being sieved onboard and the clay rich water was being released back into the river. I knew one dredging unit is capable of mining over a ton of sand each day and can continue working non-stop throughout the day. I was also aware that in-stream suction

mining is now banned all over the world as its environmental consequences are well known. And the way the workers on the dredges looked at us alarmingly, I was sure even they knew that what they were doing was wrong. Suction dredging is known to convert mining areas into dead-zones and creates pits in the river bed, resembling opencast mines on land. Estuarine beds house life

that forms the base of the food chain, and their destruction leads to the collapse of entire eco-systems. The list of environmental hazards associated with sand mining in river channels is exhaustive. Apart from the rise in suspended particulate levels, turbidity and other pollutants like oil, grease, etc., originating from vehicles used for the removal of sands, damage to/changes in breeding and spawning grounds and reduction in inland fishery resources is inevitable. Some of the associated equally grave challenges are erosion of river banks, river bank slumping, deepening of river channels, changes in river bed configuration, loss of placer mineral resources associated with alluvial sand and gravel, lack of replenishment of coastal beaches leading to coastal erosion and reduction in the supply of nutrient elements from terrestrial source, ponding of water and reduction in natural cleansing capacity of river water, lowering of ground water table in areas adjacent to mining sites, and damage to the fresh water aquifer system. As several PILs in different parts of the country continue to debate over correctness of sand mining, I could see the scientific truth being sucked out of the environmental equilibrium of this estuary, which was supposedly under protection!

As I reached about 24 km inland, I was sure my sampling location in the upper reaches was extinct! I could see that approximately 500 to 700 m of mud-swamps had been cleared and reclaimed. The landings I had seen the previous day were the site where all dredges came and off-loaded their mining loot. The locals know their habitat is being lost to the rich. But they do not know how they can help. All that they fear for is their life and deny help without an assurance of secrecy. One question haunting me ever since has been, 'How can one industry be allowed to flourish at the cost of another? Can we in this way afford to lose our natural resources forever?' ■



The writer is trained as an oceanographer and obtained her PhD from the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa. She is a marine geologist, currently working as a DST Woman Scientist with the Agharkar Research Institute Pune. Her current interests are to delineate signatures of man and natural climate variability from marine archives.

India and water sports

*India's long coastline is underexploited when one considers the potential for developing water sports and tourism along it. Luckily though, there is an enormous interest in these activities and though still at a nascent stage, this can surely become a highly successful industry, says **Devender Kundaliya**.*

NATURE has blessed India with a long, vivacious coastline, swirling rivers, fresh water lakes, streams, and many other types of water bodies that offer excellent opportunities for hosting a variety of water sports activities in the country. India's mainland coastline is about 6,100 km long - running from Kandla in Gujarat to Kolkata in West Bengal - surrounded by the Arabian Sea to the west, the Indian Ocean to the south, and the Bay of Bengal to the east. If Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands are also included, the Indian coastline length reaches about 7510 km. Such a long coastline means India has huge potential for beach and water sports tourism. However, the fact is that despite this long coastline and abundance of water bodies, the huge potential of water sports in India still remains untapped, and there is an urgent need to develop basic infrastructure in coastal regions to promote water sports activities.

Presently, Goa, Lakshadweep, Uttarakhand, Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the only destinations where you can find good facilities for water sports in India. Rishikesh in Uttarakhand is best known for white water rafting in the Ganges. The 36-km stretch of the Ganges from Kaudiyala to Rishikesh with 12 major rapids, is perfect for those who love to face the challenges of nature. Goa, along its 105-km long coastline has about 40 beaches, many of which offer a wide range of water games like fishing, parasailing, jet skiing, scuba diving, wind surfing, dinghy sailing, etc. Kovalam Beach in Kerala can be visited to test your skills in canoeing, catamaran sailing, para-sailing, scuba diving, snorkeling and wind surfing.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean offer their own surprises to visitors, holding a promise of action-packed holiday tour with activities like scuba diving, water skiing, snorkeling, and glass bottom boating. In Lakshadweep, you can explore the colorful marine world after learning just a few initial lessons in snorkeling.

Huge unexplored potential

Although all these regions provide good water sports opportunities to travellers, there are so many other places in the country which can be developed as the next water sports centers. River rafting activities, which are currently limited



White river rafting is fast becoming popular in India

to Ganges in Rishikesh and, to a lesser extent in Beas near Manali and parts of the Indus in Ladakh, can be extended to areas like Teesta in Sikkim, Brahmaputra in Assam, Chandra in Lahaul (Himachal Pradesh) and Bharali in Arunachal Pradesh. All these regions have great potential to be developed as new river rafting centers in India.

Similarly, there are plenty of natural and man-made lakes where aquatic games like sailing, wind surfing and angling of the trout fish can be promoted. Presently, there are only a couple of lakes in India, including Pong dam in Himachal Pradesh and in Umam near Shillong, where water game facilities have been developed.

Tamilnadu, Orissa, Karnataka and West Bengal are the major states which have not yet fully tapped the huge potential of water sports despite having a long coastline.

Kerala

Kovalam beach is the prime water sports center in Kerala. However, Alappuzha is another region which has the potential to host backwater-kayaking and yachting activities in the state. Some private tour companies in the recent past have organised kayaking events on Punnamada Lake and in some interior parts of Kuttanad. There are many small canals in Alappuzha which are attached to Punnamada Lake, thereby offering a huge advantage in terms of organising sports activities. Lack of



Water sports has huge potential in India

infrastructure and public awareness in Alappuzha presents hindrance in promoting backwater-kayaking in this area. Many public bodies have now requested the government to come up with a plan to promote kayaking as a leisure sport in Alappuzha.

Kozhikode district is another ideal region in Kerala to organise adventure aquatic sports. Kodikkal beach located about 14 km from Vadakara, offers nice conditions for water games. Some gaming enthusiasts have conducted parasailing demonstrations in recent years to bring the attention of the administration to the Kodikkal beach, but the government is yet to take a decision on developing this spot as a water sports area. Located about 40 km from Kochi, the Mararikulam Beach with its golden sands and swaying palm trees is another promising area for hosting aquatic games.

Andhra Pradesh

The coastal city of Vishakapatnam (Vizag) in Andhra Pradesh has been awaiting infrastructure development for years to conduct water game activities. This city has been endowed with picturesque beaches and ideal wind and wave conditions which can transform it into an international water sports destination. The tide, wind and sea conditions in Vizag are at par with the best water sports destinations in the world, and the beaches are perfect for water sports. Vizag is equipped with several star-rated hotels, air connectivity, and other facilities to cater to domestic and international tourists.

Maharashtra

Tarkarli is the most popular water games center in Maharashtra, with nice scuba diving and snorkeling facilities developed around Sindhudurg Fort in Malvan. Tsunami island off the coast of Devbaug also offers some exciting aquatic

games including parasailing. Despite the popularity of these areas, there is much scope still to develop facilities and infrastructure for promoting aquatic sports in the state. Moreover, there are many other small beaches along Maharashtra's coast, starting from the famous Juhu beach in Mumbai to Murud beach in Konkan lying about 220 km south, which can be further developed to provide gaming facilities to tourists. Ganapatipule Beach, Dahanu-Bordi Beach, Mandwa and Kihim Beach, Velneshwar Beach, Vengurla Malvan Beach, and Bassein Beach are some of the unspoiled beaches along the whole stretch that have been awaiting development and water game facilities for many years.

Gujarat

The most popular beaches in Gujarat are Ahmedpur Mandvi Beach, Somnath Beach, Chorwad Beach, Gopnath Beach, Kutch Mandvi Beach, Dwaraka Beach, Nagoa Beach, Gomtimata Beach, and Ghoghla Beach. Some of these beaches do offer facilities for games like water scooters, sailing, and speed boat trips. However, there is much scope left for development and promotion of aquatic games in Gujarat. Recently, the Gujarat government announced a policy to encourage adventure sports tourism in the state, revealing it would promote activities - such as boat and water scooter, water skiing, parasailing, fun riding, jet-skiing, kayaking, wind surfing & sailing, canoeing and scuba diving - at all popular beaches, lakes, rivers, creeks and other water bodies in the state.

Conclusion

To sum up, India's vast coastline and presence of several lakes and rivers hold a promise for exciting water sports activities, tourism development, employment creation, and earning large sums of foreign exchange in addition to giving a fillip to overall economic and social development in the country. Much has been achieved, but much more still remains to be done. Since water-sports and tourism development is a multi-



dimensional activity, it is essential that the private sector, voluntary organisations, respective state governments, and the central government do their best in this endeavour to make India a world player in this industry. ■

The author is a freelance travel writer based in Dehradun.

A maxim to live by

"Book readers are special people, and they will always turn to books as the ultimate pleasure. Those who do not read are the unfortunate ones. There's nothing wrong with them; but they are missing out on one of life's compensations and rewards. A great book is a friend that never lets you down. You can return to it again and again and the joy first derived from it will still be there."

– Ruskin Bond

Ocean's acidification

*We live in a world intrinsically connected. Bad practices in one sphere of life can affect another. Thus, overburning of fossil fuels raise the carbondioxide levels in the atmosphere, which settle on the ocean surface, turning it acidic. This in turn affects the marine creatures and hence, the food chain. We should act fast lest we reach the point of no return, cautions **Vineeta Ghosh**.*

OCEAN acidification is relatively a new environmental concern. It's of concern primarily for its potential of changing the chemistry of our marine water bodies, and consequently, its negative impact on all other stages of 'ecosystem sustainability' on the Earth.

What is ocean acidification ?

Increasing levels of carbon dioxide accumulating in the atmosphere and its subsequent coming down into surface seawater through the seawater-atmospheric interface are causing the world's oceans to become more acidic because of lowering of pH level of the sea water. The basis of this lowering of pH is a chemical reaction between carbon dioxide (CO₂) and water (H₂O) forming carbonic acid in the seawater.

Acidification of ocean water or any seawater does not mean that all water converts to acid. It does not mean that when we put our hands in the sea water we will burn, neither does it imply that the water will taste sour. Then why did the scientific community coin the term 'Acidification'? Well, we know that while measuring the pH of seawater, a number greater than 7 implies and indicates that the solution is basic or alkaline in nature, and a number lower than 7 signifies a solution is acidic, as 7 is the number being regarded as the neutral pH. Standard pure distilled water is an example of neutral pH. Since the pH of normal sea water (ocean water) is typically found in the alkaline range of 8 and above, when lowering of pH in the sea water occurs, it is said to have become acidic.

Let's take an example. Let's say the pH of a particular sample of sea water is 8.225 at a particular time of the year, and if acidification continues to occur, the pH is found to be lowered to 8.221 at the same seasonal time of the following year. Therefore, the proper phrase to be used for describing this phenomenon is "lowering of pH".

Now, what has happened to lower the pH of the sea water? The increased pressure of the CO₂ in the atmosphere leads to more dissolution of the gas into the sea water which

leads to the formation of H₂CO₃ (carbonic acid) that causes the reduction of pH. Generally, the change in pH is insignificant. However, if the concentration of CO₂ increases to a higher extent in the atmosphere, the increased pressure causes more CO₂ to be dissolved in the sea water, lowering the pH to a significant extent.

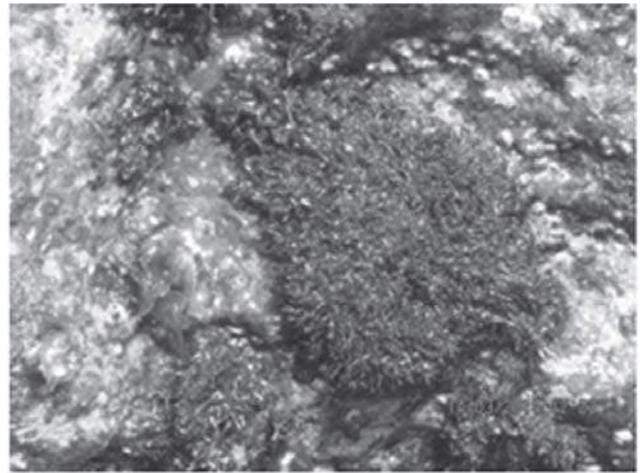
Why does acidification occur in the oceans?

The answer seems straightforward that this happens because of the solubility of carbon dioxide. But then another question comes up which is, Why do huge quantities of carbon dioxide come into the atmosphere?

Heavy quantities of carbon dioxide are released in the atmosphere as a result of high magnitude of energy consumption by human beings in the name of development – be it industrial or war or transportation – where the burning of fossil fuels cause such release. Due to its property, the carbon dioxide comes down to the 3/4th earth surface covered with the sea water and makes the sea water acidic.



The writer (extreme right) studies the air-temperature as a part of field investigation on the shell communities at Bheemunipatnam, Andhra Pradesh



Marine algae that reduces atmospheric carbon dioxide to make their own food by the way of photosynthesis and thereby act as the 'filter for atmospheric carbon dioxide' or 'global carbon sink', become less efficient due to ocean acidification.

Changes in the marine ecosystem

The acidification has many direct and indirect impacts upon the natural living and non-living marine ecosystems, and also on human society.

Various research on physical-chemical properties and biological characteristics of sea water, mainly at the coastal zone, have found to be significant in respect of negative impact. A few direct impacts include:

Thinning of shells of molluscs: The lowered pH of the sea water triggers the thinning of the calcium carbonate (CaCO_3) shells of the molluscs. Molluscs are known to produce major CaCO_3 and are vulnerable to this sea water acidification in their various life stages. The Pteropods or the 'sea butterfly' get their shells dissolved in this water of lowered pH. Studies have revealed that there is thinning of shells in the oysters and gastropods in the experimental set up of water with elevated the CO_2 , clearly proving the hypothesis.

Lowered calcification by calcifying algae: Certain algae have the uniqueness to incorporate CaCO_3 into their *thalli*, contributing to the carbon fixation. The lowering of pH in the sea water reduces the rate of calcification in these algae. This causes a threat of reduced efficiency of the 'global carbon sink'.

Coral dissolution and exacerbation of bleaching: Corals are symbiotic organisms partly plants and partly animals. The increased acidification in the sea water causes the CaCO_3 to dissolve, hence destroying the foundation of corals. Experiments conducted by scientists also have shown that along with temperature increase, if there is a simultaneous increase in the CO_2 concentration, the coral bleaching is increased by a significant percentage.

Disturbance in the marine food chain: The decrease in the population of pteropods (small marine planktons) can alter

the marine food chain as there can be an effect in the population in the organisms that prey on these pteropods.

Threat to marine biodiversity: There is a huge threat of loss in marine biodiversity as the coral reefs become vulnerable to the acidification. The large number of organisms of different species that are provided with habitat in the reefs, also face threat to their population.

Overall misbalances in the biogeochemical cycle: The change in the ocean chemistry can lead to various alterations in the biogeochemical cycle. There has been decrease in the productivity in the coral reefs as well as in phytoplanktons.

Economic and social impact: Surveys carried out in the coastal areas have revealed that there is decrease in the fish quantity today compared to a decade ago. The major occupation of people living in the coastal areas is fishing, which is considered an alternative livelihood, such as small scale agriculture.

Besides the direct and indirect effect, there exist uncertainties caused by multiplicity of various unknown threats in the coastal ecosystem absolutely dependant on the nature of seawater. Therefore, if for any cause or causes, the pH is being altered by acidification which can alter the chemistry of the ocean, no one knows how soon we will reach the point of no return. ■



The writer is a guest lecturer in Environmental Science department, Muralidhar Girls' College (University of Calcutta), Kolkata. She has also been working as honorary researcher at the Asian Marine Conservation Association. She was nominated as 'Young Scientist' in the Section of the Environmental Science, at the 99th Indian Science Congress held at Bhubaneswar, Odisha, in the year 2011 for her outstanding research contribution in Ocean Acidification.

Sailing the high seas

Sailing the seas as a merchant navy officer may be a lot of work, but there are perks of the job too. Where else can one take one's family on an extended cruise? And where else can one learn so much about life than by being pitted against the often hostile ocean for months on end? Ramesh Narain Kurpad takes us on a personalised journey on the high seas.

THE primary reason I opted for a seagoing career was because I wished to be in a service where one wears a uniform which is highly respected, and there is a huge sense of discipline.

I joined The Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) as a trainee purser officer and was posted on a passenger ship which was operating between Chennai, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore, a round trip of 16 days with a four day stay in Chennai and Singapore

respectively. The reason we as trainees were posted on passenger ships was to give us an overall exposure to handling immigration, customs and port formalities, as also all aspects relating to passenger traffic and management. Such training is very crucial and a necessary part of our job. I remember, as juniors we also used to have our share of free time, allowed to go on shore leave on our own and also occasionally accompany passengers on sightseeing trips.

The following year I was posted on an OBO (ore bulk oil) ship which was on a global run. Here I was the lone man in-charge and had to be doubly sure of my work as that would reflect on the smooth entry and exit of the ship from a port, adhering to all port formalities.

A loner's life

I had also suddenly landed on a ship where there were very few people (crew), long months of sailing with no contact with family and the outside world, and I had to come to terms with the loneliness which is a big part of this job.



A ship belonging to the SCI fleet

All seas are not the same and there were many occasions for days on end we used to negotiate dangerously rough seas (the ship is just like a toy tossed around in belligerent weather conditions), left

to plod on as we had to reach the next port with our cargo.

To continuously face this kind of life, to keep fit, eat well without throwing up and remain seaworthy myself, it quickly dawned on me that all this was only possible with a regular dose of some scotch on the rocks!

The fair weather food

The food on the ship depended mainly on weather. Fair weather always meant we would have a seven course meal, catering to both the vegetarians and the meat eaters. The quantity never being a problem, the quality and taste depended mainly on the ethnicity of the cooks and which part of our nation they hailed from! During rough weather there was only *khichdi* and *rasam* as no vessel could stay

The food on the ship depended mainly on weather. Fair weather always meant we would have a seven course meal, catering to both the vegetarians and the meat eaters.

steady on the hot plate of the galley (the ship's kitchen).

Meanwhile, during the long sailing months, work was more of a routine for me as I had to maintain a ship's office with all important documents, certificates, accounts and preparing the vessel for port formalities. In a designated port, I also had to pay every individual an advance against his wages (salary) in the local currency (usually American dollars). This currency is normally brought by the local agent upon receiving prior radio message from our ship. I had to record and account for the entire monies and maintain each and every crew account. I also had to send weekly, monthly, quarterly, half yearly and yearly financial documents as per the rules laid down from time to time by the company.

Now you may be startled when I say that the various officials who used to board the ship like the immigration, customs and port health officials, never ever did their own work of signing and clearing the ship in and out of ports without getting something "underneath the table" in the form of cash, whisky/cigarettes and even food rations (only of the expensive kind). Basically, a bribe!

The family perk

Once I attained a level of seniority, I was allowed to take

my family on board, of course subject to similar requests from other officers. This, I must admit was the sweet part of my career, as we could travel to places around the world as a family. Ships with families on board always bring a lot of cheer to everyone, in an otherwise work filled monotonous life.

One quickly learns from day one that a person on ship has to be efficient in his work, amiable, respectful, maintain decency and decorum, adhering to hierarchy.

At the end of my 35 years long sea career, there is one thing I would like to stress on. In so many years, I have seen death staring at me from close, learnt immensely, met, sailed and lived with some of the most intelligent and beautiful humans in this world. Many of them are still in touch with me including their families and I feel this is my biggest reward and take away. ■



The writer is a retired Mercantile Marine Officer, having served The Shipping Corporation of India Ltd for 35 years in the capacity of a Senior Purser Officer. He retired in the year 2011 and is a native of Bangalore in South India. His family consists of his wife and daughter.



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A wild serenade

God's primeval handiwork and man-made luxuries go hand in hand in national parks in India. Here's an account of the deliciously thrilling forays into the two leading tiger reserves in Karnataka - Bandipur and Nagarhole. Here, the creatures of the wild play hide and seek with tourists and travellers even as the forest entices them with bird song, the rustle of leaves and the creak of bamboos as tall as totem poles. Spotting the big cats may be the bonus, but the forests unveil many treasures which are equally satisfying.

Text and photos: Gustasp & Jeroo Irani



A tiger spotted at the Bandipur Reserve

Bandipur Tiger Reserve

THERE was a crispness in the air and as the early morning mist lifted, Bandipur Tiger Reserve seemed to awaken from its slumber. A symphony of bird calls greeted us even as our open safari vehicle glided down the dirt road - two tire-worn strips of brown that snaked through a forest. We stopped briefly to admire a serpent eagle that eyed us and our barrel-nosed cameras with disdain from its perch up in a tree.

A herd of spotted deer on the fringe of the safari trail looked up with concern. The rays of the morning sun filtered through the forest and spot lit a handsome stag, highlighting its liquid eyes and the velvet of its impressive antlers. Reassured that we were not predators, these gentle creatures – the popular fast-food of the wild in India – returned to their grazing.

Further down the road, a female *sambar* and its calf scurried into the thicket, the bristly hair on their muscled rumps glistening in the sunlight. Overhead, a Malabar giant squirrel was totally indifferent to our presence as it leapt through the branches with its bushy rust-red tail bobbing behind it like a rudder.

A troop of langurs leapt around while one mother suckled her baby; a red-crested woodpecker tapped away rhythmically on the trunk of a dead tree... all very nice for an average safari. But our pulse raced with anticipation as we negotiated each bend in the trail: would we be rewarded with the prized sighting

of the Indian safari trail?

“Tiger!” our driver-guide whispered; his voice hoarse with excitement. We could not believe our luck, for there, in a clearing, sat the majestic beast. So often we have been on game drives in parks and reserves across the country hoping – willing – that a big cat would honour us with its presence and ended up disappointed. We do not blame the forest guides for not trying hard enough. In fact they are focused, almost to the exclusion of all else, on tracking the king of the Indian jungles. They read pug marks to determine if the cat is male or female,



A sambar stag on the run



Bandipur, a haven for birds

the time of day or night when it prowled down the path, the direction it was headed. Tiger droppings or spoor reveal if the big cat has feasted on a fresh or old kill...

More often than not, we had to settle for just knowing that the predator was close by, but out of sight, loping through his domain, unchallenged by all the other animals who deign to call it home. Not this time though: we had chanced upon the real thing. True, the striped cat was some distance away but that did not make him less imposing. He glared back at us with the air of one who knew he inspired fear in all who dared to cross his path. Then tiring of our pesky presence, he rose and strode off into the thicket; his long black and yellow striped



The serpent eagle, Bandipur

tail waving farewell as he disappeared into the forest.

Elated by the prized sighting, we continued on a game drive that had more rewards further down the trail. The first was an elephant with its calf at a salt lick. The little one was



A female elephant and its calf at a waterhole



'The Serai' wildlife resort

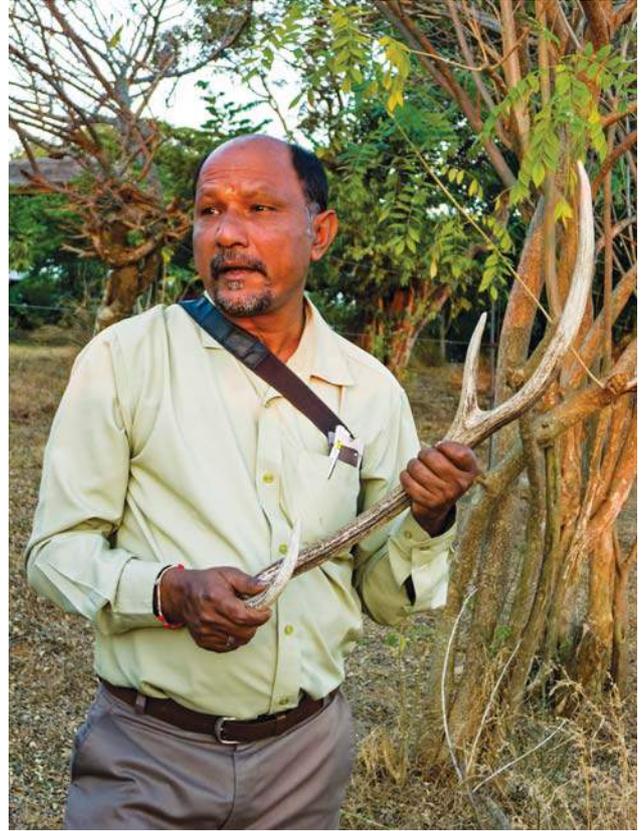
curious but its mother was cautious and she positioned herself protectively between its ward and us. Seeing that we had no intention of moving on, she trumpeted her displeasure; a goose-bumpy call that reverberated through the forest. Okay, we had got the message and were on our way once more.

'The Serai' experience

We encountered two more elephant herds which was not really surprising as the Nilgiri Biosphere which includes the national parks of Bandipur and Nagarhole in Karnataka, Mudumalai in Tamil Nadu and Wynaad in Kerala, has the largest concentration of Asiatic elephants in the world – 3,000 and counting. Back at The Serai Bandipur, and in-touch-with-nature wildlife resort that has the look and feel of luxury private game lodges in South Africa, we sat around a camp fire and shared our safari experience with other guests who congratulated us on our lucky tiger sighting. We ought to have been content: but no, we felt a twinge of denial when we found out that one of the other vehicles had chanced upon a pack of wild dogs that had brought down a spotted deer. Yes, a wildlife safari is like a gambling addiction: you are never satisfied even when you are winning.

The Serai, however, was an outright winner all right. Snuggled in the foothills of the Nilgiris, it had a spectacular view of the forested slopes of the Blue Mountains that reflected the shifting moods of the day...and night. Indeed, there was romance in the air after sunset as the resort arranged intimate tables-for-two for couples celebrating special occasions. And as darkness claimed the sky and studded it with stars, nocturnal life started to stir in the forest surrounding the resort... some animals are prone to sneak quite close to the property.

Early next morning, we set off on a bird watching tour with Kuttappan, the resort's fabled naturalist who even has a species of insect that he discovered named after him. His keen eye, knowledge of the wild and powerful binoculars helped us zero



Kuttappan, The Serai's famous naturalist

in on a variety of feathered creatures: owls, woodpeckers, drongos, coppersmiths, red and yellow vented bulbuls... and a number of other brilliantly plumed birds whose exotic names we promptly forgot.

Suddenly, the silence of the morning was rent with the trumpet call of an elephant. Moments later, two behemoths herding a little calf between them emerged on a hillock no more than 50 metres from the trail we were on. According to Kuttappan, the elephants were either calling out to the main herd or warning other animals (and humans too) to steer clear of their path as they plodded down one of the many migration corridors between the national parks. Seeing these giants at such close quarters and without the safety of a safari vehicle made us feel vulnerable and, at the same time, privileged. We felt a sense of connect with these beasts that came from knowing that we were meeting them on equal terms; that they could have so easily charged and trampled us, yet chose not to.

There were more elephants in the forest surrounding the 700-year-old hilltop Srihamawat Gopal Swamy Temple, some 12 km from the entrance of the Tiger Reserve. We, however, first imagined that they were large boulders scattered in the valley below... that was till they started to move and we noticed that they had trunks, tails, flapping ears!

On the drive back to the resort, our driver suddenly pulled up on the road just outside the resort. "Leopard," he whispered.

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The 700-year old Gopal Swamy Temple, Bandipur

And sure enough, there it was; draped on the branches of a tree, some 25 metres away from us. The hoof of a deer sticking out at an awkward angle indicated that it had just enjoyed a hearty meal. Realizing that we were not going to leave in a hurry, it gave us a disgruntled snarl, leapt down from the tree and disappeared into the all-embracing forest.

It would be an understatement to say that our Bandipur safari was an outright winner. Even if we discount the sighting of the two big cats, the adventure was an amazing experience.

Fact File

Coimbatore (191km) and Bangalore (272km) are the closest airports for Bandipur Tiger Reserve which is located



Leopard on a tree outside the Reserve

in the foothills of the Nilgiris on the Mysore-Ooty highway; about 80 km from both destinations. Mysore is the nearest railhead. Buses from Mysore and Ooty in neighbouring Tamil Nadu ply to Bandipur.

Bandipur has a handful of resorts and lodges including government-owned camps. The top of the heap is The Serai Bandipur. Bandipur is open throughout the year including the monsoon months. In addition to game drives you can go birdwatching; visit a local village, stop by a historic hilltop temple, cycle, trek or go clip-clop in a bullock cart.

For more information visit Karnataka Tourism: www.karnatakaturism.org and www.theserai.in



A pair of gaurs at Bandipur



A wild boar and spotted deer graze at Nagarhole Tiger Reserve

Nagarhole Tiger Reserve

BIRDS were well into their morning raga, welcoming the sun as it peered over the eastern horizon. Dew drops glistened on grass stems, leaves, wild flower petals and strands of silken spider webs. We stopped at a little shrine, snuggled under the aerial roots that drooped like a beard from the overhead branches of an ancient banyan tree. An offering of fresh flowers and a vermilion *tikka* smeared on a rock suggested that it was an active shrine. According to Sukanta Das, the naturalist-guide at The Serai Kabini, on the fringe of the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve in south Karnataka, folk lore has it that the twin sons of Ram – Luv and Kush – spent time here with their *guru*. However, the legend stutters and goes no further.

We moved on with our nature walk, nursing the hope that we might stumble upon the leopard that occasionally wanders into the shrub land that adjoins the national park. A butterfly fluttered over a cluster of wild flowers, taking sips of nectar as it skipped from bloom to bloom. Another settled on a pie of moist dung. “Animal droppings are rich in minerals and vitamins and from a butterfly’s point of view they are sit-down, fine dining options. Those that skip between flowers are bar hopping.” So beauty loves the crap! Das was a storehouse of delightful little nuggets of information.

Further down the trail, we caught sight of a green rope draped over a wilted clump of tall grass. Litter in the forest? No, a green vine snake. Yes, that was what it was: a snake!



Birds line the waterfront



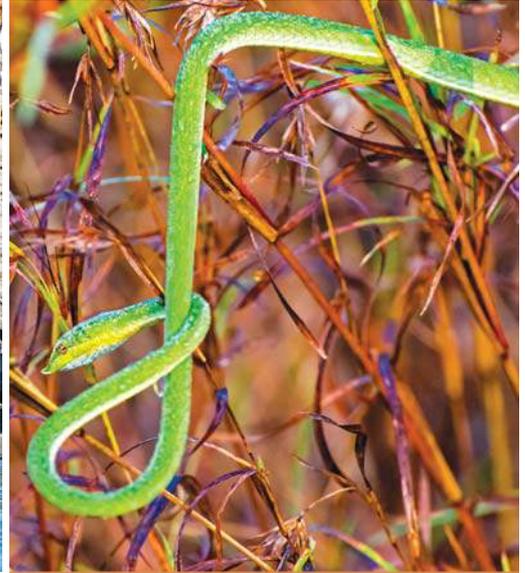
A snakebird spreads its wings to dry



A migratory bird launches into flight



A crocodile on the banks of the river, Nagarhole



A green vine snake encountered during a nature walk

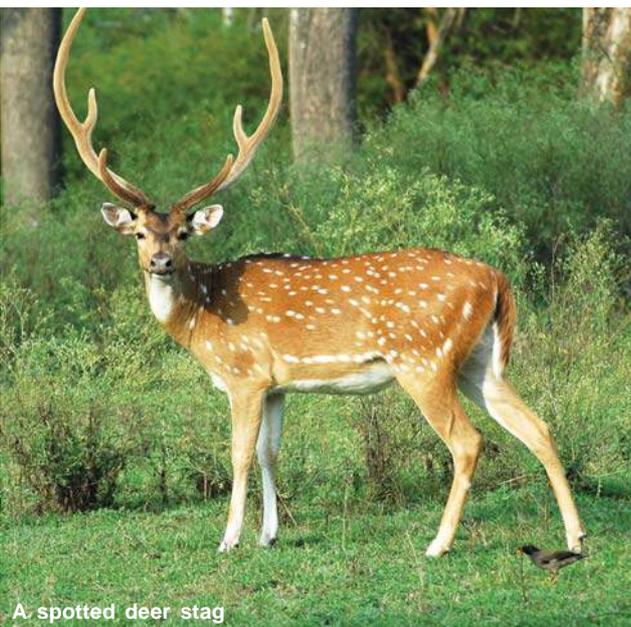
And we did not scamper away in terror! Instead we stood there, even edged a little closer, to admire the elegance and grace of the much maligned creature. And did we detect a hint of pleading in its slit eyes? A plea not to harm it as it stayed immobile, sunning itself? Greeny (our endearment for the graceful creature) must have been freezing through the night as dew drops sparkled like diamonds on its head and body.

Greeny, we guess, was relieved when we moved on, little realizing that he was the prized sighting on our morning wildlife adventure. All too often, we miss the little gems that a safari offers in our obsession to see larger mammals like tigers, leopards and elephants, for instance. Indeed Nagarhole Tiger Reserve which basks on the banks of the Kabini River has the big guns, too. In fact, it is the stage for the largest congregation of

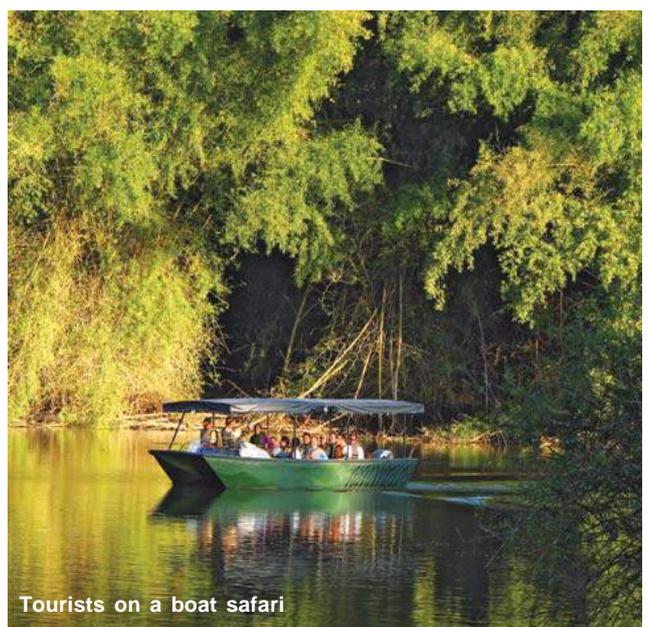
Asiatic elephants in the world. For as waterholes inside the Nilgiri Biosphere which includes Bandipur, Mudumalai in Tamil Nadu and Wynaad in Kerala, dry up, these gentle giants converge on the river to feed on its grassy banks.

The pachyderm parade

We caught a glimpse of the first movement of this annual event as different herds, packing babies, their mothers, aunts and dominant matriarchs started to roll in and fill the landscape like actors gathering to take part in an epic movie. One herd crossed the road about 10 metres in front of our safari vehicle peacefully enough when suddenly the adolescent male bringing up the rear took umbrage at our presence and staged a mock charge. Feet stomping, trunk waving, ears flapping, it was an



A spotted deer stag



Tourists on a boat safari



An elephant parade

impressive show but it did not faze our driver-guide who held his ground. Later, he confessed that he had the vehicle in reverse and was ready to gun it away should the elephant decide to shift gears from mock to real.

The best way to see the elephant parade is on a boat cruise safari which is one of the unique features of Nagarhole. The water based adventure let us see the wildlife park from a totally different perspective from a traditional game drive. A turtle resting on a piece of driftwood. A large log on a bank that started to move and betrayed the fact that it was actually a crocodile... a big one. On seeing us approach, the reptile paddled its bulky body, topped with cracked spikes (do female crocs find it attractive?), to the water's edge and submerged itself like a stealth submarine.

Further down, a pair of fishing eagles shared a meal that was rudely interrupted by a crow that was looking for an opening to sneak in and snatch what was on their rustic dinner table. A kingfisher fell out of the sky and splashed into the water.



A peacock preening in the Nagarhole Reserve

Moments later, it was airborne again with a silvery fish in its beak. The bird then pulverised its twitching catch by giving it a few good whacks on the branch of a dead tree trunk, sticking out of the water, and swallowed it whole.

Yes, dead trees that reared out of the water like ghostly fingers were the remains of a forest that was flooded with the damming of the Kabini River, decades ago. Amazingly adaptable, birds have used these stumps to their advantage. Some use it as perches, other as fishing posts from where they drop down to pluck their catch from just under the surface of the water. A few build their nests up here as it keeps their eggs and brood safe from land-based predators. We cruised through one cluster of stumps which was studded with the nests of cormorants. The chicks in one nest were really pesky, pestering their mum for more food. Made us wonder what cormorant parents do when they have reached breaking point. Whack their chicks with their wings and say 'enough is enough'? Or maybe birds are more patient with their kids than we humans are!



Painted storks



The misty safari trail



A wild boar

All along the banks of the waterway, the forest heaved with life. Elephants, the first movement of the great annual migration; wild boar; herrings, painted storks and egrets patrolling the water's edge; peacock; monkeys; herds of spotted deer... Was it our imagination or did we spy the bushy tails of a pack of wild dogs planning an ambush on an unsuspecting fawn?

Later that afternoon, we got a bonus sighting of sleek-bodied river otters as they swam past the motorboat that ferried us to the 800-year-old Bhiman Kolli Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. According to legend, Bhima of Mahabharata fame had rested here before crossing the river in a few strides to meet his Pandava brothers on the other side. We were certain that the gods would understand if we delayed paying our respect to them and spent a little time tracking the adventure of the hunting party. And sure enough, they made a kill: a large fish that the big daddy of the group carried to the shallows and chomped on as the rest of his family moved on.

The evening safari was a more traditional game drive that threw up the expected: elephants, spotted deer, sambar, monkeys, a herd of white-socked gaur or Indian bison, woodpeckers drumming on the trunks of dead trees, giant wood spiders waiting patiently to snap up hapless insects snared in their sticky webs. We did not miss the tiger as it was a rewarding safari anyway!



The 800-year old Bhiman Kolli Temple on the far banks of the river

Back at The Serai, Kabini, we checked into its spa and let the magic fingers of the therapist unravel the knotted muscles of our bodies. Later we nursed tall drinks at the Outpost Bar with its sweeping views of the river. A honeymooning couple whispered sweet nothings at a romantic table-for-two set up for them by the pool. A crescent yellow moon smiled down on the row of waterfront cottages and villas of stone and timber with sloping tiled roofs.

Later, as we snuggled in for the night, under warm blankets in an air-con room our thoughts reached out to Greeny. It would be another cold night for him. And while we felt sorry for him, we were happy he was not sharing our bed!

Fact File

Kabini is the base to explore Nagarhole National Park. Bangalore (260) km is the closest airport. Mysore (76 km) is the closest railhead. This is a year-round destination and unlike many parks in North India, Nagarhole remains open even in the rains.

In terms of accommodation, there are a number of options including The Serai Kabini, Orange County, Kabini, and the state-run Jungle Lodges and Resorts property which was once the hunting lodge of the former Maharaja of Mysore. ■

For more information visit Karnataka Tourism at: www.karnatakaturism.org

Gustasp and Jeroo Irani are travel companions for whom life is a never-ending journey. Over the last 25 years they have travelled extensively across India and the globe, taking the rough with the smooth; sampling different cultures and cuisines. In the process they have trekked in the Australian Outback, slurped snake soup in Hong Kong,



have danced with the Samburus in Africa, stayed with a local family in a Malay village, cracked the Da Vinci Code in Paris... For them, writing and photography are more than just freezing moments of that journey; it's a passion.

KARWAR

a pristine beach in coastal Karnataka



Text & Photos: Dr. Roopa Vernekar

The coastal town of Karwar is a shining jewel in Karnataka. Its beautiful beaches, pleasant climate and delicious cuisine beckon tourists, who flock to this town to experience the tranquil breeze and the blue sea. Its proximity to the more popular Goan beaches also adds to its allure.

THE journey from Mangalore to Goa by road, along the western coast of Karnataka was thrilling. Just before we reached Goa, we came across a town beside the sea and we couldn't resist stopping there, as the sight was amazing. The cool breeze blew in the fragrance of the sea towards us and we realized that we were in the town of Karwar.

Karwar is a small town situated in the northern part of Karnataka. It is a town located between the state borders of Goa and Karnataka, on the bank of the river Kali; it is at this place that river Kali meets the Arabian Sea. The Kali Bridge was built in 1986 over the Kali River.

The town and its people

The word Karwar is derived from the Konkani word *Kadwad*, *Kade* means 'last' and 'wado' means land, or the last piece of land. It is also known to be derived from the Marathi word 'kaarwan', meaning the corner of land mass before the Kali River. The geography of Karwar is such that it has land side hills and ocean side islands that naturally

protect it from cyclonic weather. Karwar has a relatively warm temperature ranging from 23 degree to 36 degree Celsius. This temperature is suitable for certain crops that are grown only in this area.

Konkani is the native language of the people living here, who also speak Marathi and Kannada. As history reveals, Uttara Kannada district was a part of Bombay state during the British rule, and hence several Marathi medium schools were established in Karwar. Later, when the Konkani language was established as an independent language, Karwar became an integral part of Karnataka. The Dutch, Portuguese, French and later, the British visited Karwar and traded muslin, cotton cloth, black pepper and cardamom.

The Karwar economy

Karwar is an agricultural region and its economy derives mainly from growing rice, groundnuts and vegetables. Sericulture, horticulture and fishing are the other primary industries. Fishing is an important occupation and almost all



The Karwar Port

varieties of fish and other sea creatures like squids, crabs, oysters, etc form the regular catch of fishermen. Goldsmithing is another important occupation of people here, they are engaged in designing of jewellery and manufacturing them. The nuclear power plant at Kaiga has provided employment to many locals. The place has great tourism potential which remains unexplored.

The Karwar Port

The Karwar Port is located at Baithkol and is operated by the Government of Karnataka. The length of the port is 355 mts. The port has liquid storage tanks for furnace oil, and molasses, it also has a jetty for fishing vessels. An interesting tidbit? The Hindi film *Golmaal returns* was filmed at Karwar Port!

The Indian navy operates a naval base at Karwar. It is the navy's third largest base and was founded as a part of Project Sea Bird. During World War II, Karwar was a naval training centre.

The Karwar Beach

The beach is vast and is visited by the locals in the evening and a few tourists can also be found capturing the sea in their lenses, overall presenting a very restful scene. The beach has a variety of sea shells of different sizes and colours and is surprisingly well maintained. It also has various attractions like the park adjacent to the beach, a huge war ship INS Chapal, which was used as a missile boat during the India-Pakistan war in 1971 and converted into a museum since November 2006. A statue of Rama Raghoba Rane has also been installed at the beach. Rama Raghoba Rane was born on 26 June 1918 at Chendia, Karwar. He was a Second Lieutenant and served the Indian Army for 21 years. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his courage and gallantry during the 1971 war against Pakistan.

The beach also offers a platform to various cultural events as many of them are staged here. The Karavali Utsav or the



A statue of Second Lt. Major Rama Raghoba Rane of Karwar, who displayed exemplary courage during the 1971 Indo-Pak War

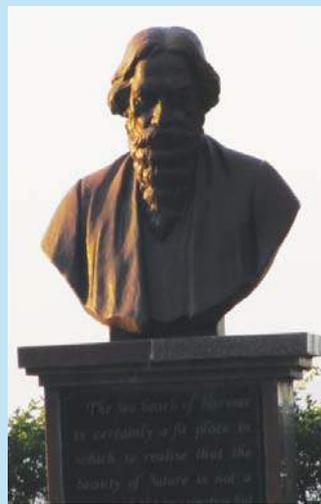
coastal festival is held once in a year at the beach and encourages the cultural diversity of the coastal regions. As part of the festival, various cultural programmes are staged and diverse stalls are put up where one can buy handicrafts, food, fabric etc. It is also a means of entertainment not only to

The Karwar Beach and the Tagore connection

The Karwar beach is known as the Rabindranath Tagore beach as he described Karwar as the 'Kashmir of Karnataka'. The nobel laureate spent time at Karwar in 1882 at the age of 22, when he lived with his second brother Satyendra Tagore who was at that time a district judge in Karwar.

The view from the beach is mesmerising. The waves rush on to the shore bringing in a large gust of water each time. The sky appears to be painted in vivid colours as if the various colours are mixed and matched on a canvas,

displaying the various expressions and moods of life. No wonder the beach attracted the great noble laureate who wrote, "The sea beach of Karwar is certainly a fit place to realise that the beauty of nature is not a mirage of imagination, but reflects the joy of infinite and thus draws us to lose ourselves in it". A statue of Tagore has been installed at the beach to pay homage to the great man. ●



The Tagore statue at the beach



The entrance to the Rabindranath Tagore Beach

the locals but also to the people of the surrounding villages and towns. We were lucky to have a glimpse of a hovercraft which was anchored at the beach for maintenance.

Fish, fish and more fish

Karwar is known for its sea food as fish is easily available, and it is the staple food of people here. Rice along with fish prepared with coconut is a hallmark of the Konkani cuisine. The fish varieties most commonly available are mackerel, pomfret, king fish and sardines, besides other sea foods like prawns, squid, oyster and crabs. The locals here prefer to cook food at home in their traditional methods. There are a few restaurants that cater to various seafood cuisines in the traditional way, and a must try are certain dishes like *ganshe shaak* served with paraboiled rice, *tissare sukke* (a dish made of oyster), *kurale ambat* (crab curry), *alambya ambat* (mushroom curry) and *maasali fry* (fish fry), as it is known here in the local language. The menu in the dessert section consists of the *patoli* (rice pancake boiled in turmeric leaves as it gives a distinct fragrance) and *sukrondo* (a delicacy made of channa dal/moong dal and jaggery stuffing which is coated with gramflour batter and deep fried); these dishes are unique and



Many varieties of sea food are available in Karwar



The local market, Karwar

are prepared mainly during festivals. The meal is completed by *kokam kadi* which is a drink prepared from the kokum fruit and is said to soothe the digestive lining and also aids in digestion. Kokum trees grow in abundance in Karwar and the dried fruit is used in a number of dishes, especially sea food curries to give it a tangy flavour. Karwar is a wonderful place for sea food lovers as the town caters to a wide variety of sea foods.

The local market

Though the town provides all basic commodities, it is well known for spices and cashews. A wide variety of fruits and vegetables are sold in the market, some of which are rare and found only in the Konkani region: For example, ramphal, raw cashews, vali bhaji (a form of green leafy vegetable that is a main ingredient in making of the *ganshe shaak*) a favourite dish of the region. Sun dried fishes are the specialty of the town and one can buy and store them for months. One can also shop for spices, cashews and kokum in the form of concentrated syrup, or as sun dried fruits. The weekly bazaar, called 'Saanti' held every Sunday is also quite popular with the locals as people from neighbouring villages come to sell



The Durga Temple is situated in the Sadashivgad hill



The Marine Museum adjacent to the beach

their home grown vegetables. Even cattle is sold at this weekly bazaar which is in existence since more than 100 years.

Temples of Karwar

The Durga temple is situated in the Sadashivgad hill; along with the mythological significance, it also has an historic importance as it was established by the Maratha warrior Chhatrapatti Shivaji. He then gave the rights to worship, to the native Bhandari population. Another important temple is the Naganath temple, which is conserved under the Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958. The natives can be found worshipping an anthill in the temple and it has high religious significance amongst the locals.

The Karwar Marine Aquarium

The Marine Aquarium at Karwar was established in 2000. A few common marine species are preserved in glass enclosure for the visitors to view. Crabs, lobsters, eels, starfishes, and sharks are some of the marine creatures found here.

Karwar is a wonderful place to visit for all nature and sea food lovers. Its location also makes it a good tourist spot as it is on the way to Goa and the NH 17 highway passes through the town.



The Karwar Marine Aquarium (Inset: sea prawn, cat fish and star fish)

How to get there

One can take a flight to Mangalore and reach Karwar by road or one can take a flight to Goa and reach Karwar by road. The journey to Karwar is approximately 270 kms from Mangalore and just 85 kms from Goa. Karwar can also be reached by train, and its railway station connects to various Indian cities. The best time to visit Karwar is between October-February, after monsoon when there is greenery all over and the climate is pleasant. Karwar has many hotels to suit every budget. It is advisable to book rooms in advance, especially during the December and January months



when the town has many visitors. Cabs can be hired at reasonable rates, the cab drivers are locals and also play the role of a guide and take tourists to the various attractions in and around Karwar. ■

The writer is a dental graduate and a writer. She likes to write articles on medical and dental topics, as well as travel and tourism.

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“Well, I am an amateur myself as I have never been to any film school”

Meet Chaitanya Tamhane. At 27, he and his first, full-length feature film *Court* are the talk of every serious person in the film industry and among film buffs everywhere. *Court* was the surprise package which won the ‘Best Feature Film’ award at the 62nd National Awards 2015. *Court* won best film in the Orizzonti section as well as the Lion of the Future ‘Luigi de Laurentiis’ award for a debut film. It went on to win best film and best director prizes at Mumbai Film Festival, 2015, and special jury mention for the ensemble cast alongside prizes at Antalya, Vienna and three other festivals. It also got the Hubert Bals fund from Rotterdam Film Festival, a prestigious but small sum. Tamhane cut his teeth in theatre as a child, went on to participate in college



plays and then made his first short fiction film *Six Strands* which got accolades at many festivals across the world. *Court* has won 18 global and national awards till now. In a candid chat with **Shoma A. Chatterji, Chaitanya Tamhane** talks about this journey and how with *Court* he only set out to tell a story he wanted to tell.

Tell us about your background in theatre.

I am a Maharashtrian and theatre is part of our growing up. As kids we would go with our parents to watch plays and this included children’s plays. A natural corollary was acting in children’s plays. My parents have always been fond of the theatre and I was in a professional play for the first time when I was in Std. III. I remember a children’s play called *Dishau Dishau* in which I acted. Most of these plays were rehearsed and put together during school vacations and did not interfere with our studies.

Participating in college drama circles was the natural outcome, wasn’t it?

Yes, to begin with. My close friend Sandeep Modak and I joined Mithibai College because it had the most active drama circle that took part in inter-collegiate drama contests. We got actively involved in theatre though we also interacted with theatre stalwarts and playwrights like Vipul Mehta of Gujarati theatre and Nishikant Kamath from Marathi theatre. We enjoyed a lot less in terms of learning to act and more in terms of

sharpening our sensibilities. This worked like a two-edged knife. On the one hand, our sensibilities sharpened and on the other, these sharpened sensibilities woke us to the fact that the theatre that was being done was terribly outdated and bad. This made me question what we were really doing and whether it made sense for the kind of theatre we were involved in.

So disillusionment set in. Right?

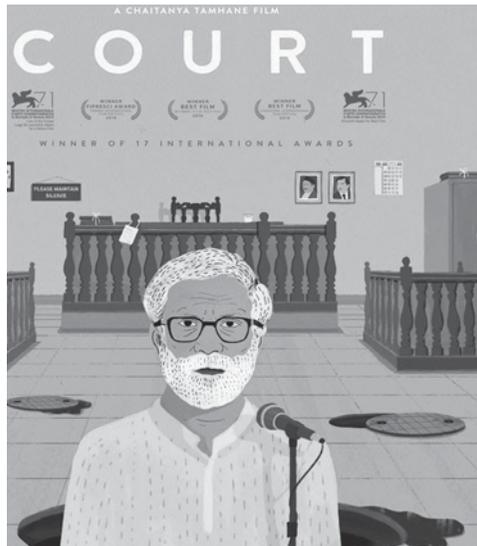
Right. It was true that winning prizes at intercollegiate drama competitions brought recognition and affirmation of what we were doing. But inside, I increasingly felt that these awards gave us a false sense of our talents and our achievements, which would not translate into real opportunities. I just quit the circuit.

But wasn't *Grey Elephants in Denmark*, your first professional play as writer-director when you were 21, a much acclaimed production?

It was reasonably well-acclaimed but it did not make me as happy as I felt it would. It was a character study of a performing artist who is partially intelligent and partially talented. He belongs to that rare breed of magicians who truly understand the difference between 'puzzles' and 'mysteries' performed at kids' birthday parties, and real magic which is nothing short of a great art. I know magic myself so I felt, why not give it a try in theatre? It was a live interactive play, because we invited audience participation with the magicians on stage and this proved to be a crowd-puller.

We would like to hear about your first short feature *Six Strands*.

Six Strands is the story of a mysterious woman who has created a magic brand of tea called *Moonlight Thurston*. The process, the way it is made is secret and ritualistic. But one fine day, the woman finds that this brand of tea will not be made anymore. It was shot entirely at the Makaibari Tea Estate in the Northeast. It is a very silent, intimate and minimalistic film featuring one actress. *Six Strands* was screened at the inaugural International Competition section of 4th Gulf International Film Festival. At the end of the festival, I was pleasantly surprised to have been selected to attend a ten-day film-making masterclass with the great Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami. *Six Strands* was also screened at Clermont-Ferrand International Film Festival 2011,



Slamdance 2011, Edinburgh International Film Festival 2011, International Film Festival Rotterdam 2011, and Short Film Center 2010, IFFI, Goa. But this is not my first film.

You did a stint with Balaji Telefilms also. What was the experience like?

The best thing that happened was that it made me discover world cinema. There were people from the National School of Drama, Delhi who were working at Balaji Telefilms. They introduced me to films and this opened a new world of ideas for me. I was fascinated by the medium, the

language, the art and craft of cinema and discovered that these films were different from what we were used to seeing in our films. I also learnt that most Indian films were complete plagiarisation of Western films. This inspired me to make my first film ever. In 2006, I wrote and directed a feature-length documentary called *Four Step Plan* on plagiarism in Indian cinema sequenced chronologically from the 1940s. During my research, I met Anand Gandhi who made *Ship of Theseus*. Later, he produced my play *Grey Elephants in Denmark*.

How did *Court* come about?

I began thinking of a real courtroom setting in an Indian situation after I finished my long tour of foreign film festivals with *Six Strands*. I discussed this with my friend from theatre Vivek Gomber, and he asked me to begin writing the script. He plays one of the two major roles – the defence lawyer in *Court*. He also stepped in to produce the film. I set off on a chain of interviews with people belonging to different cross-sections of society. I made notes, penned down free-association essays, followed by six months of casting and eight months of sighting and fixing locations entirely in Mumbai. Slowly, very slowly, *Court* was born. I visited many courts in Mumbai and found that they were far removed from the courts we see in cinema. I wanted to create a more realistic vision of what a real court looks like, how it functions on a day-to-day basis, the people who attend court professionally or as witnesses, accused and victims and so on.

How did you pitch this realistic image of the court to a credible storyline?

It begins with a small incident revolving around Narayan Kamble, a frail and sick man of 65, a performer of folk songs

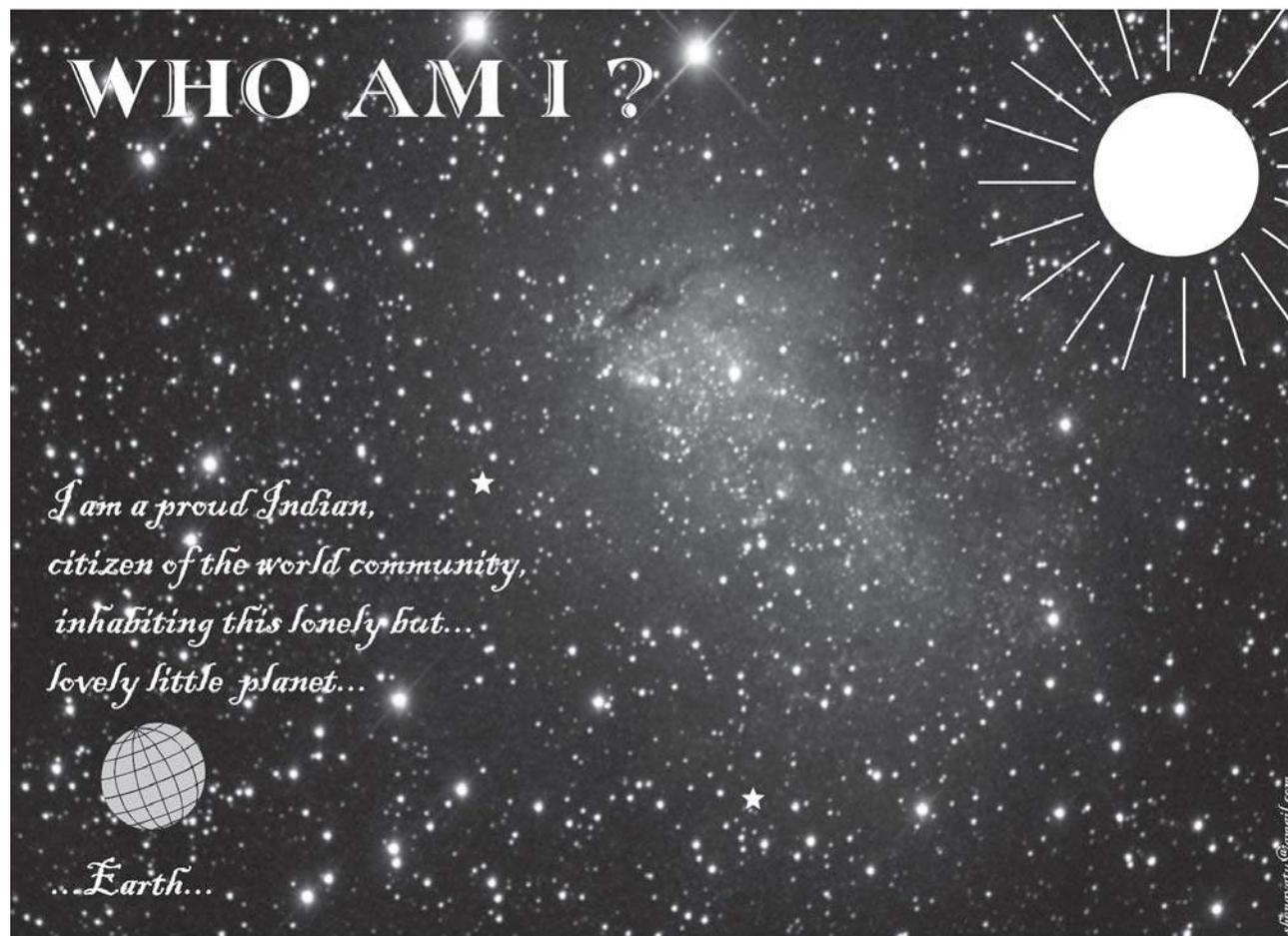
at small functions, who makes a meager living by giving tuitions to children. One day, he is arrested during a street performance on grounds of having triggered the suicide of a sewer cleaner with his insulting and inflammatory lyrics and songs. The complaint insists that the songs, written and composed by Kamble, are filled with unmentionable obscenities and incendiary lyrics. Narayan Kamble is not even aware of the existence of this sewer cleaner. There is no proof that the cleaner knew Kamble or had heard his songs. Till the end, the audience, the court and the entire legal and judicial fraternity within the film remain in the dark about whether the sewer cleaner had committed suicide or had died of suffocation and lack of proper protective gear at work. Yet, Kamble is sent to police custody all over again. When the defence attorney requests the judge to allow bail as the man is quite sick and the court will go on vacation the following day, the judge simply asks him to go to the higher court which will not be on vacation! This in brief, is the story of *Court*.

Your cast and crew were composed entirely of amateurs they say?

Not entirely, but a major part of the cast and crew have hardly worked in films before. Geetanjali Kulkarni, who plays the prosecution attorney and Vivek Gomber are the only two full-fledged actors in the film. Well, I am an amateur myself as I have never been to any film school. I have never attended any workshops in films nor have I assisted any director in films. It suited me to work with a cast and crew stripped of any rub-off from acting schools and previous films. Other actors have never faced a movie camera in their lives. For editor Rikhav Desai, *Court* is the first fiction film. The production designers Somnath Pal and Pooja Talreja have never done production design for any film before *Court*. The sound designer Anita Kushwaha is from documentary films while cinematographer Mrinal Desai has shot only a couple of feature films before *Court*. We auditioned over 2000 non-professionals to finalise the acting cast. We wanted actors who would be as real and identifiable as the script needed them to be.

Last words on *Court*?

I wanted to tell the story that I wanted to tell. It wasn't as if I had set out to make a social comment. I just got interested in the subject and started researching on it. ■



An unnecessary public rebuke

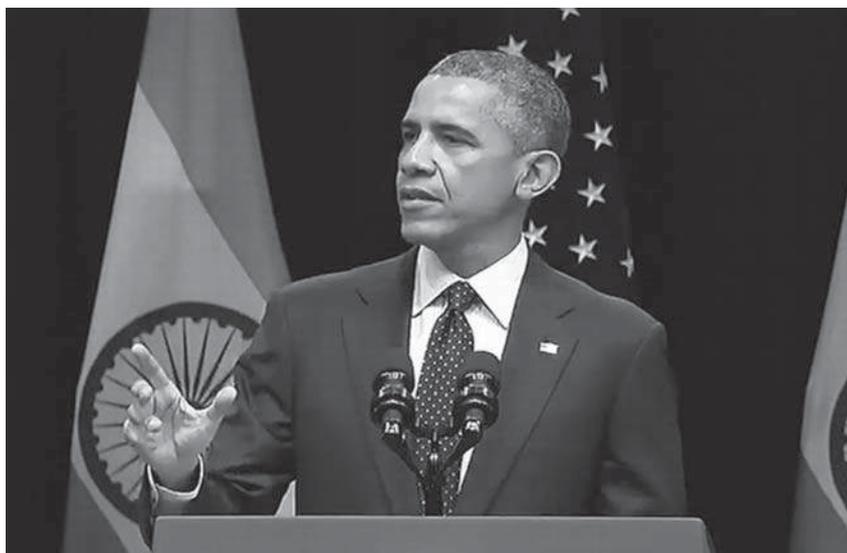
The US President's parting shot before his departure from India, on tolerance and religious freedom, could have been made privately to Prime Minister Modi, says P.M. Kamath. Such public rebukes can have undesirable fallouts domestically in both the countries, he cautions.

PRESIDENT Barack Obama of the United States (US), on the third day of his second visit to Delhi on 27 January 2015, had said: "Every person has the right to practice their faith how they choose, or to practice no faith at all, and to do so free of persecution and fear of discrimination. Nowhere is that more important than India, nowhere is it going to be more necessary for that foundational value to be upheld. India will succeed so long as it is not splintered along lines of religious faith, along lines of anything, and is unified as one nation."

As an ardent advocate of close India-US relations, I had in my article on "The 'Barack'-Modi chapter of Indo-US relations" in *One India One People* (March 2015 issue) opined, that "Our relations should not be clouded by Obama's parting, patronising advice on taking care of religious minorities". Of all the Presidents of the US so far, he had his personal compulsions probably to say it because of his dual religious identity; he may have been torn between his leanings to Islam that was his father's religion, and Christianity that was his mother's faith, as well as the faith of the nation of which he is an elected President.

Misplaced concern

However, after closely watching the developments as a reaction to his advice, in his country as well as in India, I think he and his advisers did not



US President Obama making his controversial speech at New Delhi

anticipate adverse developments within the two major democracies. His own life story shows how he emerged from the American 'melting pot' or from an American society which Jesse Jackson

had described as a 'Bowl of vegetable soup.' Analogy refers to the fact that an immigrant to the US while becoming a part of the American society, still retains his individual identity!

There was glee over Modi's embarrassment; there was no feeling of a nation's belittlement by an esteemed visitor who received all our attention for three days! On the other hand, Arun Jaitley of the BJP was considerate in stating that secularism is in our genes.

Domestic political reactions in India have been on known political lines. The Congress Party asked Prime Minister (PM) Modi to learn from Obama to respect India's commitment to pluralism. There was glee over Modi's embarrassment; there was no feeling of a nation's belittlement by an esteemed visitor who received all our attention for three days! On the other hand, Arun Jaitley of the BJP was considerate in stating that secularism is in our genes. In a similar tone, Modi also recently said in his interview to the Time Magazine that democracy is in Indian genes.

It is necessary to understand the broader implications of such an openly given advice on the domestic politics of two such vibrant democracies. I do not hesitate to consider attacks on three Hindu temples in the US or an attack on visiting Indians in the US as a direct effect of the President admonishing India. Similarly, I have a lurking surmise that attacks on Christian churches in Delhi and in Navi Mumbai were also an effect of such open rebuke.

Secular explanation of religious advice

But an observation of the policy formation process in the US and its relation to President's religious advice to India attracted my attention. Former Assistant Secretary of Commerce in the Clinton administration, Raymond Vickery, has linked a secular issue of policymaking to President's observation on religious freedom. Vickery has said: "With all major political summits, there had been an air of unreality about some aspects of the Obama visit. The Indian press had placed overwhelming emphasis on the bonhomie between Modi and Obama instead of on the issues." He added: "This emphasis extended from the greeting hug between the two men, to Modi serving tea to Obama, and to the joint radio address of the leaders. Also, it was a bit premature to hail a 'breakthrough' on the civil nuclear deal when neither of the implementing US companies would confirm the liability problem had indeed been solved."

He goes on: "As for climate change, the rhetoric on clean energy was encouraging, but by no means did it commit India to anything. Thus, Obama's bold decision to bring up major US concerns about women and religion intolerance given India's difficulties with these issues was useful — in that it restored a sense that there are real and continuing challenges that the United

It is necessary to understand the broader implications of such an openly given advice on the domestic politics of two such vibrant democracies. I do not hesitate to consider attacks on three Hindu temples in the US or an attack on visiting Indians in the US as a direct effect of the President admonishing India.

States and India need to jointly address" (emphasis added). I hope it is not true, if it is true, it will be a setback to India-US relations. Realising that, PM Modi might have decided immediately to send Indian Minister for External Affairs to Beijing to underplay India's strategic partnership with the US!

The aftershocks of a public rebuke

However, as a student of international relations, I wish to point out that the US President could have privately mentioned his concerns to the Indian PM. He should have thought of domestic effects, in both the countries, of his public advice to India. In the absence of that maturity, it is noticed that recently United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has criticised the Indian government for its policy towards minorities. Though USCIRF has been in existence since early 1990s, it seems to work, as far as India is concerned, only when the NDA is in governance in New Delhi!

But the Indian PM has taken his friend's advice very sportingly. In his recent interview to the Time magazine,

he said: "The diversity of India, of our civilisation, is actually a thing of beauty, which is something we are extremely proud of", in reply to "What he made of the President's remarks..." Obviously, what we are proud of, we do not ignore or discard, but really care for.

In this respect, his Democratic predecessor, Bill Clinton (1993-2001)-no friend of India till his March 2000 visit, was far more circumspect in public. He had clearly better understanding of how international setting influences domestic behaviour and vice a versa. He had said in India that its "difficult to be a democracy bordered by nations whose governments reject democracy." Adapting that statement, it can be said that it's difficult to be a secular society and polity when surrounded by anti-secular societies!

Conclusion

Earlier referred report of USCIRF makes a ridiculous suggestion in the context of their criticism of Indian respect for minority rights. It asks the US to "integrate concern for religious freedom into bilateral contacts... including the framework of future strategic dialogues ..." forgetting that the UN Charter prohibits interference in member countries' domestic jurisdiction. Hence, if the US is serious, let Obama-Modi jointly work to see that their love for democracy, pluralism and secularism is translated into lasting universal values by making the UN add them to the Charter on Human Rights. ■

The writer is Formerly Professor of Politics, University of Bombay, currently he is Chairman & Hon. Director, VPM's Centre for International Studies



(Regd) affiliated to Mumbai University and Adjunct Professor, Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal University, Manipal.

The killing fields of Nam Ti

Increasingly, Indians are realising the great sacrifice and bravery exhibited by Indian soldiers during the 1965 Indo-China War. Despite being the poorer, more ill-prepared army, the sheer determination and will of the Indians helped them to overcome many challenging situations, narrates Uma Sudhindra, whose father was one of those soldiers.

"We saw the lightning and that was the guns and then we heard the thunder and that was the big guns; and then we heard the rain falling and that was the blood falling; and when we came to get in the crops, it was dead men that we reaped."

– Harriet Tubman

THIS quote passed through my mind when I stood on a lovely green grassy meadow in the far eastern sector of Arunachal Pradesh.

As I heard my father vividly recap the war we fought with China in the autumn/winter of 1962, I was standing on the Nam Ti plains, overlooking the Lohit River. As I looked all around me, I saw the majestic mountains with their tall trees, the narrow gorges, the valleys where numerous small settlements have mushroomed over the years, the gushing rivers and their tributaries. And then I heard the silence. A silence so eloquent that I could hear our dead soldiers.

The Indo-China War of 1962

The India China War of 1962 is a war that brings out angst and frustration in a lot of people who were part of the war. Many did not live to tell the tale. Those who did, carry with them memories that haunt them every now and then. My father is one of them. His voice betrays the emotions he felt 53 years ago. The lost look as he reminisces what had

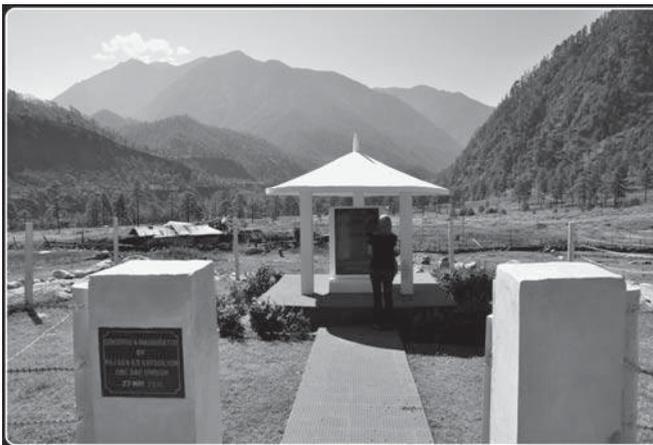
happened on those fateful days and nights will forever be etched on my mind.

What it means to live through a war, or fight a war, majority of us will never know. A lot has been written about the 1962 War between India and China. There is a China version, an India version, the Army version and innumerable accounts of individual soldiers who fought and lived to tell the tale. This is not an analysis of the battles that were fought across different

1960s, infrastructure had not developed at all in the Northeast, the way we see it today. Everybody who was posted there as part of the army, had to walk to the forward posts for days. My father walked seven days to reach his unit!

It is said by experts of war that to launch an offensive on the enemy, one must understand the terrain completely, build a strategy using the strengths of the topography and use tactics accordingly. Our forces did that, with

whatever resources were available. However, we were a poor army, with not enough weapons, ammunition and man power to deal with the impending war. This reality hit me very strongly as I stood on the Nam Ti plains, at the memorial built to pay homage to hundreds of soldiers who died there. If I have to describe the entire terrain in that part of Arunachal Pradesh, it is only in one word – tough. The tall



The memorial at Nam Ti

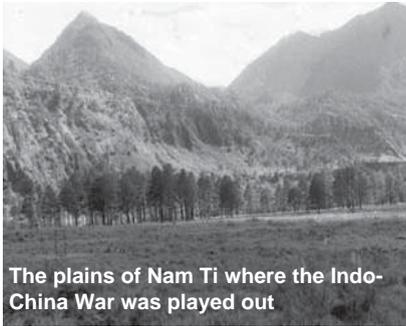
areas in Arunachal Pradesh. This is just an expression of emotions of a daughter lucky enough to be born to an Indian Army officer who has lived to share his experience with her.

Deconstructing a war

My father was commissioned in the 44 Heavy Mortar Regiment in December 1959, and moved to his unit after completing the Young Officers course in July 1960. He was sent to Tezu - Walong sector as part of 4 Artillery Brigade. In the

mountains stand very close to each other, hence giving rise to narrow gorges and valleys. The Lohit is the prominent river of the region, originating in China and flowing into India in this region. Hence, this place is also called Lohit district.

Walong sector is strategic in more ways than one. I understood this when I was explained the war with the help of a detailed map. In the north, there is our traditional border with Tibet following the watershed between Di Chu in India and Lati Chu in Tibet. I asked what the



The plains of Nam Ti where the Indo-China War was played out

terms Chu and Ti meant as they cropped up frequently in our conversations. Both meant the same...river or tributary is called Chu in Chinese and Ti in the local language in Walong. The tri junction of India, Burma and China is in the extreme east of the Lohit district. There are steep mountain ranges on the southern side, along with south east and south west boundaries of the district. I am told, even today, crossing over to Myanmar takes a three day walk along this route.

The Lohit River divides the district into two – eastern and western parts. While we were driving through the mountains, I saw remnants of the old bridges called the foot suspension bridges. Earlier, the only way to cross the river divide would be with the help of steel wire ropes spanning the river. Today, there are a couple of bridges that carry vehicles from one side to another. However, all along the Lohit, one sees foot suspension bridges that enable the locals to cross over.

There are five tributaries that join the Lohit along the gorges – Sat Ti, Tamun Ti, Dandi Ti, Nam Ti and Yapak Ti. It is the Nam Ti plateau that turned into killing fields on that fateful day in November 1962. Though the river bed is at an altitude of over 900 metres, the surrounding mountains rise steeply up to 5600 metres. The mountain sides were covered with pine forests till about 3800 metres and other bushes, shrubs and stunted plants from there to the top. The dense growth obstructed movement and view. Some of the mountains had flat plateaus on the top, which we had staked out and occupied with whatever

resources we had.

The time to believe in friendly neighbours ended on October 20 when both in NEFA and Ladakh, the Chinese came down the Himalayan slopes overrunning manifestly inadequate Indian defences in their way. Having achieved their immediate objective they halted their offensive five days later. All hell broke loose and the region reverberated with the sounds of machine guns, enemy mortar and artillery. Amidst this cacophony, the Kumaonis, Sikhs and Gurkhas fought valiantly, withholding waves of enemy attack. Classically outnumbered in strength, they stood firm, holding ground. Having run out of ammunition they fought valiantly with scant regard to personal safety.

The valiant soldiers, porters, tribals

The Chinese, buoyed by the success, wanted to exert relentless pressure in maintaining momentum. They decided to launch multiple attacks on adjacent localities with numerical superiority, their main objective being Tri Junction. Our troops fought on relentlessly, despite the shortage of every resource. We lost many lives and many were taken prisoners by the Chinese. However, it was when the fighting descended to Nam Ti, that the Chinese also realised what mettle the Indian Army was made of. One of the many unsung heroes of the Battle of Walong was Lt. Bikram Singh, who untiringly made the enemy shed blood for every inch of the ground. His ingenuity and tactical acumen paved way to extricate our boys falling back from Kibithoo and Mc Mahon Ridge. Two more names that need special mention are those of Lt. Yograj Palta and Lt. S. C. Chawla. Their daring exploits in the face of the enemy earned them the admiration of their boys who stood by them as a mighty bulwark against the enemy onslaught. Their devil may care attitude led them to repulse repeated enemy attacks against our troops.

I must talk about another group

of unsung heroes my father talks of very fondly – the porters who helped carry ration items besides arms and ammunition. More than 140 porters were engaged by the army to support our soldiers. These porters mostly belonged to the local Mishmi tribe, as did a lot of Chinese who came across from Tibet. A large number of these porters used their ethnic ties with the Chinese and helped minimise casualties and destruction.

The paddy fields of Nam Ti became killing fields when we could not protect our own. The Chinese had surrounded us from heights and we were sitting ducks. Despite that situation, our soldiers engaged in hand to hand combat, killing more than 250 Chinese.

Decisions at the highest level were taken without any military appreciation and we paid a very heavy price as a country. Standing there, at the Nam Ti Memorial, reading what Bernad S. Dougal has written, I cannot help but wonder about the sheer passion, commitment, bravery and valour of all our soldiers who have shed their blood to keep us alive, to keep our sovereignty alive: ■

*“The sentinel hills that around us stand,
Bear witness that we loved our land,
Amidst shattered rocks and flaming pine,
We fought and died on Nam Ti plain,
O Lohit gently by us glide
Pale stars above us softly shine
As we lie here in sun and rain”.*

– Bernad S. Dougal

Jai Hind!

The writer is a current affairs analyst, with focus on politics and defence. An alumna of Fergusson College and JNU, she has been writing about international relations, political systems and the humane aspect



of armed forces. She is also a social entrepreneur, running her own NGO, which empowers women by addressing their safety issues. She is part of the 'Forum for Integrated National Security'.

How clean are you?

Hygiene is very important in life. Lack of it besets one with a lot of health, psychological and social problems. But hygiene means different things to people of different cultures, explains A. Radhakrishnan.

DEFINED by the Merriam Webster dictionary as ‘the things that you do to keep yourself and your surroundings clean in order to maintain good health’, hygiene incidentally includes, apart from ‘cleanliness’, all circumstances and practices, lifestyle issues, premises and commodities that engender a safe and healthy environment. The word is derived from the Greek Goddess of health ‘Hygeia’.

Ill health risks are reduced through hygienic practices, but it also equally affects how we and others perceive ourselves and influence our levels of confidence and self-esteem, affecting many aspects of our lives.

The unclean Indian

Indians are said to have bad hygiene habits. We are famous for spitting, peeing, passing wind, etc., unabashedly in public places. A ranking of countries in respect of the observance of sanitation and hygiene standards would definitely find us close to the bottom.

We keep our homes clean but litter the outside with gay abandon, as if it was not our concern. A blog termed India ‘the world’s biggest dustbin’, a

befitting analogy for a nation of litterers. There is reportedly 1.3 lakh tons of waste generated in cities per day and



the dimensions are jaw dropping even with the ‘Swachh Bharat’ campaign kicking off.

The general lack of cleanliness and hygiene hits the eye wherever one goes in India. Be it hospitals, hotels, workplaces, railway platforms, trains, etc. We think nothing of spitting, urinating or defecating whenever we like and wherever we choose. Even where toilet facilities are provided, open defecation has become the norm. We live in unliveable surroundings, thanks

to our own dirty habits.

I block out the disgusting smells that assail the air generally by tying a handkerchief around my nose. Any lapse in concentration while walking and I could easily be stepping in a gooey mess of giant poop! I also watch out for that odd loogie of spit coming out of windows or flying through the air from somewhere. I recall when young, I assumed the red stains on the roads to be blood, till I realised they were betel leaf saliva!

A columnist Indrajit Hazra opines, “India is so dirty because Indians are so clean. Essentially, there’s some theory about the worse your personal hygiene, the better your public cleanliness. This makes no sense at all for us who take a dip in the very

public-cum-personal Ganges or local tube well to cleanse our squeaky bits, including our souls”.

Whose job is it anyway?

Let’s accept it. India is dirty because 90% Indians think that cleaning is someone else’s job. At home, it is the maid servant’s job, and outside it is some sweeper’s job and not yours. Everybody thinks that the other person will contribute to cleanliness. And if that fails, you can always blame the

municipality and elected representatives.

So basically, it is our attitude which is responsible...the *chalta hai* (so be it) attitude. People learn about India not through pictures, but through experiences. Unhygienic practices are dreadful to those not used to it. The main problem is the attitude that most Indians suffer from that anything outside one's home is not home.

Municipal initiatives to provide dustbins in public places are nixed because people, thanks to poverty, steal them without thinking about the consequences. Even when there is a dustbin right before their eyes, we do see people littering. How does then one expect such people to care about public hygiene?

The horrible Bhopal catastrophe or the Kaiga nuclear plant leak has not helped us learn. We continue to rely on hazardous and toxic technologies. Ship breaking, a highly polluting and damaging activity, as also the use of asbestos, banned in several countries for its carcinogenic properties, is welcome here. The United States sends PET bottles all the way to India for recycling and is shipped back. We are the dumping ground.

With billions in population, we possess the labour to clean up the streets. Can criminals perhaps, be put to the task? Pre-emption of corruption in municipalities; ensuring officials who are allotted tasks, will fulfil them; initiating cleanliness drives and levying of hefty fines for littering, would all help a lot.

Cleanliness encompasses basic hygiene, civic sense and public pride. We should however have a realistic expectation of cleanliness, work on ourselves and keep our surroundings as clean as possible. I do not throw away even a chocolate wrapper, but keep it in my pocket till I find a bin. If everyone did that, the whole world would not turn into a garbage bin.

Only when Indians start feeling

India is their home too, will they realise that it is their duty to keep the country clean. The need to educate children in schools about health and cleanliness to ensure a future clean India, cannot be overemphasised.

'Public awareness' is different from 'cleanliness'. In a village, excreta increases the fertility of the farm. But in a city, spitting or similar actions are only a nuisance. A person needs proper facilities to empty his wastes, for he cannot be stopped from peeing, just because it may spread disease. Proper toilets at appropriate places are essential. I am all for privatisation to bolster cleanliness.

Sadly, we Indians are upset and angry when any reference is made to public urination, public defecation, dirt, garbage, filth, the poor living on the street; things which we have to accept in order to change the narrative.

The lighter side of life

Now on to lighter stuff. Leonardo DiCaprio, the Hollywood star reportedly refuses to use deodorants or take a bath because of his love for the environment, and "this has killed our love life", says his girlfriend. He only showers a couple of days a week to conserve water and considers deodorants to be unnatural. Also an avid recycler, he regularly misses the refuse pick-up days allegedly leaving his kitchen with a foul odour from the rubbish.

Robert Pattison allegedly rarely showers and upsets cast and crew of his films as he stinks and reeks on the sets. I have heard about another popular singer Bruce Springsteen, who when asked if he took a bath every two weeks, took affront and insisted that he took it every ten days!

A survey in France showed that only one in 29 people took a shower once a week; one in five did not shower every day though 11.5 per cent of French men and women shower several times daily.

Hand washing, too, was not always a priority. One eighth of those questioned said they didn't bother washing their hands after going to the toilet. More than one in five said they didn't wash their hands before sitting down for a meal. But they are more aware of hygiene when they are cooking - 86.6 per cent say they always wash their hands before preparing food.

More than half of men quizzed in Britain admitted they regularly skipped their morning shower; with a quarter saying they'd rather have the extra time in bed.

An eighty-year-old Iranian, Haji, who lives in isolation in Dejgah village, in the Southern Iranian province of Fars, believes that "cleanliness brings him sickness." That's why he hasn't bathed at all in the past 60 years!

Nearer home, Kailash Singh 65, can be called the world's smelliest man - after refusing to wash for more than 37 years. He has not bathed or cut his 6ft-long dreadlocks since 1974, shortly after he married. He claims a priest guaranteed him a much-prized son and heir if he followed the advice. Despite neighbours joking, the sweaty farmer would be lucky if he could persuade his wife to have any children at all. He has seven daughters.

India is so dirty because as someone said, "people prefer to live in that dirty environment than to clean things up and increase the cost of everything around them." But if Indians are dirty, then let's remember also that Americans use tissue papers in their toilets even though water is available. Should Indians learn

from that? ■



The writer is a freelance journalist, poet and short story writer based in Pune, Maharashtra.

Prakash Bal Joshi Yhanca Katha

Publisher : Bhashya Prakashan, Mumbai
Pages : 355
₹ : 350



RARELY ever, if ever, would a writer who wrote one short story a year, have the gumption to publish them as an omnibus, but that is what Prakash Bal Joshi has done. His Prakash Bal Joshi Yhanca Katha is as much a reflection of the man himself. He can be quiet, but also very bold at the same time. He is definitely flush with confidence.

Joshi's work defies any attempt at compartmentalisation, for he lives for one purpose – to express himself. That, however, is not by speech but in his paintings, and as we suddenly found out, in writings. Like he speaks to the canvas with his paintbrush, in this anthology, the written word does the work. Even the closest of his associates would vouch that he may have spoken as many words as he uses in one short story.

The quiet contemplative nature of the inside energy of the man suffuses the pages; in most cases it is as if he is introspecting for himself. The nuanced movement of any of his stories indicate that they are not a complicated plot, but conveyance of an idea. The characters may not even have names. However, they are distinct characters one can conjure up. He leaves that to the reader.

His *Arsaa* (Mirror) for instance is a tiny story of clipped sentences, of even two words sometimes, of how the boy is protected by the father from being dirtied by the world. As long as the mirror is clean, shining, and unwrinkled

so to speak, it truly reflected what was before it, self-discovery was possible. In one defiant moment, the boy goes out to get smudged by all the mud and tells the parent: One cannot pass through the mirror.

His earlier *Gateway* is a clutch of intense observations, mostly of stuff one sees but does not observe of Mumbai. *Prakash Bal Joshi Yhanca Katha* is of a different meter. They abound in metaphor as in the *Bolbagh*, where the king takes a mistress and discards her the moment she conceives. The tradition is that she should leave his kingdom, and return only after being delivered of

of several impressions which may not have found space in the newspapers he worked for, seem to flow in several of the short stories. He imbibed; he apparently chewed, digested, and brought out one story a year, on an average. Joshi is not in a hurry to regurgitate just about anything that came to his mind. There is a measured expression. Yet, journalistic brevity does not rob any of the offerings of the detailing which help conjure up images, the contours, of each character, which in some cases, remain nameless.

The crass, gross world of politics and their characters who enliven the pages of newspapers while simultaneously generating disbelief and disgust in the readers – and of late, on television screen, however, and happily do not intrude here. In both his books, the world being impacted by politics – here, in the sense of friendship or even a marriage being political, apart from what we understand politics to be – has been noted and are brought out.

The immense capability of bringing out even in abstraction a notion, which he does more often with a brush, palette of colours and canvas, is evident. Just like a painting speaks to you, though painstakingly conceived and executed by days of labour, each of the short story emerges with life on the pages. He makes his point with an economy of words. It is like reading the Marathi Somerset Maugham. ■

– Mahesh Vijapurkar, Senior Editor, The Hindu

Joshi's work defies any attempt at compartmentalisation, for he lives for one purpose – to express himself. That, however, is not by speech but in his paintings, and as we suddenly found out, in writings.

the offspring. Is he trying to wrench the doors open to expose the messy world of politics?

Quite likely, for he has been a journalist for decades, reporting and analysing politics. The internalisation

One ring common to all

The practice of wearing the nose ring is a very Indian, and a very secular custom. Hindu and Muslim women wear the nose ring. As also youngsters, who are attracted more by its style than any religious significance attached to it. Shoma A. Chatterji tells us more about this custom.

WHAT is the most dramatic feature of international tennis champion Sania Mirza? Her nose-ring that has been written about and commented upon endlessly. The other international celebrity that identifies with a sparkling diamond nose-stud is Booker Prize-winning author-activist Arundhati Roy. The nose ring for Sania and the diamond stud for Arundhati have evolved as a personal statement of their identity. Neither of these two women wears her nose ornaments to signify her marital status. These are fashion statements for two women who really do not need such statements. Yet, these seemingly insignificant adornments enhance the beauty of their celebrity status. Film stars in Bollywood sport the nose ring or nose stud only for their screen roles because they have to switch looks for different characters in different films.

Pride of the brides and of courtesans too

Once upon a time, Hindu brides along with other ornate jewellery, wore large nose-rings known as *naths* with a chain extending to one ear to carry the weight of the ring. In northern parts of India, Muslim brides would get a nose-ring from the bridegroom as a part of the *nikaah*, the actual wedding ceremony among Muslims. Though nose rings are closely linked to Hindu weddings, there is no evidence of the existence of nose rings in India prior to the 16th Century, and it is believed that it entered India during the Mughal



Aishwarya Rai in the film *Chokher Bali*, wore a *nath* as a bride

rule. Both the sculptures and murals in the caves of Ajanta and Ellora as well as the excavations at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa or during the Kushan and Gupta periods, show no evidence of the use of nose studs and rings by women.

The earliest nose rings in India were small, flat ornamental patterns following petalled floral designs held in place by a screw that held inside the nostril. The piercing of the nostril itself demanded a ritual supervised and executed by men and women specialised in the skill of piercing the nostrils for the nose-stud or ring. Nose piercing is still popular in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Today, any beauty parlour will do the needful for a reasonable fee. The pain that forms part of this piercing does not affect the

demand for nose-rings and studs among young girls and women right across the world.

Interestingly, traditional prostitutes and courtesans also wear the nose-ring and the *nath* ceremony of a young virgin's entry into the trade is preceded by an elaborate ceremony where her first customer 'buys' the right to deflower her by putting a *nath* on her nostril. This marks her official entry into the profession, as she is no longer a virgin. The *nath* is then replaced with the nose stud or nose ring. Kamal Amrohi's film *Pakeeza* demonstrated this practice beautifully. Classical dancers of all Indians styles wear the nose stud or the *nath*.

Continued on page 51

The dance of Krishna

The legends around Lord Krishna are well known and an intrinsic part of the Indian Hindu culture. The rendering of the raas leela, a dance-drama devoted to Lord Krishna, is an ode to this enduring adoration of a well-loved God.

THE *raas leela* is a devotional dance-drama that is a distinctive product of the Braj region, a 90 square mile area of Uttar Pradesh province which borders Rajasthan, about 90 miles south of Delhi. It is the special preserve of the people of Braj, for it is devoted entirely to the exaltation of the love of Krishna and Radha, and the earthly exploits of Krishna. Krishna is himself a child of Braj. He was born in Mathura, and Vrindavan, seven miles away, a city sanctified by its association with him. The pilgrims who come here walk barefoot over the very ground that he is reputed to have trod. Each place is invested with a holy meaning because of its connection to Krishna's earthly existence; Mathura, where he was born in prison; Govardhan, where he lifted the mountain; Gokul, where he spent his childhood and youth; and the banks of the Jamuna river, where he danced with the *gopis*.

It should be clear by now that the *raas leela* is a dance-drama that falls in the realm of the sacred. Its home is within the temple walls, close to the holy shrine itself. It is for the eyes and hearts of *bhaktas* (devotees) and its purpose is to make real the living god, to induce a *darshan*, an epiphany or vision of Krishna and Radha in all their beauty. It is a lyrical theatre depending heavily on poetry, song, and dance to convey its message.

The *raas leela* performance

A performance falls into two parts. The first part is called the *raasa* and it expresses the lovemaking of Radha

and Krishna. Krishna who is dark, beautiful, and playful is especially attractive to women, and the beautiful Radha is his choice among them all. From a religious point of view she is the feminine aspect of the godhead, Krishna's *shakti*. The first part of the drama, however tells us of this relationship in terms of earthly, erotic love. From the opening curtain, revealing Krishna and Radha in intimate embrace, through Krishna's invitation to Radha to dance, through a series of dances and songs, the fine poetry of the *bhakti* poets and the music of the *raas leela* troupe members combine in a form that is evocative, emotional, and artistic.

After an interval, the *raasa* is followed by the *leela*. This second part always deals with some incident out of the early life of Krishna, such as stealing butter, holding up the milkmaids and demanding a toll payment, going to Radha in disguise, or leaving Gokul for Mathura. In the *leela* section there is usually less dancing and more song and dialogue.

This theatre, whose dance is now generally acknowledged as the forerunner of the classical *kathak* dance of North India, began in its present form about the start of the sixteenth century. The tide of *bhakti* (devotion) that had begun in the south was sweeping over northern India. It was the period of the great Moghuls and, experiencing some religious and political repression,



A *raas leela* performance

Hinduism turned inward. Fervent devotion to Krishna was the common factor which drew together all those instrumental in creating the theatrical *raas leela*.

It is significant that contemporary *raas leela* performers refer back to the example of the milkmaid in the Bhagavata Purana account of the *raasa*. After dancing with the milk maids in the moonlight Krishna suddenly disappears. They search among the trees for him but cannot find him. To console themselves they remember him by miming or acting out the things which Krishna did when he was among them. They mimic his walk and flute playing; they act out his miraculous feats. Seeing the intensity of their devotion, Krishna returns to them. In the same way today, those who perform and see the imitation of his *leela* will be blessed with the *darshana* (vision) of the Lord himself.

Training for raas leela

The performance of *raas leela* involves skills passed on from father to son or teacher to disciple. Usually the performers are relatives of the teacher or children of friends. The leader of each *raas leela* troupe is responsible for the training of his performers.

The *raasa* troupe, headed by a swami, is made up of 10 to 18 persons, all male. Of these, six or eight are boys who play the roles of Krishna, Radha, and Radha's milkmaid companions. They range in age from about eight to thirteen. In the *nitya raasa* only these boys appear, but in the *leela* which follows, adult actors also appear in roles such as Yashoda, Krishna, Shiva, Uddhav, and so on, according to the

particular leela being shown. The remainder of the troupe is made up of singers and instrumentalists.

The overall spirit of the *leela* of Krishna is one of brightness and joyfulness; there is no tragedy or even grave anxiety, for Krishna is the divine enjoyer and his devotees find joy in contemplating that enjoyment. Krishna is the Beautiful God and his epithet, the Beautiful Dark One, aligns with the sensuous loveliness of the face and figure of Krishna. His amorous play with Radha and the milkmaids is the epitome of the expression of his being.

The episodes generally performed from Krishna's life are: His birth, stealing of butter, display of Radha's pride and jealousy due to Krishna showering

attention on other *gopis*, Krishna's going away to Mathura, departing from Gokul, Krishna sending Uddhav to Gokul to pacify the grieving *gopis* due to Krishna's departure and Uddhav who is an 'advaitin' getting converted to the *bhakti* cult. Generally the performance ends with the *Maha raas leela*, which is a special re-enactment of his dance with the *gopis* on the banks of river Jamuna under the full autumnal moon – the *sharad purnima*. ■



The writer is Director, Nalanda Dance Research Center and is a recipient of Padmabhushan award, Akademi Ratna (Fellow of Sangeet Natak Akademi)

One ring common to all

Continued from page 49

How to wear the nose ring – right, left or centre?

Studs, also known as *phul* (flower), are the most common among nose ornaments. The *naths* are circular barbells, worn in the septum (the cartilage between the nostrils) by women of some communities. Most tribal women in India invariably sport the septum ring and it does not matter if they wear the nose ring or not. Brides wear it on the nostril with the chain. Commonly, nose rings are worn on either the left or right nostril. Typically the left nostril is favoured because in Ayurvedic medicine, the left nostril is associated with the female reproductive organs, and a piercing in that position is believed to make childbirth easier and reduce menstrual pain as well. The common practice would be to get a young girl's nose pierced when she had 'come of age' which was 16 in those days. The practice is now obsolete. The piercing of the nose for wearing the ring is said to be a sort of tribute paid to Parvati, the Goddess of marriage.

Many married women among South Indian communities, specially the Tamils, would earlier wear diamond nose-studs as a marriage symbol on both nostrils. They would continue to wear it right through their married lives and would remove them only when they were widowed. A joke went around that this 'filtered' their 'polluted' breath before reaching their husbands! Today, a young Tamil bride often does not wear a nose stud even on one nostril, leave alone both! At the other end, young girls wear nose studs as fashion statements with or without piercing their nostrils. The nose ring therefore, is the most democratic ornament ever worn. Hindu and Muslim women wear it as part of traditional customs, tribal and 'low-caste' women wear it as a part of their specific culture, courtesans and prostitutes wear it as it is ritualistic, married and single women wear it as a fashion statement. And in some countries, men wear it too.

Usually, a nose stud is available in gold balls, tiny silver flowers, pearl balls set in gold, platinum or silver and diamond-studded pieces. Some of them are so heavily ornamented with pearls

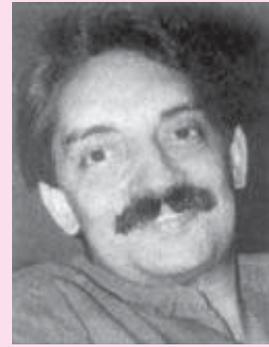
and precious stones that they have to be supported by fine chains attached to the hair. The Bulak, in Madhya Pradesh is a classic example. Nose rings and studs can be of copper, stainless steel, plastic, imitation stones, the works! In the 1960s and 1970s, wearing of the nose-stud, nose-pin and nose-ring percolated into the Hippie culture. In the 1980s and 1990s, punks and off-beat youths, music bands, etc., began wearing these ornaments. It is now a fashion statement in the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Europe and the Carribeans. It is more common among women though some men sport it too. ■

The writer is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards. She is currently Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, Delhi, researching the politics of presentation of working women in post-colonial Bengali cinema 1950 to 2003.



A wonderful life

Should one don an attitude of cheerful optimism or of utter despair when contemplating the Indian wildlife scene? Perhaps optimism, tinged by realism is the right way to go.



Bittu Sahgal
Editor, Sanctuary magazine

I used to laugh at prophets of doom. And for as long as I can remember, I have abhorred self-righteous, sanctimonious preachers with intensity. By and large I managed to ignore such people. Which is why my optimism and purpose are still intact after decades of battling the dragons of despair!

But imagine my dismay upon waking one morning to discover that I had almost metamorphosed into the creature

I loathed. Even though I never saw myself in the image, most people believed I was indeed the quintessential prophet of doom. I realise now that my near Jekyll and Hyde transmutation came about insidiously, like



A pristine forest?

Photo: Vaimit Shirodkar

a winter's dawn, a consequence of years of tramping the murky corridors of environmental reporting.

"Life", I was gently reminded by an unsympathetic wife over breakfast one New Year's Day, "is what happens to you while you are making other plans."

Where, I wondered was the life-loving, affable wildlifer I had started out as? And would I ever be able to turn the doomsday merchant from my inner door?

I have been reading, writing and editing reports about global and Indian environmental concerns for over a decade now. I studiously ignored those who, in the mid-seventies, predicted ruin and mayhem, preferring to focus on the more positive aspect of nature conservation, the magic of plant animal relationships, the exhilaration of watching that arch predator, the tiger bring down its prey, or the mesmeric precision of a spider spinning its deadly web.

Cocooned in my own world of discovery, I rationalised my priorities by believing that appreciation is a precursor to concern. Why, after all, would anyone mourn the loss of rain forests, rivers and mountain slopes if the value of these life-support systems were unknown to them?

People responded emotionally and warmed to my worldview. Without the benefit of any outside finance (not

even a bank loan!) I launched Sanctuary, a magazine devoted entirely to the proposition that wild India was worth saving.

But 'realists' (read politicians, contractors and economists) look upon the wilderness - forests, wetlands,

corals, mountains and rivers - as little more than untapped resources. In their view, people like us were locking up resource islands (like the national park in Borivli) that were crucial to development. There were jobs to create, food to grow and progress to usher in. And if some forests had to be sacrificed, so be it.

I am happy to report that the affable wildlifer is alive and well. He was rescued some years ago, when the realisation struck him that he was not responsible for every leaf that stirred, or every river that was poisoned. But every once in a while, this cheerful facet of his personality is dented, darkened and tested by those who would build golf courses in mangroves where flamingos feed; chemical ports on beaches where sea turtles nest, and mines that excavate the future of the tiger even faster than the minerals they want to turn to cash. ■

More equal than others

The alacrity and promptness with which Salman Khan was granted bail after his conviction by a Mumbai Sessions Court is testimony to the fact that money and power speak a very powerful language in India. What about those under trial prisoners who languish for years in jail because there is no one to post bail?



C. V. Aravind

is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

A Bollywood superstar in an allegedly inebriated state runs his car over five people sleeping on a pavement. One succumbs to his injuries while the others are injured. The case hangs fire for thirteen long years till a sessions judge puts a lid on it by finding the actor guilty of all charges levied against him by the prosecution, and awards him five years rigorous punishment besides a fine.

The visual media goes on an overdrive and panelists on news channels declare that justice has prevailed and that the judgment had proved that everyone including the rich and powerful are equal in the eyes of the law. In a dramatic denouement on the same evening that the judgment had been delivered, the actor's legal team makes a beeline to the High Court seeking extension of the bail as the order copies had not been delivered to them. It is granted. Two days later, the same court suspends the sentence and admits an appeal against the conviction.

Laymen and legal luminaries are stunned at the alacrity with which things had moved and express their opinion that even the *aam aadmi* (common man) should be able to have his cases heard and bail granted in record time as in this case. And therein lies the rub. Nearly three lakh under trials, most of them hailing from poor and deprived backgrounds are languishing in dingy jails across the country, suffering the worst kind of privation and misery. They have no idea when their cases will come up for trial and have no access to the bail amount or lawyers who can argue on their behalf. Seeking justice and securing it is after all a costly affair in this country.

In several cases, these under trials have been in prison for far longer durations than the maximum period of imprisonment that their crimes would have fetched them. There are any number of lawyers who would argue pro bono for them. But so large are their numbers that even this

becomes an Utopian dream.

More than three thousand Sikhs were massacred in the nation's capital Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. Thirty one years later many of the killers still walk free on the streets of Delhi. Some who were charge sheeted have died even before they could be brought to justice. The Jessica Lal case where the son of a former Union Minister gunned down a model because she refused to serve him a drink too could be brought to a logical conclusion only because of a furore in the media. At least in these cases one can rest content that though justice was delayed, it was not denied. In most cases the prosecution is unable to wrap up the cases because the defence has in its arsenal several weapons that could effectively stall the path to justice. Intimidation of witnesses, bribing them to testify in favour of the accused, dragging cases for inordinate lengths of time in the hope that some of the witnesses might even die before recording their statements are all the tricks in the book that are often resorted to by those who have money and muscle power. In the absence of a strong Witness Protection Act, witnesses can rarely summon the courage to testify and where such testimony is to be made against their own bosses or those who can play havoc with their lives, they often turn hostile.

Judicial reforms therefore are the need of the hour. Every Indian citizen irrespective of his or her caste, creed, religion or social status is entitled to equal treatment under the laws of the land which does not discriminate in any way between the rich and the poor. However, there are umpteen instances where the affluent class or those who have connections in the right places have been able to hoodwink the law by taking advantage of the loopholes. This needless to add is patently unfair and unjust and should change, and the sooner it happens the better for all concerned. ■



IMMORTAL COMIC CHARACTERS

SUPERMAN is, without a doubt, the best-known of all the comic superheroes. In fact, his popularity launched the Golden Age of comic books in the USA. Created by Canadian artist Joe Shuster and American writer Jerry Siegel, he first appeared in Action Comics way back in 1938.

His fans know him as the Man of Steel, the Man of Tomorrow and as the Last Son of Krypton. Even little kids know him as the dashing, athletic figure in blue tights and flowing red cape. Superman was born as Kal-El on the alien planet of Krypton. Sent to the Earth as a baby just before Krypton was destroyed, he was raised as Clark Kent by foster parents. When he became aware of his own extraordinary powers he began to use them for the good of humanity in the guise of Superman. As Clark Kent he is a mild-mannered, bespectacled, journalist and reporter. This double-identity is a common factor that most superheroes share.

Superman was modelled on mythical heroes like Hercules and Samson. His creators were deeply influenced by the science fiction stories of the time, and by films of Robinhood. The Superman legend grew with time, and soon stories about his boyhood avatar as Superboy became popular. Later teams of writers and artists made him more and more invincible. He could fly; he had extraordinary x-ray vision; he had super-hearing; he also had super-breath – he could freeze objects by blowing on them. In 1986, John Byrne stepped in to give him some limitations. Superman still had all these super attributes, but he could be immobilised, even killed by exposure to Kryptonite. This made him vulnerable,

Superman



and his adventures became all the more exciting.

Superman has a whole lot of supporting characters who appear regularly in most stories. Lois Lane, his colleague, later became his wife. Jimmy Olsen, Perry White, Lana Lang, Lois Lemaris, are all on his side. Lex Luther, an evil scientist and chief of Lex Corp, Brainiac, an alien android, and Doomsday, a terrible monster, are some baddies that Superman encounters repeatedly.

The success of Superman led to the creation of a whole lot of superheroes. He made his mark not only in comic books but also on radio and television and in many famous films. He has ruled so long over the imagination of people all over the world that he has been studied in depth by scholars, researchers and sociologists.

AMAZING LIVING WORLD

Painted Dogs

THE African wild dogs have colourful markings on their bodies. The markings are in yellow, black and white colours and hence these dogs are also called Painted Dogs. Each dog has a unique set of markings. This helps them to recognise each other. Another remarkable feature about these dogs is that they have four and not five digits on each paw. The wild dogs live in packs or groups of up to ten – packs having 100 dogs have also been heard of. They are carnivores and hunt anything from zebras to rodents. Before going on a hunt, the pack meets and communicates with each other through calls and body postures. The dogs stalk their prey and only when they are close enough, do they give it a chase. If one of the dogs gets separated from the pack during hunting, it will keep in touch by making a loud 'hoo' noise that can be heard two kilometres away.

The African wild dog is an endangered species today. There are hardly 4000 of them found in the wild.



INDIA



STORY

Sullen Winner

ONE day a poor teacher of law brought a former student of his to the court of Emperor Akbar.

"This boy promised to pay me as soon as he won his first case," he said. "And as he was poor I agreed and taught him law. Now, through an inheritance, he has become rich but he refuses to pay me."

"We agreed I would pay him as soon as I won my first case, your Majesty," said the young man. "If one day I take up a case and win it, I'll surely pay him."

"All right," said the emperor. "You may go."

The young man flashed a mocking smile at his teacher and turned to go, but Birbal who was standing there, stopped him.

"Wait," he said. "You promised to pay on winning the first



case and you have won, in this court. So please pay your teacher."

The young man sullenly took out his purse and paid.

PANORAMA

The brainy caves

A three-hour long journey from Vishakapatnam, winding in and out of tunnels, will lead you into the intriguing world of limestone stalactites and stalagmites at the Borra caves, in the Anantagiri Hills of the Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh.

The caves which stretch across 1 sq. km. at 1400m above sea level were formed a million years ago by the Gosthani River. Its limestone deposits have captured the public imagination. Many people see in them different shapes like Shiva-Parvati, a human brain, crocodile, temple, church and mushrooms, among other things.

Anthropologists have also found primitive Stone Age tools in the caves.



MINDBENDER

Find Out

A moron won a lottery. He went to the lottery office to claim the prize but was told that he would not be paid the entire amount at one time.

"We'll give you one lakh today and then you'll get the remaining spread over 19 weeks," explained the man at the lottery office.

"Oh no. I want all my money right now! I won it and I want it," insisted the moron.

The man tried to explain the whole procedure to the moron once again. But the moron was furious and shouted out, "Look I want my money. If you're not going to give me my 20 lakhs right now, then give me my five rupees back!"



DR. JYOTIBEN TRIVEDI

A feminist and educationist (1922-2015)

Dr. Jyotiben Trivedi was the Vice Chancellor of SNDT Women's University (SNDTWU) from 1980 to 1986. She was kind, sensitive to the problems of all the employees of SNDTWU and took genuine interest in our lives, helped and guided us in times of difficulty, was generous in sponsoring education and health expenditure of the needy. Every time she met any one of us, the first thing she asked was, "Have you sent money order to your mother? Never neglect your mother. If you don't have enough cash, I will give you the money". For her, all the employees were her family members. She did not differentiate them on the basis of their rank or position. To her all of them were equally worthy.

To subsequent vice chancellors of the university also, she gave constructive suggestions and always stood by us. Dr. Jyotiben was very gracious and had generosity of heart. She was an intellectually alert citizen and always gave serious thought to larger issues of society-community health, social change, and social justice. She was duped by her beneficiaries so many times in her life, but she never stopped her philanthropic work.

Once she asked me, "What should be our goal?" I said, "Academic excellence". She said, "The most important goal should be hand-holding and enabling young women to enter institutions of higher learning and building their lives". When I was selected for a post doctoral fellowship at The London School of Economics and Political Science, I was hesitant to go as my eight-year-old daughter refused to go with me to London. It was Dr. Jyotiben and then Vice Chancellor, Prof. Suma Chitnis who boosted my morale to make best of this opportunity. Dr. Trivedi was always happy when we achieved recognition and laurels in our career. She was also interested in our work in the women's movement and community health. She played a crucial role in the development of the Lady Thackersey College of Nursing with her visionary leadership, networking with medical and nursing community and patrons.

Prof. Vasudha Kamath, Vice Chancellor of SNDTWU presided over the function and concluded by saying, "Dr. Jyoti

Trivedi has had a lasting impact on my personality. She was Hon. Vice Chancellor, when I joined as a young teacher in the Education Department. She had interviewed and selected me. The M.Ed. lectures used to be in the evening, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. One day, a student started bleeding and fainted in the class. I was frantic and running around looking for help when the security guards of our university told me to contact Dr. Trivedi. Even at that late hour she was in her office at work. When I told her about the medical emergency, she immediately contacted Bombay Hospital, which was close by and told me to take the student there. The student got medical

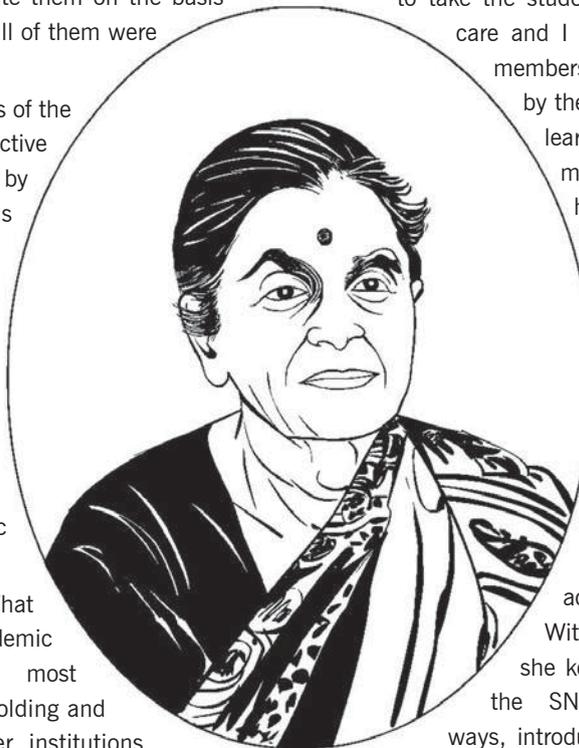
care and I was in the hospital till her family members arrived. This sensitive handling

by the head of the institution was a great learning for me in the initial period of my teaching career. Jyotiben always had great dreams for SNDTWU. During the Golden Jubilee Year of L.T. College of Nursing, she asked me, "Why can't SNDTWU have a medical college? Start efforts in that direction."

As a Vice-Chancellor, Jyotiben was always cordial and took interest in personal, professional and Institutional development and carried everybody along. She acknowledged talent and hard work. With her vision and sharp intellect, she keenly looked at the development of the SNDT Women's University in diverse ways, introducing technology, new programmes in Home Science, Pharmacy and Polytechnic. She was also keen on creating career paths for people. Hundreds of teachers grew under her guidance as decision makers, education administrators and institution builders. Jyotiben was always keen that every opportunity should be given on merit and would not mind standing alone for upholding fairness.

Her honesty of purpose and determination with respect to empowerment of women through higher education made her a role model for thousands of university educated graduate and post graduate students, as well as education leaders of our country. ■

– Dr. Vibhuti Patel is Professor and Head, Department of Economics, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai.



VICE ADMIRAL RUSTOM KHUSHRO SHAPOORJEE GHANDHI, PVSM Vr C

India's Nelson (1924-2014)

RUSTOM, the eldest of five siblings, was born to Khushru Shapurjee Gandhi and Dina Dhunjishah Amrotiwala on 1 July 1924, in Jabalpur. He passed his intermediate examination from St Joseph's College, Nainital in 1941 and joined Allahabad University for further studies. He left a year later and went to United Kingdom where he joined the Royal Naval College at Eaton. He was commissioned into the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) on 1 January 1943, and served as a midshipman on the cruiser Suffolk in 1943-44, employed in the task of hunting German raiders in the Atlantic Ocean. In 1945, he was transferred to the Destroyer Wakeful which took part in the attack on the Japanese held refineries in Indonesia. He served as ADC to Lord Mountbatten, the last viceroy of India, and established a lasting friendship with the Mountbatten family.

He commanded INS Betwa in 1961 and played a decisive role in the Goa operations. The Portuguese destroyer NRP Afonso de Albuquerque commanded by Captain Antonio Da Cunha Aragao tried to hide behind merchant ships. Gandhi crippled the Portuguese ship by superior gun action and scored a direct hit to its control tower. The captain was severely wounded. The crew disembarked and set fire to the ship. The captain was sent by car to the hospital at Panaji. Gandhi visited Captain Aragao and presented him a bottle of brandy and chocolates and used his contacts to send a message to his family that he was well. In return, Captain Aragao gave Commander Gandhi the key to his cabin as a token of surrender. On learning about the exploits of INS Betwa, Mountbatten called Gandhi "India's Nelson".

He was the first Indian officer to attend a course at the United States Naval War College, Newport, and was posted as Chief Naval Instructor at the Defence Services Staff College from 1965 to 68. In the 1971 War, he was the Flag Captain of the Western Fleet and ignoring attacks by Pakistani submarine or aircraft, kept threatening the Karachi coast. The ships were thus denied entry into the Karachi port. He was awarded Vr C for his courageous leadership. He was the only naval officer to have commanded ships in all the marine wars fought by India.

He commanded the Eastern and Western Fleets and took over as the Commander-in Chief Western Naval Command in 1977 with the rank of Vice-Admiral. He was awarded PVSM for distinguished services. He retired in 1979.

He took up an unusual assignment as technical advisor for Ewan Lloyd's movie, *The Sea Wolves*. He served as Chairman of Shipping Corporation of India from 1981 to 1986. The Ministry of Shipping had pressurised Gandhi to purchase ships for USD 850 million. After negotiations over 18 months, 37 ships were purchased for USD 230 million from three different shipyards. One shipyard offered him a compensation of USD 100,000 for each ship. He informed Delhi that the total cost had been reduced by USD 1.5 million for 15 ships.

He served as Governor of Himachal Pradesh from April 1986 to February 1990 and as Member of the Minorities Commission from 1993 to 1996. He retired to his home in Mumbai near Navy Nagar, enjoying his hobby of fishing and keeping in touch with his friends all over the world. He suffered a stroke in 2011 and fought it with his usual courage.

He passed away on 23 December 2014. His wife had passed away in 2011. He is survived by one son and two daughters. Unconventional as ever, he had asked for a sea burial. Friends, family and a Guard of Honour paid their last respects to him on 26 December in INS Ashwini. On 27 December, the coffin was loaded onto INS Vipul. It sailed forty miles out into the Arabian Sea. His children recited Zoroastrian prayers. The Navy fired three rounds of gunfire, officers stood to attention, the last post played and the coffin slid into the waters.

Flamboyant, impressive and perfect in diction, his dripping sarcasm could often achieve more results than admonishment. He saw the regatta team off with a remark "If you lose, do not come back on board". He displayed gallantry and devotion to duty of a high order. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



D. JAYAKANTHAN

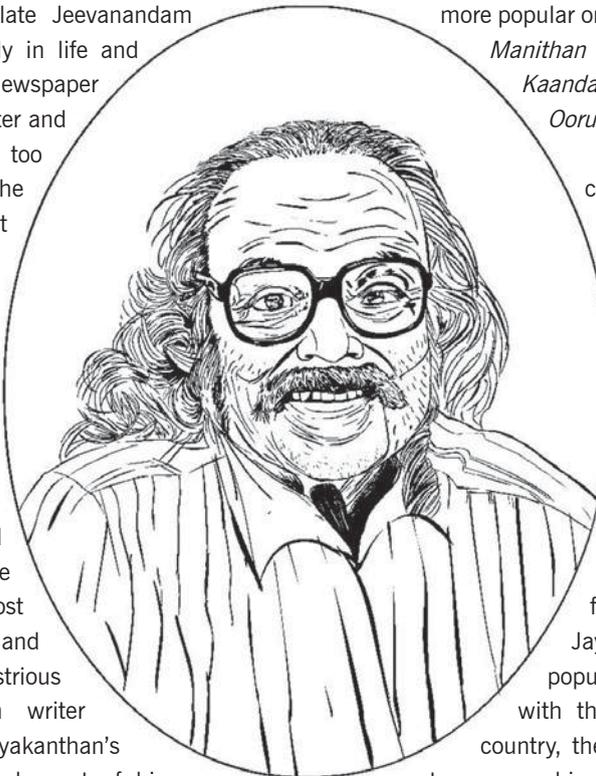
A literary genius (1934-2015)

ONE of the most highly regarded and respected writers in Tamil, Jayakanthan who passed away recently at the age of 81, was a man of many parts. He was first and foremost a writer, but was equally proficient in various other vocations like journalism and film making, and also carved his own niche as a critic and orator as well. Jayakanthan who was born in Cuddalore, a fishing village in Tamilnadu in an agrarian family, had very little formal education, but that in no way proved to be a handicap for him in the pursuit of his literary endeavours. The writer came under the influence of Communist leaders like the late Jeevanandam and Baladandayudham quite early in life and worked for a time in the party's newspaper *Janasakthi*. The fiery freedom fighter and reputed poet Subramania Bharthi too remained a great inspiration for the budding writer whose first short story published in 1953 was titled *Sowbhagyavathi*. As a prolific novelist and short story writer, Jayakanthan then began to pen articles and short stories for all the leading publications in Tamil before he graduated to writing full-fledged novels. As many as 40 novels, 200 short stories and 2 autobiographies flowed from the pen of this gifted writer and most of them were based on rural folk and their lives. Like one of his illustrious contemporaries, the Malayalam writer Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Jayakanthan's novels too carried the flavour and scent of his native soil, and his heroes and heroines usually belonged to the lowest rungs of the economic ladder like rickshaw pullers, prostitutes, ragpickers etc. Their simple joys and sorrows were often the nucleus of his novels and short stories, and Jayakanthan never failed to breathe life and spirit into their ordinary, mundane lives.

A number of his novels made their way to celluloid and *Sila Nerangalil Sila Manithargal* which fetched him the Sahitya Academy Award was made into a full length feature film by the noted director Bhimsingh and the heroine of the film Lakshmi won the National Award for Best Actress for her role of a young girl, Ganga who is raped by a rich man who later atones for his act and makes her a part of his life. Bhimsingh also directed Jayakanthan's *Oru Nadigai Natakam Paarkiraal*.

The writer himself had a fascination for films and produced and directed a couple of low budget black and white films titled *Unnaipol Oruvan* (on the plight of slumdwellers) and *Yaarukkagal Azhuthaan*, the latter film featuring the veteran comedian Nagesh in a serious role. *Unnaipol Oruvan* won a National Award for the Third Best Film of the year.

As a writer, Jayakanthan remained a firebrand often basing his oeuvres on social ills like casteism, untouchability and the exploitation of the poor and the downtrodden. Almost all his novels struck a chord with the readers and some of the more popular ones were Gangai Enge Pogiral, *Oru Manithan Oru Veedu Oru Ulagam*, *Sundara Kaandam*, *Jaya Jaya Shankara* and *Oorukku Nooruper*.



Jayakanthan also wrote a couple of autobiographies, the first titled *Oru Ilakkiyavathiyin Arasiyal Anubhavangal* and the second *Oru Ilakkiyavathiyin Kalaiulaga Anubhavangal*. The first narrated in vivid detail his brief foray into politics, while the second centred around his fleeting romance with the tinsel world. The writer's literary works netted him a number of prestigious awards and apart from the Sahitya Academy Award, Jayakanthan or JK as he was popularly called was also honoured with the highest literary award in the country, the Jnanpith. The Padma Bhushan too came his way. A documentary *Elaigalai*

Vistharitha Ezhuthu Kalaignan on his life and times was made during his lifetime and the film was produced by music maestro Ilaiyaraaja and was directed by Ravisubramaniam. A non-conformist all his life, Jayakanthan will be remembered for the depth of the research that went into his writing, his yearning for a classless, casteless society and for the sublime, lyrical quality of his prose. Perhaps the greatest tribute to the popularity of this talented author is that his works have stood the test of time and are certain to serve as an inspiration to all writers of the present and future generations as well. ■

– C V Aravind is a freelance Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

(Sketches of Great Indians by C.D. Rane)

CHARTER
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION
firmly believes in

1. Adherence to the Constitution
 2. Equality before Law
 3. Accountability of those in Positions of Power
 4. Basic Amenities for All
 5. Freedom of Expression
 6. Justice without Delay
 7. Universal Right to Primary Education
 8. Health for All
 9. Population Management
 10. Alleviation of Poverty
 11. Eradication of Child Labour and all other forms of Forced Labour
 12. Dignity for the Differently-Abled
 13. Equality of Gender, Caste and all other Socially Disadvantaged Groups
 14. Removing Corruption from all Spheres of Life
 15. Upholding India's Rich Cultural Heritage
 16. Promotion of Scientific Temper
 17. Separation of Religion from State
 18. Promotion of Communal Harmony
 19. Emphasis on Rural Development
 20. Concern for Environment
-

WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?

Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?

Am I a youth/senior citizen first or an Indian first?

*In all cases you are Indian First, Last and Always.
Be a Proud Indian. Make this country Great, Strong and United.*



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE