

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined

## INDIA'S Foreign Relations

The new government's foreign policy blitzkrieg holds a lot of promise

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**  
A taste of Nagaland

**FACE TO FACE**  
Shafique Ibrahim Patel



MORPARIA'S PAGE



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### **R.I.P Mr. Kamath**

The doyen of Indian journalism M.V.Kamath, who served as a member on the Advisory Board of One India One People Foundation since its inception in 1997, passed away peacefully on 9 October, 2014, at Manipal, after a brief illness. He was 93.

Soft-spoken and humane, Kamath, who groomed many young journalists in his life time was a close friend, philosopher and guide to OIOP's late founder editor Sadanand A. Shetty, and helped him in establishing the foundation and starting the One India One People magazine. He was a part of the foundation's journey since then.

In an illustrious career that spanned 60 years in journalism, Kamath authored several books and was honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2004. It was under his editorship that the circulation of the Illustrated Weekly of India reached an incredible 4,00,000! He shifted from Mumbai to Manipal a few years ago, and worked as the Hon. Director of the Manipal School of Communication, until his demise. Despite suffering ill health for some time, he was mentally alert and kept abreast of news and all political developments.

R.I.P Sir. We will miss you.

# Only milk and honey for our neighbours

*To avoid being labelled a 'bully', India must woo her neighbours arduously, employing unconventional means if necessary, says V. Gangadhar.*

It is an oxymoron: 'Keep the neighbours far away'. Ask any big nation and its foreign secretary will say, "Oh, I can easily deal with the Big Powers including the US. It is the smaller ones which give us all the trouble, creating an endless process of pin pricks". After World War II, the US still managed to exist in peace with Germany and Japan as well as the Cold War enemy, the USSR. Look at Cuba, only 90 miles from the US; it is still regarded as an enemy. Its former President, Fidel Castro survived several assassination attempts by the CIA and other US agencies, which led to a lot of cribbing by the US allies.

Yes, size does matter and the bigger nations always accused of being 'bullies' have to tread cautiously to avoid being labelled as such. India suffers from such a problem, surrounded on all sides by tiny nations like Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal and so on. Often unjustly, we have been accused of trampling on their rights. This is a major issue for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his NDA government which, as such, has very little experience in handling foreign relations.

Modi tried to remedy this situation and pretended to be a foreign affairs expert by inviting all SAARC representatives to his 'coronation', sorry, I mean 'swearing-in!' That some of them swore at him after the ceremony is neither here nor there. But once SAARC was over, there was nothing else to do to improve the wooing of our smaller neighbours. Ideally, any democratic nation would like to create and maintain excellent relations with its neighbours. The following is a scenario of how India would create a 'friendly neighbourhood', where she would be a shining star of peaceful co-existence.

**Bhutan, Nepal:** Let us admit it. Our 'foreign desk' has very little knowledge about these neighbours where the rulers appear to be wearing the same kind of costumes. At the external affairs Ministry, we have the American Desk, the Russian Desk, the Chinese Desk and the African desk, but not a desk for these tiny nations.

Still, we have to maintain good relations with them

and earn their goodwill. Since every nation, small or big, is interested in Bollywood, we can use hindi cinema to win them. Why not plan a sequel to Dev Anand's super hit movie, *Jewel Thief*? The country does not matter, it could be in Nepal or Bhutan. Modi could persuade Dev Saab's son Suneil Anand to release the script of *Son of Jewel Thief* and rope in BJP stars in the NDA like Vinod Khanna, Anupam Kher, Hema Malini and other members of the glamour brigade to work on the movie. The rulers of these nations could be assigned important guest roles, and within no time, will be eating out of Sushma Swaraj's hands and supporting our foreign policy.

**Sri Lanka:** After the civil war and the defeat of the LTTE, our relations are not good with Sri Lanka and we have to win them over. On our side, the initiative should come from Tamil Nadu and its political parties, DMK, AIADMK, DMDK, ABCDEMDK, FGHIJMK and so on. With the *Purratchi Thalivi* (revolutionary leader) in jail, AIADMK (PTJAIADMK) will represent the former chief minister. A lot of give and take will be needed to make the milk of human kindness runneth over. The elder son in any Tamil family will have to be named Prabhakaran. The Indian Navy along with the Sri Lankan fleet of ships, should use the latest type of trawlers to fish massively in the coastal sea and supply the catch to Sri Lanka.

**Pakistan:** Because of prevailing conditions, Indian and Pakistani forces posted on either side of the border lines, did not exchange packets of sweets, and this has to be rectified. Orders will be given to the Indian Air Force to air drop big packets of North Indian, South Indian and Bengali sweets to the patrolling Pakistani soldiers. With such friendly gestures abounding, the sweetened Indian foreign policy will be known all over the world and make Modi a certainty for the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize. ■



The writer is a well-known satirist.

# Modi on the move

*In Narendra Modi, India has finally got an active, on the move Prime Minister who is clear in his vision for the country. In a foreign policy blitzkrieg, Modi has interacted with all India's near and strategic neighbours, and visited Brazil, Japan and US in less than five months after he took over. There is a lot of promise on the ground, performance will surely follow, hopes **B. Ramesh Babu**.*

**P**RIME Minister Narendra Modi is the kind of leader who does not allow grass to grow under his feet. He is a man on the move at home and abroad. He is clear headed, pragmatic, and has the courage to say and do what needs to be said and done. His self-confidence to lead the nation obviously is based on the massive popular mandate he won in the 2014 elections. But, the contrast from the last three years of the Manmohan Singh Government cannot be explained away on this score alone. Modi is determined to achieve his twin objectives of putting the country back on the track of rapid and sustained growth and enhance the country's security. His foreign policy initiatives are designed to subserve the overarching goals.

Last four months saw enormous activity on the foreign relations front. An endless stream of foreign leaders from across the world came to renew and strengthen their bilateral relations with India. A Chinese envoy, a Minister from Singapore, US Under Secretary of State, Congressman John McCain (the Republican Party's Presidential candidate against Obama in the 2008 elections), a high-level delegation from UK led by the Foreign Secretary William Hague and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, and the Australian Prime Minister were among them.

## A great start

On his part, the new Prime Minister started his innings on the foreign relations front with a bang. In an unprecedented and imaginative move, he invited all the SAARC leaders to his swearing-in ceremony. Understandably, the Ministry of External Affairs was not in the loop on this bold initiative. Equally unprecedented was the response. All of them, including Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif graced the occasion, which is an acknowledgement of India's importance, and their desire to touch base with the new leader in command in the country.

Modi used the occasion to hold one-to-one meetings with all of them. While no serious negotiations could be held, the novel initiative conveyed the message that the Modi Government accorded highest priority to the country's relations with its immediate neighbours in South Asia. Modi chose



**U.S. President Barack Obama hosted a meeting with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House**

Bhutan for his first official foreign trip to avoid any wrong signals on this score. Next he went to Nepal. By agreeing to review the old and controversial Treaty of 1950, he cleared the way for restoring good relations with Nepal.

This was followed by the new Prime Minister's very successful diplomatic foray at the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) Summit in Brazil during 15-16 July, 2014. The most important outcome of the meeting was the decision to set up a New Development Bank as long-term alternative to the World Bank and IMF. In a shrewd tactical move, Modi proposed the principle of equality of all members in the operation of the Bank. Modi also won the consent of all members to have India nominate the first President of the Bank for the initial five years.

Modi held one-to-one meetings with all the leaders on the sidelines of the Summit. Most important and seemingly fruitful of them was his interaction with the Chinese President Xi Jinping. He invited India to be an active member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a significant departure from the earlier policy of having India as only an Observer to the deliberations. Xi also invited India to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) to be held in China in November 2014. This could be seen as China's acceptance of India as a legitimate player in Asia-Pacific. China invited India earlier to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as a founder member.

At Modi's request, Brazilian President Dilma Rouseff, the host of the BRICS Summit, invited the leaders of as many as eleven South American countries to meet and interact with the visiting Indian Prime Minister. Modi used the occasion to press for expanded bilateral and multilateral relations between India and those countries.



### India-Japan: Strategic security gets prominence

Modi's highly successful visit to Japan and the much acclaimed one-to-one meeting with Shinzo Abe, the equally popular Prime Minister of

Japan, followed soon afterwards. Modi wanted to meet Abe before the Chinese President's scheduled visit. New proximity between India and Japan is rightly seen as the best way to leverage India-China bilateral equation. Japan was more than willing to play ball. Japan pledged to invest 2.1 lakh crores of rupees (\$35.5 billion) in India in five years. Five agreements, including one in defence sector, were signed in Tokyo. As anticipated, the civilian nuclear deal did not come through.

The most important take away from Modi's trip to Japan was in the area of strategic security. The two countries agreed to work with the US for a joint trilateral (US-Japan-India) arrangement to ensure safety and security of the high seas in the Indo-Pacific region. The two leaders went on to add that they would reach out to other concerned countries in the region. This is a noteworthy departure from the policy posture of the UPA Government, which did not want to join any anti-China coalition. Modi was less squeamish and clear headed on the need to contain what he described as the "forces of expansionism" in the region. But he was careful not to mention any country by name.

### India-China: Taking the dragon by its tail



The three-day State Visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping to India began on 17 September, 2014. As usual there was a lot of build up and media hype over the visit in India. Unlike in the past, Xi's visit to India

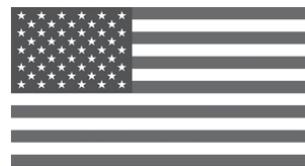
was publicised widely in China. Official spokespersons of the country declared that the "historic" visit would usher in "another era" in Sino-Indian relations and would be embedded with strong "strategic resonance." There was much talk of Xi "matching, if not surpassing" the massive Japanese investment announced from Tokyo. The Indian side was equally euphoric about the outcomes from the visit.

However, the reality turned out to be far more modest than the pre-visit expectations. China pledged to invest \$20 billion in India in the next five years, mainly in industrial infrastructure and development projects. The number of industrial parks proposed was reduced to two (from four). A five-year plan was mooted to reduce the huge and growing adverse trade balance (\$40 billion). The pre-visit hype about a China-Russia-India security linkage to counter America's global hegemony did not surface during the visit; nor was there any mention of the earlier stated possibility of including India in the recently signed mega (\$400 billion) energy deal with Moscow.

On the contrary, China indulged in its usual double game of playing hot and cold at the same time, which back fired this time around. Even as the offers of huge investments and a new era of economic cooperation were on the anvil, Chinese soldiers intruded across the LOAC in Chumar sector in Ladakh and set up camps. The Indian side responded by confronting the Chinese with a matching military buildup. Modi told the Chinese President, while the official level negotiations were in progress, that unless peace and tranquillity are assured on the border no progress would be possible in the bilateral relations between our two countries. Such open declaration right in the middle of the delegation level negotiations had not happened before. Prime Minister Modi was clear and categorical on this score and deserves high praise for taking the dragon by its tail. Xi responded by saying that he would look into the matter. But, the confrontation continued till five days after President Xi went back home.

In between, Modi handled Pakistan firmly and extracted due restraint. His Government told the Pakistani High Commissioner in India not to meet the Kashmiri separatist leaders prior to the Foreign Secretaries meeting to be held in Islamabad shortly. The High Commissioner went ahead and met the Hurriyat leaders as was the usual practice. India responded by cancelling the scheduled bilateral meeting. Later, Pakistan agreed that it was not necessary to meet the separatist leaders in advance of bilateral talks in the future.

### India-US: Modi makes a pitch for 'Make in India'



Modi's five-day trip to the US was a virtual whirlwind. It was packed with interactions with selected bigwigs in business and industry, and a series of mass meetings attended by an enthusiastic audience. At the very outset it should be highlighted that prior to his trip, Modi wisely and correctly observed that India-US relations do not mean relations between Delhi and Washington. Government to Government relations (important as they are) constitute

only one element in the vast canvas of people to people relations between the two countries.

The new Prime Minister sees himself as a business diplomat. Prior to his departure to the US, he launched his major campaign called "Make in India", with much fanfare. He made sure that corporate India was enthusiastically on his side before wooing Big Business in America. Towards this end he combined style, symbolism, and substance into a masterly PR campaign. Before going on to Washington, Modi made it a point to meet a select group of CEOs of major corporations and followed it up with one to one meetings with a few of them. Modi seemed to have persuaded them to take a fresh look at India as a good investment destination.

A number of actions of immense symbolism followed soon after. He visited "ground zero" – the site of 9/11 terrorist attack in New York City, with the Mayor in tow! He met the Clinton couple and a number of prominent Indian-American leaders. His address at the Global Citizens Festival in the Central Park made him a "Rock Star" style world leader. His emotion filled address at the Madison Square Garden was certainly the high water mark of his trip to the US. More than 18,000 ticket holding crowd inside and a lot of others who could not get in, heard him with rapt attention. The speech was broadcast live on a huge screen at Times Square, and over 50 locations across the vast country.

He addressed the United Nations General Assembly like a world leader. He said that India looks at the world as one family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*), has a tradition of living in tune with nature, and yoga is the ancient civilisation's gift to the world. He thought it was fruitless to bring bilateral issues like Kashmir to the UN and told Pakistan that the two countries should instead take care of the flood victims all over the state. He also stated that 20<sup>th</sup> century institutions like the UN would become irrelevant if they do not reform, to reflect the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While in Washington DC, Modi made it a point to pay his respects to Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and Mahatma Gandhi. The symbolism of these visits assumed extra significance because Obama changed his plans and accompanied Modi to the Martin Luther King Memorial. Another symbolic feature of Modi's trip to the US was that he continued with his usual nine-day *Navaratri* Festival fast of consuming only water, including at the White House dinner!

The Modi-Obama one to one meeting was certainly the highlight of the foreign foray. Both leaders saw the other's



**Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi at the state guest house in Tokyo**

country as a natural partner and declared their intent to take the strategic partnership to the next level. India-US relations are already so extensive and intensive that one could only expect steady and incremental enhancement in the bilateral equation. To expect breakthroughs each time the two leaders meet is unrealistic. A quantum jump in the nature of the relationship would be possible only if and when the two nations share a common world view, which is not on the cards. Irrespective of parties in power in India, we cannot and will not endorse the American penchant for unilateral military intervention around the world.

There are bound to be a number of issues on which the two countries do not see eye to eye. Nuclear Liability Law, Intellectual Property Rights, and trade development versus food security are hard nuts to crack. The only wise course is to manage the differences.

India condemns America's double standards on international terrorism emanating from Pakistan, and does not appreciate the American plea of helplessness in the face of Pakistan's perfidy. One of the perennial problems of relations between the two democracies is, "consensus at the conceptual level and contention at the concrete level."

After these months of foreign forays and activism of Modi, the verdict now lies in the future. There is a lot of promise. In the final analysis, it is performance that matters. ■



The writer is Adjunct Professor, School of Public Policy, ICFAI University, Hyderabad. Formerly, he was the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Professor of Civics & Politics at Mumbai University.

## Maxim

*No religion has mandated killing others as a requirement for its sustenance or promotion.*

- Dr.A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

# India Afghan *bhai bhai*

*India and Afghanistan have maintained a friendly and strategic relationship over the decades, despite India's refusal to get involved militarily in that country. The right path for India to tread, especially after the new President has taken over in Afghanistan, is to continue providing active cooperation in areas as diverse as training, education, infrastructure, defence, and of course, democracy, opines P. M. Kamath.*



AFGHANISTAN is today at a crossroads, creating uncertainties as to the course it will take after the Americans withdraw the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). President Hamid Karzai was unwilling to sign a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) to enable them to place a limited number of US and NATO troops in Afghanistan after the December 2014 withdrawal. Karzai, because of his anti-American stance, had stated that the new government that was elected in June 2014 would decide on the bilateral agreement. Americans were frustrated with President Karzai and were speaking of 'Withdrawal with Zero Option'.

After the June elections, an opportunity for smooth transfer of power was frustrated by the squabbling between the two equally competent candidates - Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, both eager to succeed to the Presidency. However, on 11 September, they agreed to power sharing under an American and UN team mediated agreement, a first ever democratic transition of power in Afghanistan. The agreement on power sharing provided for Ashraf Ghani becoming the President and sharing powers with Abdullah Abdullah as the Chief Executive Officer – a sort of Prime Minister (PM). The new government was inaugurated after the President was sworn in on 29 September.

## Is India a reluctant partner?

What has been the Indian role so far? Afghanistan had common border with India during the British rule and was a friendly neighbour. Even after the creation of Pakistan, friendly relations between the two continued. But Pakistan's relations with the two have always been turbulent with mutual mistrust.

Though the Afghans were unhappy with India for not speaking out firmly against Soviet military intervention in their country in December 1979, relations have improved since

the American military intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001 to overturn the then anti-people Taliban government. Since then, the democratically elected first Afghan President, India-educated Karzai, has always come to India as a friend and eager to improve relations. Despite that, many have described India as a reluctant partner of Afghanistan.

What explains India's reluctance? It has two and a half reasons. First, historically world's major powers in the past like the British Empire, and the Soviet Union have failed to control or subdue Afghanistan. India does not wish to get involved militarily in Afghanistan. That policy is reinforced by Indian Peace Keeping Force's (IPKF) failure in Sri Lanka in the 1980s to subdue the LTTE.

Second, Pakistan is highly suspicious of Indian intentions whenever she gets involved in Afghanistan, even in the area of economic reconstruction. Pakistan since inception, has acquired tremendous capacity to disturb India in every possible way – from pumping counterfeit currency, to sending terrorists, and waging war openly or by stealth. Any presence of India in Afghanistan is considered as aimed against Pakistan. This is borne out by the fact of Pakistan's India-specific terrorist instrument, the Lashkar-e-Toiba's (LeT) attack on Indian Embassy in Kabul twice, in 2008 and 2009, killing 75.

Thus, India is highly concerned with the sensitivities of Pakistan. Hence, while willing to participate in economic development, aid in the growth of democracy and emergence of Afghanistan as a modern educated and secular nation, India is very cautious about getting involved militarily in Afghanistan.

The last, half reason is the US. It has been pursuing 'zigging now and zagging later policy' on Indian participation in Afghanistan; that in turn, was determined by the intensity with which Pakistan was able to pressurise the US for Indian exclusion, or the US ability to withstand Pakistan's pressure or blackmailing. American policy makers thus confuse Indian policymakers by their lack of clarity of intention and policies!

### Economic, infrastructure and educational development

Yet, since the American direct military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, India has been active in the development of infrastructure, economy, education, culture and democratisation of politics in Afghanistan. India, by making a commitment of an aid of \$2 billion, has emerged as the fifth largest bilateral donor for development activities, of which over \$1 billion has already been spent. These activities include Delaram-Zarang highway connecting Afghanistan's main highway, the ring road, to the Iranian border. Eventually, this will enable Afghanistan to trade directly with India bypassing Pakistan, as India is also helping Iran in the development of Iranian Chabahar port.

India has undertaken to build a Parliament building in Kabul, electricity generation and distribution to Kabul and some more cities. Indian capacity building programmes provide hundreds of scholarships to Afghan students, and civil servants. India is also providing food aid, medical aid, etc.

### Security preparedness

India is the first country to have signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan. We may not be militarily involved, yet, India is involved in training of Afghan Police, Army and administrative personnel. President Karzai had during his visits to New Delhi requested former Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh to increase Indian military involvement with a wish-list for enhanced military cooperation. President Karzai had requested for light artillery guns, helicopters and heavy vehicles. A military training academy with Indian instructors was also sought by him.

### Post-December 2014 scenario

I had organised an international seminar on Afghanistan in Mumbai in July 2014. During the seminar quite a few scholars were of the opinion that Taliban is already very active in the Afghan countryside and once the US withdraws, it might capture power in Kabul. However, this possibility is ruled out by a section of scholars who argue that Taliban does not enjoy airpower, without which it is difficult for them to capture power. Another section pointed out that the Afghan situation now is totally different in comparison to the situation soon after Soviet withdrawal in 1985.

Afghan scholars are confident that during the 14 years of democracy in Afghanistan, Afghans have come to develop a vested interest in retaining freedoms they are enjoying under

the new regime. The people will fight to see that democracy continues to flourish in Afghanistan. But India has also been reluctant to invest more in economic development because of the uncertain political and security scenario in Afghanistan until 11 September 2014. Since then, things have moved in the right direction.

The new President has already signed a BSA with the US and the NATO on 30 September, making it possible for them to keep about 12,000 troops in Afghanistan after the US troops withdrawal at the end of December 2014. Explaining the rationale for his acceptance of the security pact, President Ghani said: "This agreement will pave the way for peace; it will not be an obstacle to peace." The security pact will help to train, equip and advise Afghan troops. Counter terrorism is an important area of training.

### Agenda for Modi government

Hamid Karzai had, like the other heads of state from the SAARC countries, attended Modi's swearing-in ceremony in Delhi. He had one-to-one talks with Modi, wherein the two discussed, enhanced cooperation between two countries after the December 2014 US and NATO troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan. Hence, here are some policy suggestions. Afghan students who study in Indian Universities have nothing but praise for the programme. India should at least double the scholarships it offers now. India should also expand its training programme for Afghan diplomatic, security, police, military and administration personnel in Indian institutions, academies and universities. Indian personnel visiting Afghan universities and training academies is also a welcome option. There are twenty million youth below 25. India could provide vocational training to the youth so that they can get be gainfully employed. This may prevent them from joining in anti-state activities. India should also contribute towards the proposed Afghan decision to rebuild the Bamiyan Buddha with UNESCO funding. This Afghan decision is highly laudable. It could strengthen Afghanistan's secular credentials.

Today foreign aid constitutes a major part of Afghanistan's \$20 billion GDP. Now Afghan leaders need to develop its economy and gradually reduce their over-dependence on foreign aid. India should take up the long delayed pipeline to ship gas from Turkmenistan to India, which could earn Afghanistan \$400 million annually. India's increased involvement in mining of minerals like gold, silver, aluminum is also desirable. India should also explore possibilities to

### Health

*Acidity can strike at any time and any place. Some simple home remedies are, chewing on tulsii leaves or boiling them in water and drinking the concoction. Eating cloves gives instant relief as does a glass of cold milk, as the calcium present in milk inhibits acid build-up and removes extra acid.*

set up joint food-processing projects in Afghanistan to process a wide range of fruits for export.

In the national security area, India already has a programme for enabling Afghanistan to purchase Russian military hardware. India should also agree to restore capacity of existing arms manufacturing units in Afghanistan. India could also consider supplying helicopters and fighter planes. The policy should be willingness to supply all that is feasible and desirable with the exception of sending Indian armed forces to fight their wars.

India has already warned the US that it should not abruptly withdraw from Afghanistan leaving its democracy to terrorists. Modi and Obama in their recent meeting in Washington have agreed to coordinate their Afghan policies.

Security pacts signed on 30 September will enable foreign assistance in billions to pour from the US and the European Union. India should explore ways and means to increase its cooperation with Afghanistan, jointly with the US, in certain mutually beneficial high-tech areas. For instance, air traffic control system to regulate air space over Afghanistan is currently looked after by the US-based company, IAP World-Wide Services. They are short of trained air-controllers. While

helping to train Afghans for air-traffic controlling jobs, India could also provide Indian air traffic control staff.

India is the second largest contributor to the UN Democratic Fund that separately contributes funds to Afghanistan to develop as a democracy. The US, Europe, Japan, South Korea and India jointly want to see Afghanistan develop as a democratic nation within the comity of nations.

International support to build a democratic Afghanistan becomes vital for peace and security not only for India, but to democracies all over the world in the background of the growing power of the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS). Pakistan is certainly going to grab the opportunity of inviting and using ISIS to harm India and Afghanistan. ■



The writer is former Professor of Politics, University of Bombay, currently, Hon. Director, VPM's Centre for International Studies (CIS), and Adjunct Professor, Department of Geopolitics and International Relation's, Manipal University, Manipal. Under his directorship, VPM's CIS organised an international seminar from 29-31 July, 2014, on 'American Withdrawal from Afghanistan in December 2014: Post Withdrawal Puzzle of Policy Options for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan'.



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# A dialogue of the deaf

*India's most acrimonious relationship in the neighbourhood is with Pakistan, with whom she had a common name and history up until 1947. But instead of living in peaceful co-existence, India and Pakistan have been squabbling, warring and doing their best to cause the other most damage, literally on the ground, and figuratively in the international arena. When two neighbours cannot sit down and hold effective bilateral talks, a different approach will have to be found, opines Dr. Sanjay Bhaduria.*



THE relationship between India and Pakistan has for long been labeled as 'enduring rivalry', 'sustained conflict', 'ugly stability' and so on by analysts to define the relationship, in an attempt to force an eastern intellectual puzzle into a pre-conceived western mould. Unfortunately, the India-Pakistan relationship is and has been about almost everything that matters: from history to memory, from prejudice to identity, from territory to sovereignty, from religion to ideology, from trust to betrayal and from security to insecurity.

So, how does one analyse the relationship – in inter-state terms, or at the inter-society dimension, or at the people to people level? Given the contemporary state of affairs, reconciliation at the state level is unlikely, given that the leadership in both India and Pakistan have to address their respective domestic constituencies. The same elements in both the countries have been concerned for years that despite talks at various political and administrative levels, there has hardly been any significant progress in their bilateral relations. The cause merits discussion under the various heads which are thought to be salient for Indo-Pakistan relationship.

## Pakistan's crisis of identity and its 'security syndrome'

It has been pointed out by many respected scholars that the problem is more psychological and attitudinal, rather than tangible in nature. Pakistan's behaviour gives an impression that it is in search of an independent identity as a state, as there is so much in common between the two countries in terms of history, language and culture. As it came into existence as a separate state only in 1947, it does not have a separate history, so it traces its history from Mohammed Bin Qasim (711 AD), and has named its missiles *Ghauri* and *Ghazni* who had invaded undivided India. Similarly, they have a shared culture and language with India which cannot be denied. Pakistan suffers from a huge insecurity, as it is confronted with a 'big'

neighbour like India, which it feels somehow has an unfinished agenda of undoing the Partition, leading to it developing, in the words of M. S. Venkatramani, a 'security syndrome'.

It can be appreciated that the resource potential and development perspective of the two countries are in conjunction with each other. A number of books and articles in journals and magazines have been written on India-Pakistan relations either endorsing or criticising the official position of the country concerned. However, this conventional literature cannot fathom the true mood of the people and intelligentsia in the two countries. The situation can be summed up in the words of an Indian diplomat who opines that, "The people need peace, the leaders want to make peace, but the establishments are unwilling to adjust". However, there is much in common between India and Pakistan, and cooperation rather than confrontation is in their common interest.

## Past baggage and mistrust

The relations between the two countries have been hostage to history, dating back to pre-partition days when Hindu-Muslim relations were politicised to the extent that Partition seemed to be the logical outcome. There is severe mistrust between the two on several issues: Pakistan's grievance that India has not accepted Partition; that India does not treat its Muslim minority well with whom Pakistan has a natural affinity; and its fear that India is trying to hegemonise the whole region politically, economically and militarily. On the other hand, India too has resentment about Pakistan trying to destabilise its unity and integrity. Tackling mutual distrust has been the prime obstacle in this relationship.

## The Jammu & Kashmir issue

Pakistan spells out its foreign policy in one word, which is 'Kashmir', giving a sense of the importance it accords to this issue, and it has added fuel to fire by trying to communalise and internationalise the issue which has led India to harden its posture. Moreover, Pakistan's policy to bleed India by a

thousand cuts, initiated by Zia-Ul-Haq after being convinced that Pakistan cannot possibly win a regular war, has seen it indulging in low intensity conflict. The Pakistani media has always held that the best option would be to continue or rather step up aid to secessionist elements in Kashmir, 'freedom fighters' in their vocabulary, fan anti-India sentiments and win international sympathy for their cause. This is at a low cost to Pakistan and any flare up would be between the Indian state authorities and Kashmiris – a very comfortable situation for Pakistan indeed. In such a situation, the prospects of a friendly dialogue appear bleak.

### The Simla Agreement

This agreement spelling out 'bilateralism' is considered by a significant body of opinion in Pakistan, as worthless, as they feel they were coerced into signing the Agreement as India was in a stronger bargaining position. A noted Pakistani scholar Hussain Haqqani opines, "The fact that it was a treaty between unequals means that this agreement could not be the basis for our future friendly relations". A veteran diplomat from India also put it succinctly: "The agreement was so worded as to be susceptible to different interpretations". Some analysts feel that the agreement had in itself the seeds of its destruction because it was not willingly signed by one party. So, the agreement which could have provided the impetus for friendly relations provided little hope for a peaceful resolution of disputes.

### Cross-border terrorism

Pakistan's internal compulsions in terms of the links between top army personnel, bureaucrats and political leaders, have acquired a measure of legitimacy under the banner of 'Islam' and 'jihad,' which gets translated into cross-border terrorism towards India. The 'hate India' glue is thought to be rightly or wrongly the binding force to keep Pakistan intact amidst a crumbling economy. But in the process, the failure of the state apparatus in creating a culture of impunity, and ultimately leading to the breakdown of the rule of law in the country and the ongoing fragility, appears to be a prelude to a failed state. Thus, the extremists' growth and power in Pakistani society can be said to be a direct result of its policy towards India.

So, terrorism emanating from territory under Pakistan's control remains a core concern in bilateral relations. Progress in the Mumbai terror attack case in Pakistan is seen as an important marker of Pakistan's commitment to combat terrorism emanating from its soil. The US State Department

has noted in its *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013* (April 2014) that: "Continued allegations of violations of the Line of Control between India and Pakistan, Pakistan's failure to bring the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai attacks to justice, and activities of Pakistan-based terrorist groups remained serious concerns for the Indian government." We can reasonably conclude that India's major security concern with Pakistan arises from its support to cross-border militancy and terrorism.

### Conclusion

It is a fact that dealing with Pakistan is futile until it sets its own house in order, which has enabled terrorist groups, guerrilla armies and other non-state actors to emerge in different parts of the country; they have fatally weakened the political institutions, marginalised the role of the state, and have created monsters that threaten to devour Pakistani society.

As far as the future of India-Pakistan relationship is concerned, despite a number of common ideas expressed on both sides of the border, there has been no meeting of minds and vision, even in the present international climate where there is a premium on peace rather than conflict. It is thus a question of seeing the realities, and not being guided by passions. The bilateral relations have got bogged down in decades of misperceptions and distrust, often fuelled by the status quo favouring official machinery in both countries. The political leadership has tended to pursue relations in light of their domestic compulsions and election prospects which have not helped the cause.

The 'human factor' in Indo-Pakistan relations makes it imperative to view it beyond the routine exercise to be negotiated, on the basis of officials' decision-making. Any misplaced optimism is likely to blow up in their faces and create a situation far worse than what obtains at present. ■

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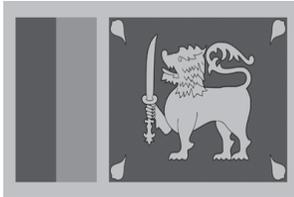
Information Agency (USIA). He is the Secretary of the National Congress for Defence Studies (NCDS) and the Associate Editor of the Indian Journal of Strategic Studies (IJSS), published by the University of Allahabad. He has contributed more than fifty articles to national journals, besides authoring books and monographs. His latest publication is the edited volume, 'India's National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'.

### Did you know?

*The Great Indian Bustard, a large bird with a horizontal body and long bare legs giving it an ostrich like appearance, is among the heaviest of the flying birds. And it is one of the rarest birds of the Indian sub-continent. Once common on the dry plains of the Indian subcontinent, this bird is now found only in some parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. Less than a thousand survive today and the species is threatened by hunting and loss of its habitat.*

# Natural allies, but low on trust

*India and Sri Lanka have all the ingredients to be natural allies, from a shared history, ethnicity and culture, to trade and commerce. Yet, the relations between the two countries have been mired in conflicts and controversies since decades. It will take a herculean effort by the Modi government to clear these webs of mistrust, says P. K. Balachandran.*



once said.

Theoretically, Gandhi's statement should hold good, as the cultural, linguistic, religious and economic history of India and Sri Lanka (which was known as "Ceylon" from the Colonial period up to 1972), are closely intertwined. But since the Colonial era, the two countries have drifted apart, with the relationship increasingly marked by tension and mutual suspicion rather than friendship and cooperation.

## Historical ties

Buddhism, which is the religion of more than 70 percent of Sri Lankans, was brought to Sri Lanka by Emperor Ashoka's son, Prince Mahinda. Sinhalese, which is the language of the majority of Sri Lankans, is highly Sanskritised. Even while being devout Buddhists, the Sinhalese worship all the Hindu Gods, with the notable exception of Rama, perhaps because of the Ramayana, in which Rama defeated the Sri Lankan King Ravana, and in which, Sri Lankans are described as demons.

Down the ages, Sri Lankan Kings had traced their mythical ancestries to the *Surya* and *Chandra Vamsas* of India and had preferred to marry Indian princesses to acquire legitimacy as *Kshatriyas*. Sri Lankan Kings recruited soldiers from India, particularly Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, and had formed alliances with Madurai and Thanjavur kingdoms to defeat their enemies in the island. Tamils had ruled parts of Sri Lanka for long periods. However, despite the multifarious ties with India, especially South India, there had been deep tensions too. The Cholas were seen as invaders, destroyers of Buddhism, and the irrigation system. The Sinhalese-Buddhist historical chronicle *Mahawamsa*, which signifies Sinhalese-Buddhist resurgence, portrays Tamils and Hindu beliefs in bad light. The present Tamil-Sinhalese ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka draws sustenance from the *Mahawamsa*. Nevertheless, there was no "ethnic conflict" as such in Sri

It is, at least it should be, impossible for India and Sri Lanka to quarrel. We are the nearest neighbors. We are inheritors of a common culture," Mahatma Gandhi

Lanka, till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And that was entirely due to the effects of British rule - the economic, administrative and political system the colonial ruler introduced. Prior to the establishment of British rule, the economic and cultural synergies between Sri Lanka and India, Sri Lankans and Indians, and Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus, were stronger than the discrepancies.

Relations were symbiotic rather than antagonistic. Trade was in the hands of the Tamils and Muslims (who lived in the coastal areas), and the biggest chunk of Sri Lanka's international trade was with India. The language of trade was Tamil, as the mother tongue of the Muslims was also Tamil, though they were part Arab in origin. Many castes and communities came down from India to work in specialised trades. The Karavas, Salagamas, Chetties and Warnakulasuriyas are among them. None of these aspects of Sri Lankan society posed any problem. Sri Lanka was absorbent and accommodative.

## First signs of conflict

The first signs of India-Sri Lanka conflict appeared in the last part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup>, when Madras officials ruled the island. The Madras system of taxation and general administration was unsuited to Sri Lankan traditions. The locals revolted against the Madras officials in 1797. When the Madras rule ended in 1802, the British government made Ceylon a Crown Colony, putting it directly under it.

When the British saw potential in growing coffee, tea and rubber in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, they looked for local wage labour. Not finding willing workers locally, they brought labour from Tamil Nadu, where frequent droughts had thrown lakhs out of workers out of job. Initially, the presence of Indian labour did not cause any local resentment as the plantation economy was independent of the local village economy. It was when some form of representative government was introduced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the presence of Indian workers began to be seen as a threat by the locals. Politicians began to gather support on the basis of community affiliations. The British encouraged representation on communal or ethnic basis. There was separate representation for Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims in the councils they set up.

In the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, communal politics was exacerbated by the Government of India's concern for the welfare of Indians working overseas. The concern stemmed from the Indian nationalist movement, which was pressing the British to get a better deal for the Indian workers who were treated virtually as slaves. The British government in Ceylon was under pressure from three quarters: namely, the newly emerging Sinhalese political elite which wanted a reduction of the Indian element in the population, the British planters who were keen on retaining the labour, and Government of India which wanted Colombo to ensure a better deal for the Indian worker.

Sinhalese nationalist leaders were at loggerheads with Indian nationalists on the issue of Indians in Ceylon, who were in every walk of life by the 1930s. In fact, the nationalist movement in Ceylon was an anti-Indian movement rather than an anti-British movement.

### Stripped of citizenship

Not surprisingly, the very first action of independent Ceylon was the passing of an Act in 1948 to deprive resident Indians of the right to citizenship. Nearly one million Indians were rendered "Stateless". They were expected to leave the island, though a mass exodus of plantation workers would have ruined Sri Lanka, as tea and rubber were the only exportable goods those days.

However, New Delhi stemmed this by entering into bilateral negotiations with Sri Lanka. After hard negotiations, India agreed to take 525,000 people, and Sri Lanka 300,000. The fate of another 150,000 was left undecided. India undertook to repatriate the numbers assigned to it. But when India dragged its feet on repatriation, Sri Lanka delayed grant of citizenship to the lot given to it. Very few plantation workers were eager to be repatriated, as in the early years of independence, economic conditions in India were worse. In fact, there was a lot of illegal Indian immigration to Sri Lanka, and the immigrants were derided and hunted down as "*kalla thonis*" (illegal boat people).

The leader of the plantation workers, S.Thondaman, was hurt that his people should be treated like a "sack of potatoes" and divided among two countries. Fed up with the Indian approach, he struck a deal with Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene (JR) in 1987, under which Sri Lanka would give citizenship to all except those who had opted for India. At that time, JR was keen on cultivating the Indian Tamil community, as the North Eastern "Sri Lanka Tamil" insurgency was in full swing. In 2003, through an all-party consensus, all, including those who were earmarked for repatriation to India, were given Sri Lankan citizenship.

### North-East Tamil question

While the Indian Origin Tamil problem was solved without

Indian intervention, the problem of the North Eastern "Sri Lankan Tamils" brought India into conflict with Sri Lanka. In 1983, the anti-Tamil riots, sparked by the Tamil demand for an independent *Eelam* took a violent form, sending 150,000 Sri Lankan Tamils fleeing to Tamil Nadu as refugees. This touched off an unceasing sympathetic wave across Tamil Nadu. Tamils in India suddenly rediscovered kinship with the Tamils of Sri Lanka, which had snapped long ago due to a variety of factors.

This led to India forcing President Jayewardene to sign an Accord with it in 1987, which set up Provincial Councils with some degree of autonomy, as per the new 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution. An Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was sent to implement the Accord and disarm the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which was fixated on securing *Eelam*.

The Accord and the induction of the IPKF were despised by both the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The LTTE went to war against the IPKF in 1987, and President R. Premadasa ordered the withdrawal of the IPKF in 1990. In 1991, the LTTE assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for sending the IPKF.

Following these developments, India kept aloof from Sri Lankan affairs allowing the island to stew in its own ethnic juice. But by the second half of the 1990s, India had stepped up trade links with Sri Lanka through a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The FTA boosted two way trade exponentially. But India was the larger beneficiary, to the chagrin of many Sri Lankans. Later in the 2000s, with an anti-terrorism wave sweeping the globe after 9/11, India stepped up military cooperation with Sri Lanka. When President Mahinda Rajapaksa unleashed Eelam War IV to decimate the LTTE in 2006, India helped him covertly.

However, since India felt that it can never remain aloof from the Sri Lankan Tamil question because of the pro-Sri Lankan Tamil outcry in Tamil Nadu, it extracted a promise from Rajapaksa that he will fully implement the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and even go beyond it. But Rajapaksa has not fulfilled his promises, to date. Over the years, powers under 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment have been whittled away causing much dismay in New Delhi. Tamil Nadu upped its ante following charges that the Sri Lankan forces had committed war crimes in the final phase of Eelam War IV in which 40,000 Tamil civilians were allegedly massacred by shelling.

New Delhi is now fully backing the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in Sri Lanka. But the TNA is seen by Rajapaksa as a former "proxy" of the LTTE which has become an "incarnation" of the LTTE. The TNA is shunned by Rajapaksa though it is ruling the Northern Province. India has been unsuccessfully urging Rajapaksa to talk to the TNA and work out a solution which can be put to the other parties for a broader consensus.

Resenting India's meddlesome behaviour, Sri Lanka has refused to sign a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with it, which India is very keen on.

### Enter China

As a further bulwark against India, Rajapaksa is building very strong ties with China. He has given China more than a foothold in the Sri Lankan economy. Heavy concessions have been given to Chinese state enterprises which have often come up with unsolicited projects in the infrastructure sector. Chinese loans have been taken at high interest without a thought about how they can be repaid by a country which is already neck deep in debt. India fears that debt may turn Sri Lanka into a client state of China, which could use its presence in Sri Lanka to threaten India, if relations with India sour.

### Fishing in troubled waters

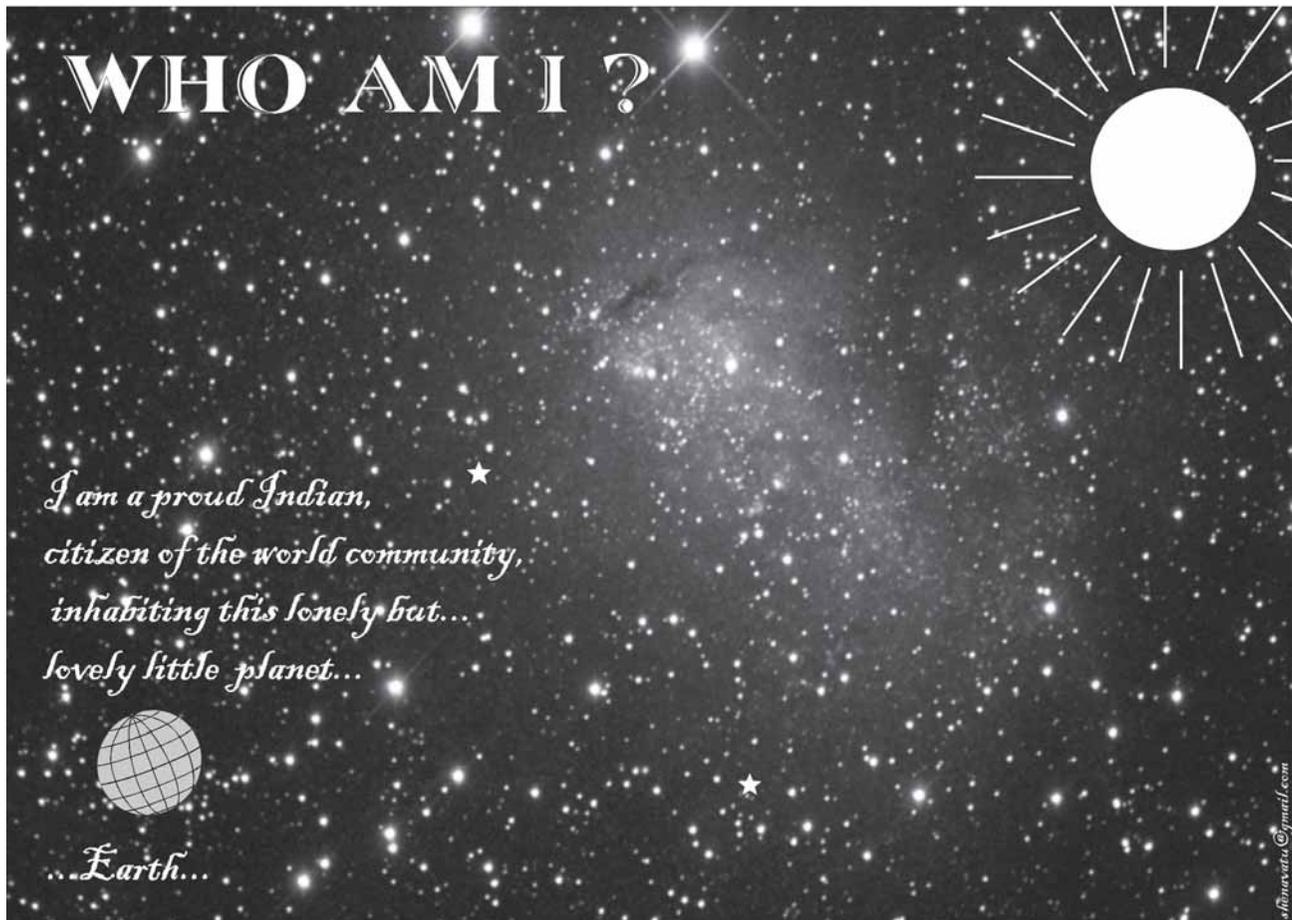
Poaching by Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry fishermen in North Sri Lanka is another issue which has recently cropped up to bedevil bilateral relations. Tamil Nadu fishermen do not recognise the sea boundary agreement signed in the mid-1970s and claim a "traditional right" to fish in Palk Bay and Palk Strait. The agreement was signed without consulting them. An annoyed Sri Lanka has been detaining intruders and their boats, causing distress on the Indian side. Sri Lanka also wants the Indians to eschew "bottom trawling" but the latter say this cannot be done overnight.

At their meeting in New York on 28 September, in the sidelines of the UN General Assembly address by Prime Minister Modi, President Rajapaksa once again brought up the "bottom trawling" practice allowed only to the Indian fishermen and banned for the Sri Lankan fishermen. It is clear that this is one of the contentious, unresolved issues between the two countries right now, with New Delhi under severe pressure from Tamil Nadu too. The President also reportedly assured that his government was assisting the Northern Province, particularly with financial resources in the amount of Rs. 1.5 billion that has been made available in this year's budget. This is significant in the light of the support India has given to the TNA.

Be that as it may, it is clear that between Tamil Nadu and Colombo, New Delhi has its hands full. India under Modi will have to address the contentious issues soon. It should not become a case of Delhi running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. There will hopefully be some light soon at the end of this tunnel. ■



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# Shared ancestry, different trajectories

*India had a vital role to play in the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, and for a while, the relations between the two countries were fine. But in the last few decades, the relations have soured over border disputes and river water sharing. Be that as it may, Bangladesh is geo-strategically well-located in the new construct of Indo-Pacific Asia, and India would do well to keep that in mind, says Prof. Sanjukta Banerji Bhattacharya.*



**B**ANGLADESH was the product of two different surgical separations, both involving India in different capacities. The first was in 1947, when both

independent India and the new state of Pakistan were born, and this occurred through violent bloodshed and mass exoduses on both sides. The second was when East Pakistan separated from the rest of Pakistan, again after much violence, where India acted as a facilitator in the birth of Bangladesh, partly because of its own self interest (both security and economic), and partly because of sentimental humanitarian concerns for a people who had strong links on the Indian side of the border.

## An uneasy relationship

The new country's relations with India, therefore, have been marked by both attraction and suspicions – having the same ancestry, there is much that is common between the two countries; but the post-1947 history of India and the current state of Bangladesh have followed different trajectories, leading to diverse ideologies, national interests, economic and political outlooks, despite the commonalities in culture and background, and expected similarities in broader areas: economic, security, ecological and political.

Following the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, with considerable assistance from the Indian army, and India's recognition of Bangladesh even prior to its formal emergence, India's relations with the country could not have been better. However, after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975,

the relationship has not always been smooth; this has been partly due to upheavals in Bangladeshi politics and perceptions regarding India's role in the region. It may not be wrong to say that on the whole, when the Awami League is in power, relations between the two countries have improved.

**While India has so far showcased India's Northeast and Myanmar as the hub of its 'Look East' policy, rightfully this position should belong to Bangladesh, which is located geo-strategically to reach out to the new construct called Indo-Pacific-Asia.**

## A slew of agreements

In fact, bilateral relations progressed in 1996, when a new Awami League government signed a 30-year Ganges water sharing agreement with India in December (an earlier agreement had lapsed in 1988). A peace accord between tribal insurgents in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Bangladesh government in December 1997, also allowed many tribal refugees to return from India, thus easing relations between the two.

Further improvements in relations marked the visit of Sheikh Hasina in 2010 to India, followed by the reciprocal visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2011, and a spate of high-level official visits thereafter, including that of the then Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee (2012) and the then Power Minister, Sushil Kumar Shinde (2011). Singh signed 10 agreements/protocols/MOUs, including a Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development, and a Protocol to the Agreement concerning demarcation of the Land Boundary between India and Bangladesh. Some institutional mechanisms have also been set in motion for promoting

unobstructed relationship between the two countries, for instance, the Joint Rivers Commission, the Joint Economic Commission, the Joint Working Group on Security, the Joint Boundary Working Group, the Joint Working Group on Trade,

the Joint Group of Customs Officials etc.

The new BJP government also indicated the importance of Bangladesh in its foreign policy agenda when Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's first visit abroad was scheduled to Bangladesh. The fact that she made a special effort to meet with Khaleda Zia, the former opposition leader, and Raushan Ershad, the current one, also implies a long term commitment to the country.

### Contentious issues

However, contentious issues persist between the two countries and these can be partly blamed on geography and partly on politics. India's land border with Bangladesh as per the Ministry of Defence is 4351 kms running through five states, viz., West Bengal (2217kms), Assam (262 kms), Meghalaya (443kms), Tripura (856 kms) and Mizoram (318 kms), including nearly 781 kms of riverine border. This border is porous and there have been innumerable issues of non-documented migration, human, cattle and drug trafficking, smuggling, firing on civilians on both sides by their respective border security forces etc. Further complicating the border issue is India's inability to ratify the protocol to the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) of 1974 with Bangladesh. Under this, 161 adversely held small enclaves are to be exchanged by the two countries; 7,100 acres of land will be transferred to India and nearly 17,000 acres will go to Bangladesh.

The then Union Cabinet had in February 2013 approved a draft LBA Bill for introduction in the monsoon session of Parliament for ratification, but was unable to proceed because of opposition from the Trinamool Congress and the BJP. Another major issue is the sharing of river waters (there are 54 common rivers that traverse India and Bangladesh), especially the Ganges. The problem arose with the construction of the Farakka Barrage which Bangladesh claims restricts water supply during the lean season (January to July), and floods the country during the monsoons. The Ganga water sharing treaty of 1996 has partly resolved the issue, but a new contentious problem is the Teesta water sharing one. An attempt was made to resolve the issue in 2011, but failed primarily because of

the intransigence of the West Bengal government. India also wants a land corridor through Bangladesh which will make its Northeast easily accessible. This is important in the context of the development of the region and economic connectivity. So far Bangladesh has not conceded to India's requests.

### Improving relations is in India's interest

While these and other irritants sour India-Bangladesh relations at times, it may be noted that they have never been adverse; on the contrary, there is a lot of cooperation and generally amiable relations. This is as it should be, as India's primary interests in the future will lie more and more on its eastern flank, through Bangladesh and Myanmar, to Southeast Asia.

While India has so far showcased India's Northeast and Myanmar as the hub of its 'Look East' policy, rightfully this position should belong to Bangladesh, which is located geo-strategically to reach out to the new construct called 'Indo-Pacific Asia'. Further, in the context of rising Islamic militancy and the existence of outfits like Harkat-al-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), Jamaat-e-Islami, Hefajat-e-Islam, Jagrata Muslim Janata, and HUJI-B in Bangladesh, whose links to Al Qaeda are well known and whose export of militancy to India is increasingly evident, it is in India's interests to improve security and other relations with the country.

India is increasingly aware of Bangladesh's importance to India. Swaraj's recent visit was an extraordinary attempt to reach out to the people of Bangladesh using diplomacy, and an unprecedented understanding of grievances and means to assuage them. As she told a gathering of the BIIS (Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies), which represents a large part of Bangladesh's

civil society, "Our desire is that India and Bangladesh should flourish together as two equal partners. We share not just our past but also our future". ■



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## Festival

*The Thiksay Gustor is a two-day festival that takes place in Ladakh. It is one of the many monastic festivals that take place in Ladakh at the different monasteries of Spituk, Thiksay and Karsha Zanskar. The festival is held on the 17th, 18th and 19th day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month of Tibetan lunar calendar. The assassination of the Tibetan apostate King Lang Darma by a Buddhist monk in the mid 9<sup>th</sup> century is enacted during this festival. In some of the monasteries, there is an effigy symbolising the stronger evil forces, which is burnt. After the two-day celebrations, there is a ritualistic dispersal of the tormas or the sacrificial cake. This is supposed to symbolise the destruction of all forms of evil.*

# Hope on the horizon

*When Maldives briefly became a contentious neighbour of India, it spelled trouble as India has many security concerns in the Indian Ocean region. But now, efforts are on to deepen the economic and security ties, and the new government in India is sending out all the right signals, say Prof. Nalini Kant Jha and Gaurav Kumar Jha.*



**E**VEN before becoming the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi had hinted that his foreign policy will actively focus on improving ties with India's immediate neighbours, which is being termed as "neighbourhood first" policy in the media. He started well by inviting all heads of state/government of South Asian countries for the inauguration of his government. On his second day in office, he held bilateral talks with each individually, which was dubbed as a "mini SAARC summit" by the media. Later, during a launch event at ISRO, he asked Indian scientists to endeavour to develop a dedicated SAARC satellite to share the fruits of technology with people across South Asia, to complement the currently operating 'Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme' in the region. Needless to add, this "neighbourhood first" policy guides the Modi Government's policy towards Maldives as well. However, in order to understand India's current relations with Maldives, a brief background on its ties with that country, is in order.

## The backdrop

Mohamed Nasheed becoming the first President of Maldives under the multi-party format was hailed as "the heralding a new era of democracy and progressive politics." This led to popular expectation about Maldives's successful march towards a democratic transition in the country, for which they have been struggling for years. These expectations were, however, dashed to the ground just three years after the new Constitution came into existence. In a surprising move, Nasheed resigned on 7 February 2012, leading to a spell of political uncertainty and turmoil in Maldives. Nasheed claimed that he was threatened with a "bloodbath" if he refused to step down. However, Mohamad Waheed Hassan Manik, who took over as President, insisted that it was "not a coup." The political turmoil reached an alarming point and received the attention of the world community when Nasheed had to seek refuge in the Indian Embassy in Male to escape an arrest warrant.

## India's concerns

Today, Maldives has emerged as one of the most important neighbours of India in geo-strategic and economic terms. For, Maldives is located south of India's Lakshadweep Islands in the Indian Ocean, with a 820 km long and 120 km wide spread in the Indian Ocean.

As the state of Kerala and the union territory of Lakshadweep are in close proximity to the Maldivian islands, there are always Indian concerns about the possible use of Maldives' territory against it. These concerns assume significance in light of the fact that the November 2008 cross-border terrorist attack in Mumbai was made possible from across the sea. There are already reports that Pakistan's notorious terrorist outfit, Lashkar-e-Toiba has been seeking a foothold in the Maldives by exploiting the Islamic connection.

Maldives also occupies a special place in India's foreign policy because of special focus on this region by the US under its Asia policy on the one hand, and increasing cases of piracy in the Indian Ocean near Somalia and Strait of Malacca, on the other. This has made Maldives a very strategic country to establish Indian naval bases for enhanced security in the Indian Ocean. Finally, India is also wary about the rapidly increasing Chinese influence in the Maldives, both militarily and diplomatically.

## Deepening of defence, economic ties

It is in this context that India had taken several initiatives to deepen its defence ties with Maldives. A high-powered delegation from India visited Maldives on 30 June, 2009, which discussed the establishment of an Air wing of the Maldives National Defence Forces (MNDF). Subsequently, the Indian Defence Minister, A. K. Antony, visited Maldives from 20 to 22 August 2009, and announced enhancing the scope of the ongoing joint MNDF Marines, Army and Coast Guard exercises. India agreed to set up 26 radar stations across 26 atolls of the Maldives.

India's economic relations with Maldives have also improved a lot in the last few years. For instance, in 2009, Maldives faced a severe foreign exchange crisis, and the

Maldivian Monetary Authority (MMA) issued treasury bonds denominated in US dollars for the first time in December 2009. The State Bank of India subscribed the entire lot of US \$100 million to help Maldives recover from the shortage of currency. In 2009 -10, the official figure for bilateral trade stood at ₹ 395.57 crores and heavily skewed in favour of India.

Earlier, in November 2009, Suzlon Energy of India signed an MoU to set up a 25 MW wind farm at an investment of US\$ 40 million in the Southern Province of Maldives, and Shri Educare of Delhi signed an MoU to take over the management of Ghiyassudin School, the first such initiative under the privatisation policy of the Government of Maldives. Other proposals in the fields of education, renewable energy, health and waste management are also under active consideration. Nasheed's party, the MDP, says India's commercial investment rose dramatically from \$60 million (₹ 300 crore) before 2008, to almost \$900 million (₹ 4,500 crore) in 2011.

### Relations turn acrimonious

The demise of the elected government under Nasheed derailed India-Maldives ties. The new government under Waheed was a coalition of parties, who were critical of Nasheed's pro-India stance, and had also been vocally opposed on nationalistic grounds to Indian company GMR's investment in the Male International airport. It has now come to light that Waheed allowed Chinese tour operators to buy into 18 resorts in the Maldivian atoll, which has jolted India. Not surprisingly, when India flew its then Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai to help resolve the internal political crisis, he failed to get any lasting assurance from the opposing parties on the way forward. On the contrary, members of the Maldivian ruling coalition publicly spoke against Indian "interference" in the country's matters.

Relations between India and Maldives became very acrimonious when Waheed canceled the contract signed with GMR. Hence, when Waheed wanted to visit India, New Delhi sent a strong signal to Maldives that India is not willing to engage with its current leadership after the GMR controversy, and the Government turned down an official request from the Maldivian foreign minister to visit India.

Fortunately, however, both the countries realised the need for arresting the decline in the ties. Hence, they took certain steps towards reinstating the trust and confidence that the relationship enjoyed in the past. For instance, during the visit of Maldives' Defence Minister to India, both India and Maldives agreed to enhance their defence cooperation and continue to work together to tackle regional security concerns. Subsequently, the Maldives President who visited India, tried to iron out the differences by saying that his government would

talk to any investor including GMR. In fact, he blamed President Mohamed Nasheed for inking a faulty contract with GMR, which resulted in its termination.

### Conclusion

In view of Maldives's strategic location and internal dynamics, India's chief concern is to ensure peace, security and continuation of the democratic process in Maldives, so that its strategic and economic interest can be protected. At the same time, India should also give a clear signal to Maldivian leaders that India can intervene, if the domestic turmoil in the country creates security concerns for India. New Delhi should also try to get the international community on its side on the issue. As the hardliners are vehemently trying to bring Maldives close to China, it is very important for India to see that this does not transpire.

It is heartening to note that while the new Maldivian President, Abdulla Yameen's Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) formed part of Waheed's national unity government, since taking office in November 2013, he has made the strengthening of Maldivian-Indian ties a priority. In January 2014, Yameen met the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in India – his first official trip out of Maldives following his inauguration. The President again visited New Delhi to attend the inauguration ceremony of the new Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During his meeting with Modi, President Yameen categorically accepted India's leadership role in the international arena. Modi, on his part, highlighted in particular the close relations between the two countries under President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's leadership, and expressed his confidence that it could be "restored" in the future. Modi has assured that India would facilitate higher education for Maldivian students, as well as fully cooperate with initiatives to promote Maldives tourism in India, particularly in regions like Kerala and Gujarat. ■



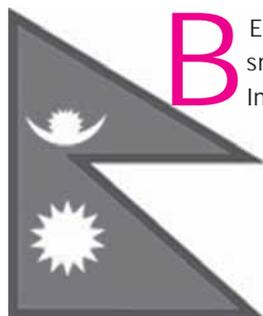
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# From Somnath to Pashupatinath

*India and Nepal may be seen as ‘unequal neighbours’, but the religious and cultural links between the two are very strong. Nepal declaring itself a ‘secular nation’ and the increased Christian missionary activity in Nepal in the name of development, have raised many hackles in India. Prime Minister Modi has sought to reverse this trend by signing trade agreements and focusing on his own personal journey to Pashupatinath, writes Dr. Rajesh S. Kharat.*



**B**EING a landlocked and small state, Nepal's relations with India have always been characterised as relations between 'unequal neighbours'. In fact, both geo-strategic considerations and the location of Nepal have decided Nepal's destiny. It is sandwiched between two powerful neighbours — India and China, who tend to be hostile towards each other. As far as Nepal is concerned, India has always had an edge over China, due to its geographical proximity and more important—historical legacy and cultural affinity with Nepal.

## Roadblocks in Indo-Nepal ties

Unfortunately, the last three decades of India-Nepal relations have not been smooth due to a number of factors—in particular, in 1988–89, when the Indian government declared an 'economic blockade' against Nepal and compelled it to accept India's terms and conditions. As a result, the Nepalese perception towards India became somewhat inimical, despite the fact that it is dependent upon India for its access to the world. In addition to this, India's indirect support and sympathy to the Maoist Movement in Nepal further strained the relationship between the two. Even during bilateral dialogues or negotiations, when the Nepalese side was represented by the Head of the Government or the Head of the State, the Indian side was always represented either by the Indian diplomats or the secretaries of respective ministries. This gave the impression of not only India's diplomatic apathy towards Nepal, but also the undermining of the political authorities in Nepal. Hence, Nepal contested India's role in its political process.

## 'Hindutva' as a common plank

The election of Nepal in 2013 rejected the radical politics of the Maoists, and set the new political mood for democracy. It also changed the attitude of Nepalese political leaders towards India. As a result, there were a series of meetings, deliberations, seminars and workshops conducted and organised between the elected representatives of Nepal and the right-wing cultural organisations, interest groups and political parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party, which was then the opposition party in the Indian Parliament. The main objective of this 'Bharat-Nepal Sahyog Manch' (India-Nepal Cooperation Forum), was to improve the relationship between the two neighbours and cement a further friendship based on common religion and culture. Primarily, an ideology of 'Hindutva' became a basis between the two nations. Therefore, the Nepalese were anxious to know the results of the Indian elections and Narendra Modi's Prime Ministership. This anxiety could be seen in light of the altering of Nepal's character from a Theocratic to Secular state, which de-recognised Hinduism as the official religion of the state.

The decision of declaring Nepal as a secular state was a big blow to Nepal's unique identity as it was the only Hindu state in the world. But it was not a sudden decision. During the *Jan Andolan II*, the Maoists had started influencing the youth who had been victims of the Hindu-dominated society and belonged to either *janjatis* or lower strata of the Hindu society. So when Maoists came to power, it was inevitable that they declared Nepal as a 'Secular' state.

## Secular v/s Hindu nation

With the new character of a secular state, many non-state actors particularly the international funding agencies and donor countries became active in propagating Christianity while providing economic assistance to improve socio-economic conditions, free education, medical facilities and

resources for livelihood. As a result, a majority of *janjatis* and *dalits* embraced Christianity with the help of these international and local NGOs (non-governmental organisations) whose presence in Nepal was just to protect human rights. In other words, in the name of human rights many non-state actors became allegedly involved in the conversion programmes and the Nepalese government could not do much to prevent this, as many departments and ministries were dependent upon the funds given by these INGOs.

The Nepalese government found itself in a pincer-like situation and possibly expected Indian assistance in this regard. But the secular leadership in India did not pay any heed to this call. Modi's candidature for the Indian Prime Ministership perhaps raised hopes of Nepalese statesmen and people who have seen in him a Hindu saviour. As a result, Nepal as a nation welcomed Modi and congratulated him by putting up his photographs and posters all over Nepal. Particularly, political parties and organisations, whose ideologies are based on right-wing Hinduism, came openly in support of Modi and organised processions and appealed to the newly elected Members of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal to reverse the earlier decision of a secular state, and once again declare Nepal a Hindu state.

### Modi's visit and his message

Knowing the fact about Nepal's enthusiasm about BJP's victory and India's thousands of years of religious and cultural association with Nepal, it was expected that Modi's first official foreign visit would be Nepal. But being a shrewd statesman, Modi chose Bhutan over Nepal. It has served many purposes. Firstly, being the leader of a political party which has a Hindutva ideology, and more so being a Prime Minister, his visit to Nepal would have been criticised by all his opponents inside and outside of the country. With this, he avoided the giving of any wrong message to other neighbouring states of the region. Secondly, choosing Bhutan would help India to remove the ill-feelings which Bhutan had developed against India due to an abrupt withdrawal of the various subsidies during its second parliamentary elections in July 2013. Thirdly, the visit to Bhutan indirectly helped India to inculcate confidence among the other neighbouring states that small neighbours also matter to India.

Modi used Hinduism as an instrument of cultural diplomacy vis-à-vis Nepal. Visiting the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu was not a mere gesture, but it was a very calculative move, which had a different meaning altogether. One can see from Modi's speech in the Parliament of Nepal,

**Modi used Hinduism as an instrument of cultural diplomacy vis-à-vis Nepal. Visiting the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu was not a mere gesture, but it was a very calculative move, which had a different meaning altogether.**

that he did not miss any opportunity to elaborate on India–Nepal relations, which are basically guided by Hindu religion. He established a personal link to this cultural relationship while mentioning that he belongs to Somnath (Gujarat) and reached Pashupatinath (Kathmandu) via Kashi Vishwanath (Varanasi) for the attainment of spiritual bliss! In his deliberations, he spoke often about the Hindu religious texts and scriptures— the Rigveda, the Vedas and the Upanishads. He cited many Hindu mythological references to prove his point of cultural affinity between India and Nepal. He implied that India will always respect Nepal's religious sentiments and its cultural ethos, while

respecting its independent political entity, and India will do its best to support Nepal's economic development. In other words, while using cultural diplomacy, Modi seemed to send a strong message to the INGOs and funding agencies, which are converting the Nepalese people to Christianity in the name of human rights and development assistance. At the political level, Modi's visit should be seen as containing the Chinese influence in Nepal and restricting Nepal from further leaning towards China.

### Modi government also talked trade

On the contentious issue of revision of the 1950 Treaty between India and Nepal, the Modi government took a leap forward from the earlier government. India proposed an

Information and Technology connectivity between the two countries. Concessional loans worth \$ 1 billion to build power plants have been promised to Nepal. India also gave a grant of NRs 69 million to Nepal to supply iodised salt to control iodine deficiency diseases in Nepal. In addition to this, keeping in mind Nepal's rich water resources, both the countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding amending the ToR (Terms of References) on the Pancheshwar Multiple Project, to carry forward the work on the Pancheshwar Development Authority in Nepal. Another agreement was signed on cooperation between Nepal Television and Doordarshan, the

state-owned television stations of both the countries. It will help both India and Nepal to establish the right perceptions and create a conducive atmosphere for healthy relations. ■



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KNOW INDIA BETTER

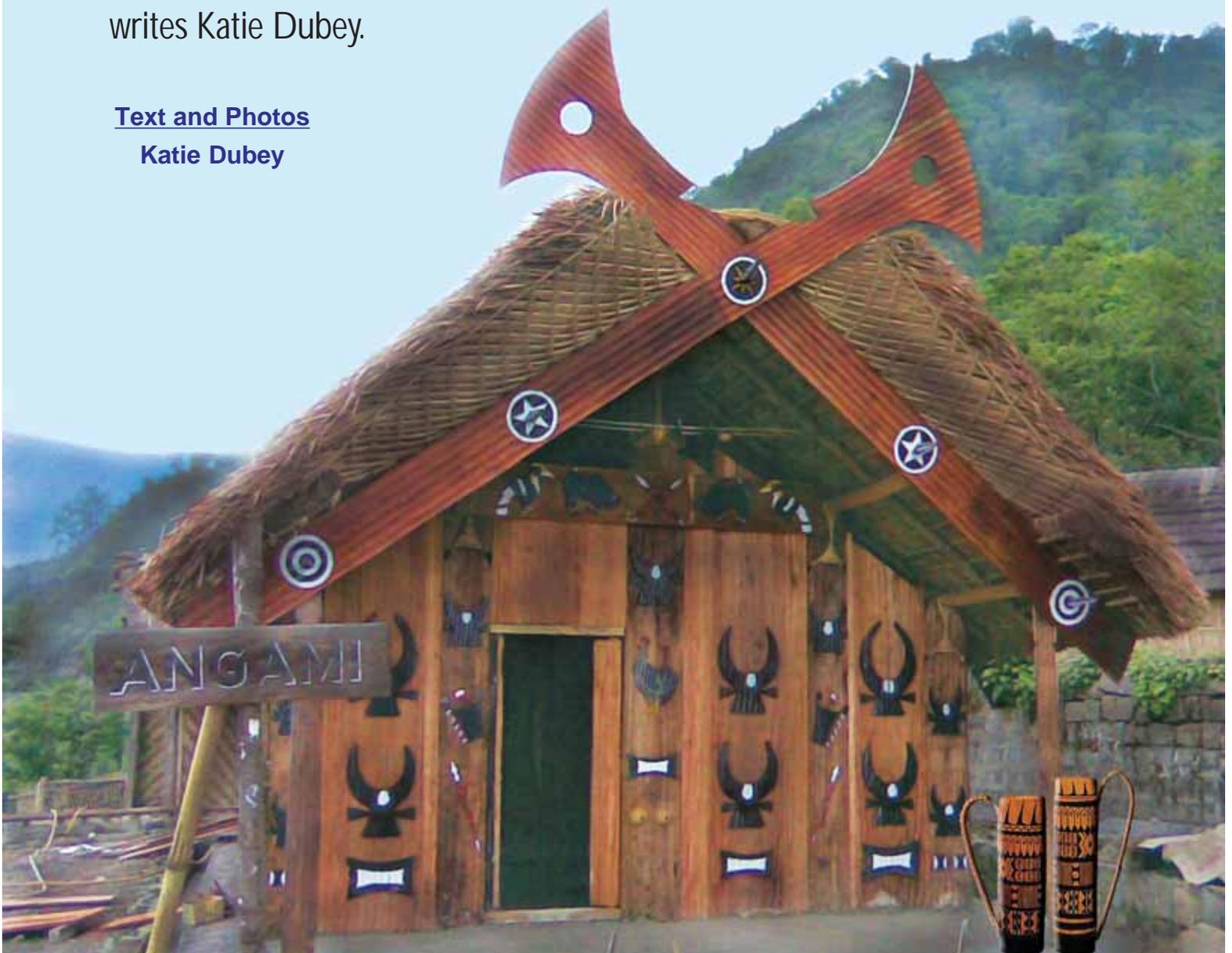
# A taste of NAGALAND



The enchanting land of the Nagas was untouched by the outside world till the arrival of the British, and the Christian missionaries. The repelled Japanese invasion of Kohima during World War II further altered the Naga psyche. While the physical landscape remains beautifully stark, the Naga society is experiencing robust winds of change. They are definitely not isolated anymore, writes Katie Dubey.

Text and Photos

Katie Dubey



ON an evening not long ago, I was dispassionately watching an advertisement for Kaun Banega Corepati, the popular quiz programme. On the set was a young girl from the Northeast, sitting across the show's host, Amitabh Bachchan. His question to her was: 'Kohima belongs to which country?' She looked at him and said she would like to use a lifeline. "Which one?" asked the host. "Audience poll", replied the young woman. The scene then shifted to a group of people watching the programme on television, who sniggered at this, then shifted back to the set of KBC. Audience poll results come through and it unanimously said 'India'. Amitabh Bachchan looked at the girl kindly and said, '*Sat pratishad vote India ko mile hain. Yeh to sabhi jaante hai ki Kohima India mein hai.*' (A hundred percent votes have said Kohima belongs to India and everyone knows this). The girl looked him straight in the eye and asked, '*Jaante hain, par maante kitne hain?*' (Everyone knows it, but do they accept it?)

Her words made my hair stand on end. Suddenly, I was re-living the trip I had taken to Nagaland, with much trepidation. Nagaland is rife with insurgency and was considered an unsafe destination, as if it is in another hostile land. In spite of severe dissuasion, we took off for Assam and then to Nagaland.

### An unconventional welcome

We flew to Assam and from Dibrugarh, Air India took us on a short haul flight to Dimapur at the base of the Naga hills. Dimapur today is an industrial town, but in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was the glorious capital of the Kachari kings. The only remains of this vibrant period are the magnificent, megalithic, phallic ruins strewn around the city.



**An isolated mountain residence just off the road. The homes are placed in shallow valleys just below the road**



**The multi-purpose tea-house along the wayside**

The tiny airport was overly populated with black clad, rifle-toting security, but no sense of threat prevailed. Low air-traffic speeded up luggage retrieval and soon we were out on the street, where we encountered more security; we were courteously frisked, papers checked and then escorted to our pre-arranged taxi. It was 2 pm. The sun overhead was bright and hot as we stepped into the waiting cab and began our journey of 74 kms into the hills, headed for the capital city of Nagaland – Kohima.

The road narrowed as we moved out of town, but was smooth. Jungle unfolded on both sides and dwellings were scant, but where they appeared, there were large piles of logged wood stacked by the roadside. The forests were dark green and tinged with brown, awaiting the monsoon, and the hillside was conspicuous by the absence of flowers of any type at all. Not even roadside flowering weeds were visible! As we began to ascend the mountains, the temperature began to drop. The scenery got monotonous, and as there was a total absence of traffic or people, my attention began to wander to all that I had read and heard.

### The mythological origins

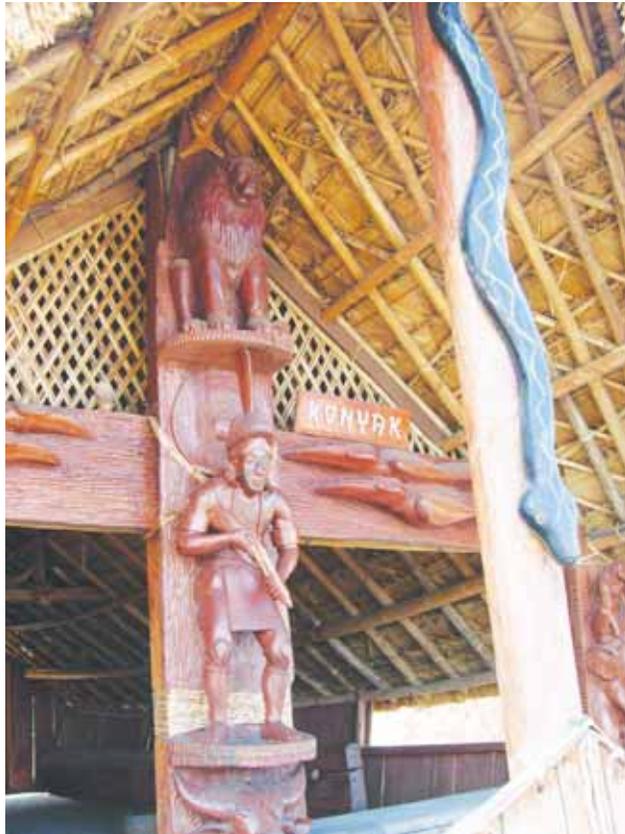
'Nag' connotes the world of snakes. In Hinduism and Buddhism, Nagas are semi-divine beings, half human and half serpent, considered to be a strong and handsome race, but also potentially dangerous. They are considered capable of assuming a human, serpent, or half-human and half-serpent form, and are regarded as being superior to humans in several ways.

Mythology relates that the Nagas are the children of Kadru, the granddaughter of the Creator, Brahma, and her husband, Kasyapa. They lived on earth, but multiplied so rapidly that Brahma, fearing for earth, relegated them to the subterranean world. So, they moved beneath the waters and built magnificent jeweled palaces on the bottom of rivers, lakes and seas. Legend has it that their underground realm is *patala* and they are the guardians of treasure troves. The females or *naginis*, are serpent princesses of striking beauty and allure. Dynasties of Manipur, a neighbouring state of Nagaland, claim origin in the union of a human being and a *nagini* and the beauty of the women certainly bear out the legend.

Our epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have references of contact between the Indo-Aryans and people of the Northeast. In ancient Sanskrit literature there is mention of a golden skinned people referred to as *Kiritas*, who are also mentioned in the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda*, clearly indicating that the Mongoloids were present in this area from ancient times.

### The mystery of the Naga past

Naga history is a mystery. No written historical records of their origin or their route of migration to their present location exists. The belief is that the majority of the Nagas migrated



**The hut of the Konyak, a tribe which has a strong association with snakes, as can be seen with the snake slithering along the pole**



**A Naga home**

from the South-East through the corridor of the Indo-Myanmar border to the Naga Hills. Difficult mountainous terrain, clothed with immense virgin forests, became the haven of several isolated tribes of Indo-Mongol or Myanmarese origins.

Naga scholar Dr. Horam has traced the origin of the Nagas to the Southern seas. He writes: "There can be little doubt that at one time the Nagas must have wandered about before they found their permanent abode; from their myths and legends one gathers that there is a dim relationship with the natives of Borneo in that the two have a common traditional way of head hunting; with the Indonesians, as both use the loin loom for weaving cloth. The embroidery on the Naga clothes resembled the kind done on Indonesian clothes".

He continues: "The hypothesis that the Nagas must have come from the seacoast or some islands is strengthened by the ornaments still being used today in many Naga villages. Left undisturbed for such a long time, they have retained the culture of the most ancient times till today. Their fondness of cowrie shells as decoration on clothes and the use of conch shells as precious ornaments and the fact that the Nagas have a way of life very similar to that of those living in the remote parts of Borneo, Sarawak, Indonesia and Malaysia are indicative of their original abode by the sea."

Folklore tells of the Nagas crossing the Indo-Myanmar border



**The World War II cemetery in Kohima**

to their present location in the Naga Hills. According to folklore, Poumai Naga was an old man who led the Nagas from Myanmar to Shajouba, a village near Makhel, a designated dispersal site. The story goes that when all the tribes had gathered together, Pou thrust his walking stick into the ground and left. The stick took root and soon grew into a wild pear tree that thrives to date in the village of Shajouba, giving veracity to the story. The Nagas consider this wild pear sacred and no one dares to cut any branches from it. If branches shed during a storm, it is seen an ill omen and all 16 tribes propitiate the tree by not working their fields for a day. Not even a twig can be taken from the tree - such is the awe in which it is held.

When the pear grew, the Nagas dispersed to various locations in the hills and each tribe named itself after its forefather; the *Poumai* is named after *Pou* and *Mao* after *Meo*, thus different names like *Sema*, *Lotha*, *Angami*, *Ao*, *Tangkhul* and others came into existence and their amalgamation with the local population is perhaps the reason for the numerous dialects generated, each so distinctive that those of another village cannot comprehend it.

### **The capital city - Kohima**

"With 5,000 years of history behind us, it is almost impossible not to have legend put some brush strokes of colour

into our lives", I ruminated, as we sped along the mountain road. Some wayside teahouses began to appear at long intervals; residences by the wayside with a room abutting the road. Members of the family take turns at manning it. Tea is available along with the ubiquitous plastic wrapped snacks!

After a three hour drive, when we wound around the mountain and bill boards appeared, I knew we had entered Kohima. It was 5 pm. As we alighted from the car at the entrance to the hotel, I shivered in the frigid evening air. Dimapur was hot when we landed and lulled us into thinking that Kohima would be just pleasantly nippy, but it was biting cold, which gave us the impetus to get through the door fast, into the warmth of the interior. Our guide now became our translator, as we stood at the counter, clueless about the language. Although some English is spoken, it is broken and halting, making communication somewhat difficult. Between the receptionist, the guide and us, we managed to complete the formalities of checking in and were escorted to our second floor rooms via the staircase. I was delighted to be in a room with a terrace adjoining it and beautiful, flowering potted plants bordering the walls of the terrace. Standing on the terrace in the bracing cold air, I looked out onto the market and the town beyond. The police headquarters stood out with the flag full mast towering over the market below!



**Set on the hill, in the midst of nature, as all Naga settlements generally are, each hut is unique to its tribe**

Having freshened up with tea and *pakodas*, we went downstairs to take a walk in the town. It was 5.30 pm but the sky was gray and tending to black. The town seemed to be engulfed in silence. Our driver, who was in deep in conversation with the shop keeper of the adjoining shop, shot to his feet, like he had seen ghosts! "Going out?" he queried. "Yes", my husband replied. "We would like to take a turn in the town". I thought our driver would have a breakdown. We shot each other a bewildered look. "No" he reiterated more forcefully. "All closed now. We go tomorrow", and barred the way. Left with no choice, we turned and retraced our steps indoors. Back in our room we opened wide the bay window to the terrace and let in the frigid air. Then we took our chairs out on the terrace, set up the heater behind our backs and in silent companionship watched the sky turn to indigo. Stars began to wink and lights to blink in the market below. A scene etched in memory. It was the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, Valentine's day, and an evening of perfect celebration!

### Short summers, long, cold winters

Largely mountainous, Nagaland stretches from southwest to northeast, parallel to the immense valley of the Brahmaputra, the majestic river of Assam. On the other side, Nagaland's border is defined by the high Himalayas. Mount Saramati is the highest peak of Nagaland at 12,602 feet, in the Twensang district. This is where the Naga Hills merge with the Patkai Range, very close to the border with Myanmar.

Mountainous terrain promotes a cool climate. Summer is short in Nagaland and the temperature oscillates between 16 degrees and 31 degrees celsius. Torrential monsoon rains follow the summer and continue practically nonstop from June to September, recording an annual average rainfall from 2000mm-2500mm. Winter follows immediately on the heels of the rains



**A Lotha Chumpau hut, with an unusual roof bearing a broom like decoration and hangings on the roof. The hangings bear a Chinese touch probably reminiscent of their origins**

and temperatures drop further to as low as four degrees celsius. Bitterly cold and dry weather strike parts of the state and the higher altitudes are enveloped in snow.

A range of altitudes and diverse climatic conditions have fostered rich vegetative growth. Evergreen tropical and subtropical forests occupy 20 percent of the state's total area of 6,410 square miles. Rare species of trees and plants are found in the forests and a variety of endangered species of animals and birds also make the forest regions of Nagaland their home. The Amur Falcon is one such rare bird that migrates through Nagaland. It has one of the longest migration routes among all birds, at 22,000 kms a year from eastern Asia to southern Africa and back. In 2012, wild-lifers unearthed the shocking story of the massacre of tens of thousands of these migratory birds in Nagaland.

Isolated over the centuries, the Naga tribes occupied specific mountain ranges with their settlements on the hilltops, followed animism as a religion and scoured the forest as resource



**Interior of a Naga hut with the fireplace occupying the centre spot and the all the meats ranged around it**



**Young warriors of the Phoem tribe dressed in traditional ceremonial attire outside the Phoem hut. The feathers in their head dress are those of the Hornbill, the state bird of Nagaland**

material for all their needs. They fought continuously amongst themselves and resorted to head hunting, until the British arrived.

### The arrival of the British

The British came into contact with the Nagas in 1832 when Captain Jenkins and Pamberton, along with 700 soldiers and 800 porters carrying their baggage and provisions, marched across the Naga Hills in an attempt to find a route from Manipur to Assam, and camped there. The Nagas immediately commenced raiding the British troops in different villages, fighting them continuously until 1880 when the British finally overpowered the Nagas, after which they dominated several parts of the Naga Hills, but the Konyak tribe continued to fight them.

The British followed a policy of “least interference” in the internal affairs of the Nagas, thus, the traditional life pattern of the Naga tribes remained largely unchanged except for some good fallout – the inter-tribal warfare and head-hunting diminished due to British intervention. In the wake of the troops followed the Christian missionaries, and conversions to Christianity followed rapidly.

### The Japanese invasion and the battle at the tennis court

When we left our room and moved out on to the street,

both our guide and driver caught up with us. They had the day planned and we were driven straight to the World War II cemetery that occupies centre stage in the city. It was a poignant moment when we entered this sprawling cemetery

that occupies a hill, and gazed at the gravestones of all the young men who had fought the Japanese invasion in 1944.

We walked solemnly past the rows of headstones – a total of 1,421 – at each terraced level reading the inscriptions and finally climbed to the very top where a cross has been erected and a plaque mounted in an alcove that reads, ‘Here around the tennis court of the Deputy Commissioner lie the men who fought in the battle of Kohima in which they and their comrades finally halted the invasion of India by the forces of Japan in April 1944’. Lord Earl Mountbatten called this “one of the greatest battles in history...one of naked, unparalleled heroism”.

A moment of truth; cost of freedom is extremely high and we owe a debt to those who paid this price. Pensively I sat by the cross, watching the beautifully laid out and well maintained flowerbeds between the rows of gravestones, far removed from the city, yet in the heart of it.

Nagaland came to the fore during World War II, when India was forced to give troops to the British for their war effort

**Nagaland came to the fore during World War II, when India was forced to give troops to the British for their war effort much against its own inclination.**



**The entrance to the State World War II museum at the base of the Naga heritage complex**

much against its own inclination. Kohima, about 30 miles from the border of Burma, had to be taken by the Japanese if their 1944 'U Go' campaign to capture Delhi was to succeed.

On 15<sup>th</sup> March, a Japanese division attacked Kohima. They moved swiftly on the city, having reconnoitred the whole area two weeks before the attack. and their work "must rank as one of the most brilliant feats of reconnaissance in the history of war." British forces in Kohima remained unaware of the advance and learned of it only on 18<sup>th</sup> March, from fleeing refugees.

The dramatic battle that was to change the tide of the war was fought on the tennis court of the Deputy Commissioner Charles Pawsey's bungalow, from the 4<sup>th</sup> of April to 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1944. By 5<sup>th</sup> April, the British had been forced back onto the Kohima ridge by the speedily advancing Japanese forces. The ridge consisted of Garrison Hill, Jail Hill, Detail Issue Hill and the Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow, that had now become the main line of defence and was held by the 4<sup>th</sup> Royal West Kents along with troops from the Assam Rifles and the Assam regiment. Their supply lines cut off, only air drop of food was possible of which a lot fell on the Japanese side.

The Japanese launched a series of attacks into the north-east region of Kohima's defences. By 9<sup>th</sup> April, the British and Indian troops were forced out of the Deputy Commissioner's

bungalow to the far end of the tennis court. They came under increasingly heavy artillery and mortar fire and had to repel frequent infantry assaults. It was a scene of some of the hardest, closest and grimmest fighting, with grenades being hurled across the tennis court at point-blank range. On 15<sup>th</sup> April, British troops on Kohima ridge heard that the British 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was attacking along the Dimapur-Kohima road and had broken through Japanese road blocks.

**Nagas are reputed to eat anything that moves, so wood worms or *kellu*, hornet grubs, grasshoppers, fermented fish and pork and even dog meat is the local fare, cooked with a very hot chilli paste.**

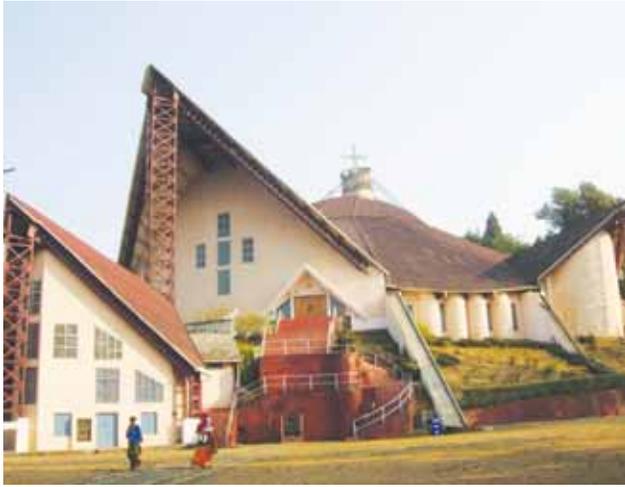
### **The Naga Heritage Complex and War Museum**

After the War Cemetery, we were driven to the Naga Heritage Complex at Kisama, about 12 kms out of Kohima.

Kisama is derived from the names of two villages, Ki(gwema) and (Phe)sama. The suffix 'Ma' denotes village. The Naga Heritage complex stands on the land of these two tribes. Outside the cluster of the city, situated on an isolated hill in pristine beauty, it has been created to sustain the distinct identity of dialects,

customs and traditions of all the ethnic tribes of Nagaland, showcase it to the outside world, and preserve it for their own, in a rapidly changing scenario.

It has the traditional houses of all 16 tribes and the Morung, an all male dormitory, each with its authentic design and indigenous architecture. The now popular Hornbill festival is



**The highly unusual Cathedral of 'Mary the help of the Christians' in Kohima, combining the architecture of the traditional church and the Naga hut**

held here each year and serves to bring all the tribes together in a single arena.

We walked around the complex in leisurely fashion, enjoying the natural surroundings, taking pictures and absorbing the information the guide imparted, explaining all the intricacies of the house design and the symbols that decorated them. Each one was ingeniously built and decorated. They were set well apart with a surrounding compound wall and the artefacts of their daily life contained within. Several huts showcased the living conditions of the Nagas; a central room with a blazing fire and cured meats hanging on hooks. All parts of the animal were hung on hooks above the fire and would be eaten bit by bit through the freezing winter days, when hunting and fresh meat was not possible. The sight was fascinating. When we were through with the houses we walked down the slope to the War Museum.



**Woodworms for sale. As one lot is sold, another is obtained from nearby trees**



**Interior of the Cathedral at Kohima**

The World War II has left an indelible mark on Kohima, and this may be the reason that most of the young men opt for military service in Nagaland. At the base of the Heritage Village complex is the newly opened War Museum. A general and his entourage were visiting the museum with the curator in close attendance and attention and we were totally neglected by the staff! Nagas are generally aloof from visitors but courteous when spoken to. The general went around and reminisced about the battle to those around him, recounting what position he, along with his men had held during the battle. Later, the Phoem tribe, from which his men were probably drawn, were to perform for him at the Phoem hut. We were very fortunate to see the tribe, dressed in their ceremonial best, await their general.

### **A large Cathedral and the tallest wooden cross**

As we left the Heritage complex, morning had merged into



**A woman shops with her baby on her back, in a Kohima market**



**Jackets made of Naga motifs. Each design represents a different tribe**

afternoon. We headed back into town and went on to Aradura hill, where the largest Cathedral of northeast India is located. It was the most unusual edifice I have ever seen blending the traditional with the indigenous. It houses a cross 16 feet high, the largest wooden cross in the country and probably the tallest in all of Asia.

The Cathedral owes its existence to Lieutenant Reverend Abraham Alnagimtathil, the first bishop of Nagaland, who envisioned a place for prayer in peace and solitude. Work began on the building in 1986 with a large part of the finance coming from the Japanese, who lost thousands in the battle at Kohima. The church of 'Mary Help of the Christians' was consecrated in 1991.

### All about Naga shawls, squirmy worms and hot chilli paste

Next morning, we meandered through the typically narrow hill streets with shops lining them. I was keen on buying Naga



**Souvenir shop at ToupHEMA Tourist village**



**Naga jewellery and artifacts available in shops around town**

scarves and shawls with their fascinating colours and patterns and was told that each particular colour combination and pattern is a tribal stamp. Colours are different for men and women. "Take what you like", says a person next to me, "it will make no difference to you, but for us they are a stamp of our identity". The jewellery of the Nagas is beads strung in ways that mark their tribal distinctions.

Shopping over, we moved on and came upon a vibrant market, sprawling by the side of the road and dropping down to lower levels on the hill slopes, negotiated by roughly cut stairs. The base level is the heart of the market, with highly interesting fare like woodworms squirming in a plastic basin. "Very tasty, try", says the vendor, "How much?" I ask. I don't know at that point, what was more horrifying for me, the idea of paying ` 1,000 for a few squiggles in motion or eating them! But I happily photographed them. The market was a riot of colours with loads of vegetables that one does not see in the plains.



**Tourist cottages at the ToupHEMA Tourist village with traditional outer facade**



A panel on the outer wall of the State Museum showing traditional forest life

Nagas are reputed to eat anything that moves, so wood worms or *kellu*, hornet grubs, grasshoppers, fermented fish and pork and even dog meat is the local fare, cooked with a very hot chilli paste. Meats and fish are fermented or smoked over the home fire to preserve them, and during the harsh winters small bits are cut and cooked with the King chilli, reputed to be the hottest chilli in the world. Fortunately, hotels will also serve chicken, pork or beef. The closest I got to Naga food was to have the Tenga chicken, which was a watery chilli curry with bamboo shoots and pieces of chicken in it.

Some other interesting places to visit are the state museum, provided there is electricity when you get there, and the Touphema Tourist village, about 41 kilometers from Kohima. Located on a hillock, with a valley view, this complex offers a

taste of the Naga lifestyle. The village has a cluster of theme based huts with modern interiors, while the outer façade is authentically traditional.

It is very clear that it is difficult to halt the wave of change. Isolated and left to themselves the Nagas lived their ancient lifestyle for centuries. Exposed to modernity, they are helpless against its onslaught, now sweeping away an ancient way of life that had endured over the centuries. ■



The writer is the author of three coffee-table books and writes for various newspapers and magazines on nature and environment.

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## KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR



Bhutan Entry at Phuentsholing

# The Last Shangri-La

Bhutan is India's most peaceful, and perhaps, least ambitious neighbour. Its emphasis on preserving biodiversity, protecting natural resources, maintaining cultural identity, and discouraging unbridled tourism, make it very unique. This small Himalayan Kingdom, which counts its wealth in happiness, holds many lessons for India. There is a certain magic in the air in Bhutan, a lilting melody that refuses to fade long after you have come away, marvels **Akul Tripathi**.

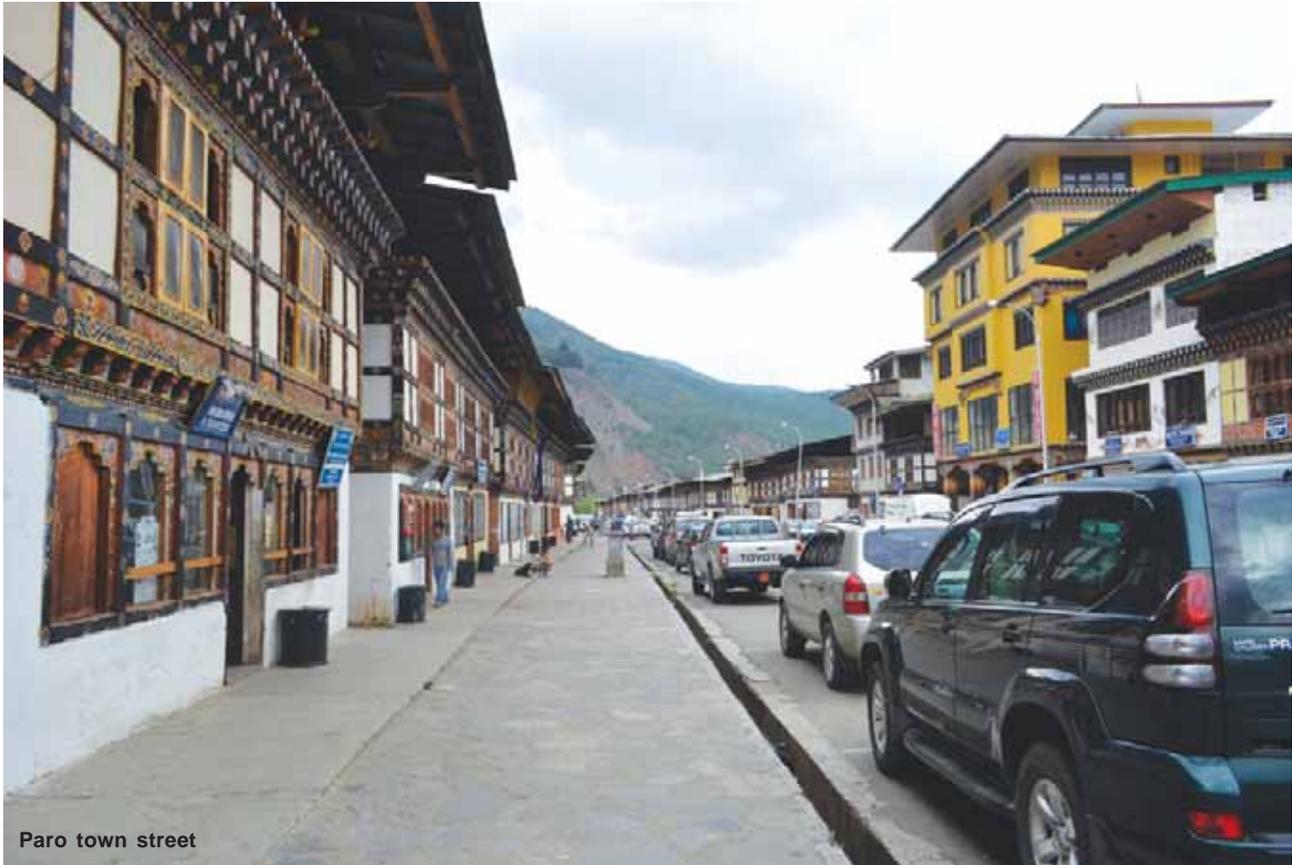
**W**ITH high profile neighbours like China and Pakistan, alongwith others like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh, who each have their own unique attractions and moments of excitement on a global scale, it is only after a pause that most people remember the sleepy little country about the size of Switzerland, with who we share a border of 605 kms. Our smallest neighbour and one we share the best ties with - the Kingdom Of Bhutan.

### The origin of Bhutan

A possible derivative of the name Bhutan is believed to be

from Sanskrit *bhoma-anta* - a reference to Bhutan's position at the southernmost extreme of the Tibetan plateau and culture. However, Bhutan is the name which occurs only in English communication. In Bhutanese, which is also known as Dzongkha, the official name of this Buddhist kingdom is Drukylu (country of the Drokpa, the Dragon People, or the Land of the Thunder Dragon), a reference to the country's dominant Buddhist sect.

Sandwiched between India on three sides (east, south and west) and Tibet in the north, Bhutan is a land-locked country which holds the distinction of being amongst the very, very few countries which have been independent throughout their



Paro town street

history, never conquered, occupied, or governed by an outside power (notwithstanding occasional nominal tributary status).

The region of Bhutan was a site of numerous warring factions till the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the lama and military leader Shabdrung Namgyal unified the area and created a distinct Bhutanese identity. Bhutan became a protectorate of British India and has since maintained very close relations with India. It was amongst the first to recognise India as an independent country, and signed a Treaty of Friendship with India in 1949, which has since been modified in 1972 and 2007.

### Engaging with the world

From actively staying out of contact with the rest of the world, Bhutan from 1952 has aggressively pursued a policy of modernisation. Two major world events are seen as fillips that necessitated this shift in world view. The first was the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese in 1951 which led to Bhutan closing its northern frontiers and aligning itself more prominently with its southern neighbour. This laid the seeds for Bhutan's realisation of needing a modernisation programme to offset chances of Chinese encroachment. Later in 1975, its neighbour Sikkim, which had a monarchy that endured more than 300 years, was ousted by a plebiscite, causing this long time Indian protectorate to become India's twenty-second state. An event that undoubtedly created ripples in the Bhutanese monarchy, and served as an impetus

to speed up reform and modernisation. In 2008, Bhutan made the transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy.

Given its size and location in the Himalayas, it is no surprise that India is Bhutan's largest trading partner accounting for 98 percent of its exports and 90 percent of imports. This special relationship with India allows for easy access to Bhutan for Indian nationals and vice versa, without need for a visa or passport. Entry can be secured with a voter ID, making it the easiest country for Indians to travel to. A facility, which surprisingly few Indians seem to avail of.

To be fair to the globetrotting Indians, Bhutan is not exactly encouraging of tourism in general. The country was thrown open to tourists only in the 70s, which is when it also became a member of the United Nations. The entry permit allows for travel only to the capital of Thimphu and the town of Paro. To go to any area beyond this, tourists must obtain a special area permit from the Immigration Office at Thimphu.



Drukgyel Dzong near Paro



The Himalayas behind the Chortens at Dochula

### Travelling to Bhutan

There are three official entry-exit points to Bhutan from India- Phuntsholing, Gelephu and Samdrup Jongkhar in eastern Bhutan. Phuntsholing is about 160 kms from the bustling city of Siliguri in Northern West Bengal. Gelephu is close to Ongaigaon town in Assam and Samdrup Jhonkar is about 150 kms from Guwahati. Of these, Phuntsholing is by far the most easy and popular entry route. Though regulations are favourable, the checking is thorough, methodical and precise.

The only airport is at the town of Paro and Indian citizens can avail of flights at special rates flying out from Kolkata and New Delhi. There are no railways in Bhutan. The first ever railway link connecting India and Bhutan was announced by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in May 2008. The project - called the Nehru Golden Jubilee Railway Link - was proposed as a 18 km link connecting Hashimara in West Bengal to Toribari in Bhutan. Unfortunately, this meagre rail stretch is stuck in the unending coils of Indian bureaucratic red tape.

Once the formalities are out of the way, being in Bhutan is like entering a peculiar time warp. All modern amenities are available, the roads though limited, are in pristine condition, English is generally understood and yet, it seems like one has entered a different era. The traditional look, feel, language and customs of the Bhutanese are alive and thriving. The years of isolation and regulation of everything foreign has resulted in a modern country which retains the character of the previous century, making the experience akin to entering a fairy tale.

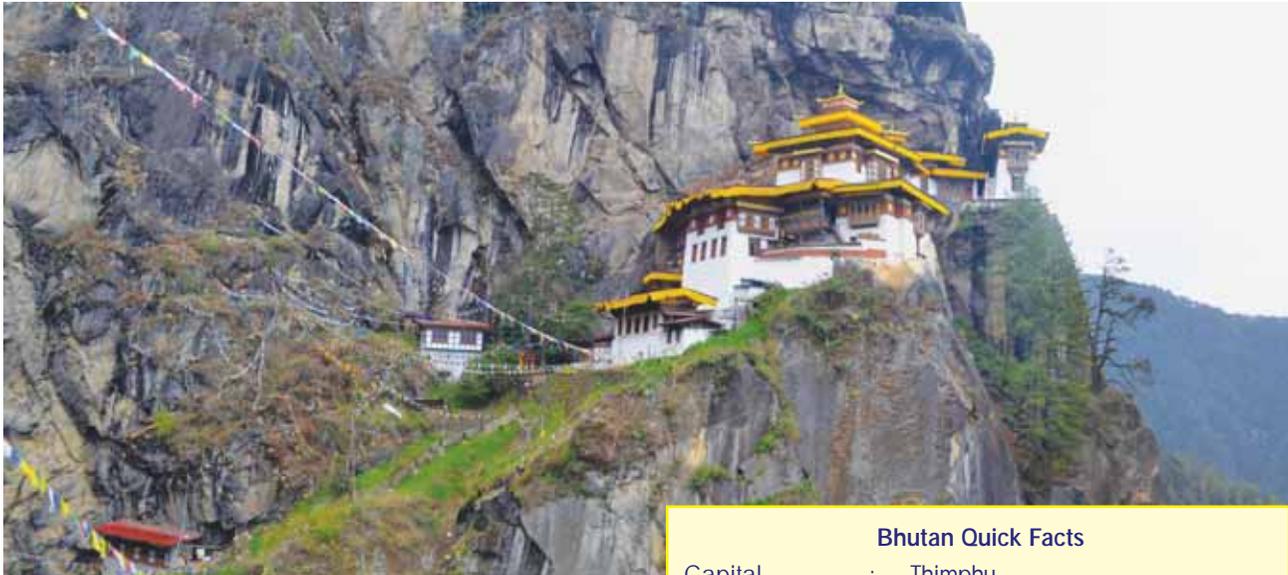
### Keeping its traditions alive

Despite the recent surges to integrate with the outside world, the Kingdom of Bhutan is protective of its culture and way of life. It was amongst the last countries to introduce television and internet in 1999. In keeping with this, there are some laws which might seem a little queer but go a long way in maintaining the charm of this kingdom in the clouds. By official decree, all buildings must have the traditional Bhutanese architectural look and it is mandatory to wear the traditional Bhutanese dress for all government employees and all citizens entering government buildings. Vajrayana Buddhism is the official state religion and monks of the order are provided significant government subsidies.

### The Tiger's Nest and sacred mountains

Buddhist monasteries and places of worship along with the forts (*dzong*) that survive from the medieval ages are the main tourist attractions. The picture postcard for Bhutan tourism, however, is undoubtedly the Tiger's Nest monastery. Perched, seemingly precariously, on a sheer rock cliff overlooking the Paro valley at an altitude of over 10,000 ft, the Tiger's Nest monastery is one of those places where history and legend have intermingled so completely that a little bit of each is mixed in the telling of either version.

The protagonist in the story of Tiger's Nest is the Indian Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, who arrived in Bhutan in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and established Buddhism in Bhutan and is since seen as the 'protector saint of Bhutan'.



**Tiger's Nest monastery**

As per the most popular legend, Padmasambhava is said to have arrived here on the back of a flying tigress. He is said to have landed on the cliff, vanquished a local demon, meditated in the cave and anointed it as the place for building a monastery. It is thus that the place came to be known as *Taktsang*, which means 'Tiger's Lair'. Many Tibetan saints and eminent figures have known to have meditated at this location.

One story further embellishes the popular legend with the story of Tenzin Rabgye who built the temple here in 1692, and is mentioned by many authors as a reincarnation of Guru Rinpoche. The current structure however is new as the old one was destroyed in a fire in 2005 along with several centuries of records, paintings, artefacts and statues.

The true beauty of the world's last Buddhist Kingdom is its pristine Himalayan landscape and the well preserved biodiversity. Every mountain is sacred, every grove has a mystery and behind every rock is a story of a miracle. Seventy-two percent of Bhutan is under forest cover. Its concern and measures for protecting its natural heritage are considered a model to emulate the world over. It is enshrined in the constitution that 60 percent of the country's land must be under forest cover, 40 percent designated as national parks, reserves and protected areas, and a further 9 percent as biodiversity corridors linking the protected area. This conservation ideal is at the core of every development policy and buttressed by the force of law.

### Controlled tourism

As a Himalayan nation, there is untold potential in mountaineering and related activities. Yet, since 2003, there is a complete ban on any mountaineering in Bhutan. The rationale is a two-fold reasoning which combines the respect for the Bhutanese belief of mountain tops being the sacred home of protective spirits, and the practical problem of the lack of high-altitude rescue resources.

### Bhutan Quick Facts

Capital	: Thimphu
Size	: 38,394 km <sup>2</sup>
Government	: Constitutional Monarchy
Population	: 742,737 (2012 estimate)
King	: Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk
Prime Minister	: Tshering Tobgay
Currency	: Ngultrum
ISD Code	: +975
Country Domain	: .bt

This combination has made Bhutan home to what is widely claimed to be highest unclimbed mountain in the world in terms of elevation - the Gangkhar Puensum (at 24,836 feet).

Admirable peculiarities abound in Bhutan. They measure not their Gross Domestic Product, but their Gross National Happiness. It is the world's only carbon sink - it absorbs more CO<sub>2</sub> than it gives out. As a country, it has outlawed tobacco. Its primary export is renewable energy in the form of hydroelectricity which it supplies to India.

Expectations from Bhutan are usually low and information about the shy country is not thrown in your face through advertising. The processes for entry to the country can seem confusing, and the costs of getting there appear disproportionate, as compared to other options of travel in India or the world. Yet, there is a haunting appeal to the place which is not easy to place and on getting here, a strange reluctance to get out of this enchanting kingdom grabs hold. There is a melody to life here. A lilting mesmerising tune which once heard will play itself in your head for a life time.



It may not seem much on a map, but that speck on the globe has an entire world hiding within - a shadow realm of sorts I wish there were more of in this world. ■

**The writer is a media professional and freelance writer.**

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## New OIOP Clubs in Mumbai

### St. Xavier's High School & Jr. College, Vile Parle



Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde, Trustee and Managing Editor, presenting the OIOP Club membership certificate to the Principal Mrs. Vera Fernandes



Students sing a song on the occasion



Students watch the performance

### Malti Jayant Dalal High School (Sadhana), Santacruz



Principal Mr. Chandu G. Parmar, Anuradha Dhareshwar, Editor, OIOP and Mrs. Hegde light the inaugural lamp



Mrs. Hegde addressing the students



Students present a cultural programme on the occasion

### Taraben Master English Secondary School, Santacruz



Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde presenting the OIOP club membership certificate to the Principal Mrs. Alka Khanna and Mr. Bechu Singh



Mrs. Hegde addressing the students



A section of the audience

# A triumph of neighbourly relations

*India and Bhutan continue to have the best relations in the neighbourhood, despite minor irritants. India would do well to remember the strategic importance of this peaceful neighbour, and continue to help Bhutan in every way possible, writes Prof. B.C. Upreti.*



**B**HUTAN, a small country located in the southern slopes of the great Himalayan ranges, is the smallest member of the South Asian fraternity. Yet, this country has its own unique history. It has the youngest monarchy, strong Buddhist traditions, a monarch who relinquished state powers, a country which declared its goal of 'Gross National Happiness', and its quest for preserving its cultural identity, all make Bhutan a unique country.

Bhutan occupies a strategic position in between the two giants – India and China - and it is of immense importance to India. Moreover, Bhutan's limited economic resources, landlocked status, and the quest for modernisation, makes that country excessively dependent on India.

## The bonds of friendship

India-Bhutan relations set an example of close and cooperative relations between two neighbouring countries. In fact, they are unparalleled in many ways in South Asia. Way back in the 1950's, Bhutan faced acute resource scarcity, technological backwardness, and lack of access to difficult hilly terrains. India helped by investing in the country's infrastructure. India has not only provided the highest amounts of foreign aid, but it has also tried to cater to the particular needs of Bhutan. India has helped Bhutan in building a number of hydro-power projects and this has been a continuous process. One may note that the Chukha hydro-power project has been able to contribute to more than 40 per cent of Bhutan's national revenue. In fact, Bhutan's prosperity lies in its willingness to exploit its mighty river water potential and India has helped Bhutan in this sector in a big way.

Education, health, telecommunication, and transportation are the other areas where India has played a significant role.

## Bhutan's transition to democracy

Bhutan is a country which has smoothly transitioned to



**Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Bhutan counterpart Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay**

democracy. The king of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, himself came forward to promote democratisation of the country. Initially, Bhutan tried to evolve a model of its own, where both the traditional and modern political forces could be accommodated. But it was towards the end of the last century that Bhutan began to express interest in adopting a western democratic model. Bhutan's two general elections in 2008 and 2013 are a testimony of her peaceful march to democracy. India not only provided the necessary inputs in Constitution making, but also in making necessary infrastructural arrangements to conduct the two general elections. One can very well understand that for a country like Bhutan with its remote areas, logistics of connecting to that population could be a huge challenge and hence, India's assistance was very important. A happier situation compared to Nepal, where democratisation and the constitution making process have been highly complicated, and is still very fragile. No doubt a democratic and stable neighbour is an asset to India, particularly in the context of building peaceful and stable frontiers. India has been a partner to Bhutan's quest for democracy.

(Continued on page 43)

# Path from the past

*Modern notions of nationhood and boundaries have all but obliterated the glorious past of the Silk Route, the Grand Trunk Road and the sea routes, which had facilitated so much trade and travel in and across the Indian sub-continent. The re-drawing of borders and the general air of mistrust have isolated us, and have ensured that we would much rather engage with far away nations than our own neighbours, rues Akul Tripathi.*

**B**EFORE there was even a hint of the dawn of civilisation in much of what is today's sophisticated society, the ancient people of the land we now recognise as India were trading across the seas and far in-road from its many shores. The cosmopolitan dwellers from the valley between the Indus and the since dried-up Saraswati River were an industrious and adventurous people travelling and exchanging freely with neighbours, and even lands which all those thousands of years ago must have seemed just as far and dangerous to get to, as the moon does, to us Earthlings!

Be it ultra modern civilisations, enterprising tribal traders, or the family that shifts into the empty flat across the landing; the first outreach into the world has always been the immediate neighbour. From the much eulogised bowl of sugar on a personal level to its national counterpart of electricity or oil - in distress and in good times, to the neighbour is where one goes. Across history of the area we call India, all neighbouring kingdoms and empires have traded with as much gusto as they have warred with their neighbours.

Officially, India shares her land borders with seven countries - Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar. A couple of clarifications - Tibet is recognised as an Autonomous Region of China by the Indian government and while India claims a land border with Afghanistan through northwestern undivided Kashmir, that region is under Pakistani control and hence excluded from the scope of countries with a contiguous land border.

## The demise of the famous Grand Trunk Road

Two thousand years before these complications arose, a road is believed to have shaped itself by the tireless treading of human feet; which connected the ends of the Indian subcontinent. Stretching from Chittagong in present day Bangladesh, it wound its way up to today's Kabul in Afghanistan. One of south Asia's longest and oldest roads, it has been known by many names like *Uttara Patha*, *Badshahi*

*Sadak* and *Sadak-e-Azam*, but the most popular name for this 2500 kms long continuum is the Grand Trunk Road.

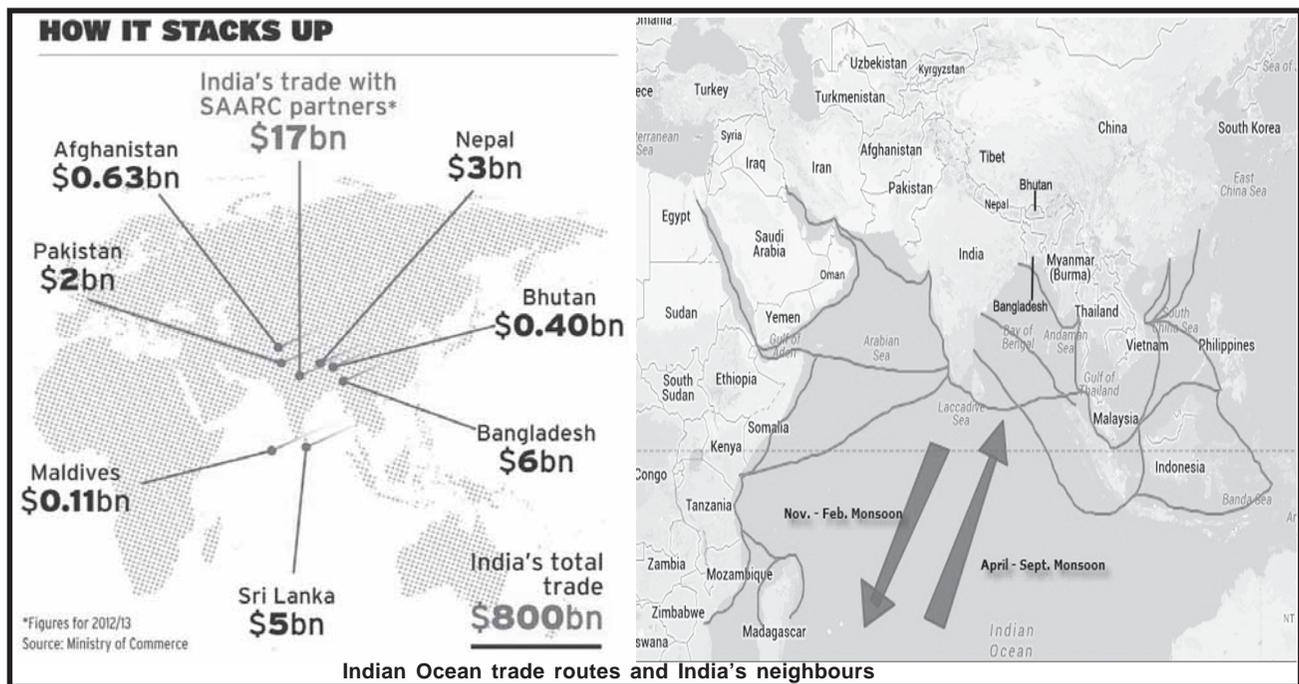
Renovated and extended by Sher Shah Suri in the sixteenth century, the *Sadak-e-Azam* carries a baggage of history like few others, and stoically remains, in Kipling's words, "Such a river of life as nowhere else exists in the world". Known to European travellers as 'the long walk', this grand road has today selflessly merged itself into the road networks of the countries it traverses, and remains one of the backbones of surface transport in the Indian subcontinent. Outcrops from this subcontinental highway would rise up to meet the famous Silk Route.

The geographical continuum of the area of the Indian sub-continent is packed with almost every imaginable resource required for necessity or luxury. Yet, the utility and traffic along its entire length has scarcely seen a fragment of the activity it was once renowned for. The chief contributor to this disruption were the arbitrary lines Lord Cyril Radcliffe drew across a map in the five weeks he had to split the 'jewel in the British Raj'. What transpired in 1947 was the ludicrous formation of a country separated by the entire width of India. The independence of India did to the Trunk Road what the ascendancy of the Ottomans did to the Silk Route in 1453 - effectively closed a route that had outlived empires, plagues and wars.

## Trade across the seas

Across the ocean, Sri Lanka is the closest neighbour, followed by Indonesia, whose northern island of Aceh is just 150 kms from India's southernmost land mass — *Indira Point* in the Nicobar Islands. The coastline stretches such that the immediate neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar have always been important sea-trade partners.

Long before Europeans "discovered" the Indian Ocean, from at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, traders from India's coastal areas used triangle-sailed dhows to harness the seasonal monsoon



winds as ideas, goods and people moved freely across a web of sea routes that connected India, Arabia, East Africa, South-East and East Asia, including China. From the Indus Valley, people traded with Mesopotamia and Afghanistan, the Indians traded with the Romans, the Cinnamon Route that linked south-east Asia with East Africa or the many trade routes across the Bay Of Bengal, which connected the kingdoms across the Indian Ocean, maritime trade was a well developed and fully functional system. More intricate and perhaps older and more voluminous than its land counterpart - the Silk Route; the fall of which, quite unpredictably set the tone for the demise of these sea connections as well.

With the closure of the Silk Route, Portuguese sailors under Vasco da Gama rounded the southern point of Africa and ventured into new seas. The Portuguese were eager to join in the Indian Ocean trade, as the Europeans still craved Asian goods. However, Europe had precious little to barter with. The people of the subcontinent and further south had no need of wool or fur clothing or the other meagre products of Europe.

Quite predictably, the Portuguese then entered the market more as pirates than traders, using a combination of bravado, cannons and extortion to gain a foothold in the ocean trade. They were quickly followed by the Dutch East India Company, which sought a total monopoly over the trade of spices. Close on heels came the British East India Company, and the Europeans fought a diplomatic and often violent battle for the supremacy of the Indian Ocean. The British came out the better in this and as the thriving economies of Asia were

transformed into colonies, reciprocal trade dissolved with goods moving increasingly to Europe.

### The isolation of South Asia

From being an elaborate network of symbiotic co-existence, to fenced off islands of isolation and indifference, bordering on mutual loathing, South Asia has walked down a long and dangerous dark road of divide based on ridiculous vanities. Today, South Asia is one of the least economically integrated regions in the world.

It is absurd that except China, no neighbouring country finds itself in the top 10 list of trade partners with India. It is laughable that we use 1000 km long diversions to travel within our own country in deference to some imaginary lines. It is contrary to every sense of business or trade that we import at higher costs from distant countries while refusing to trade with our neighbours. It is frustrating to not visit places we grew up learning about. It is heartbreaking that dwellers of the subcontinent cannot visit the places of their family's origins because it is on the 'other side'.



It is up to us to realise that we are not isolated rocks, and the chasms that separate us are only illusions. It is true we are all glorious individual waves, but we must bring back the memory that we are also the ocean. ■

The writer is a media professional and freelance writer.

# Foreign affairs need not be all that ‘foreign’

*India’s foreign policy saw its golden period under Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, maintains V. Gangadhar. Since then, successive Prime Ministers have behaved like regional satraps, while the regional leaders of India set the tone of New Delhi’s foreign policy.*

**A**T the Simla Institute which trains hundreds of bright young men and women who have passed the All India Civil Service Examinations, the focus, I am told, used to be on foreign affairs. The brightest and the best who had cleared the Indian Foreign Service examinations were the ‘cream’, and just needed some finishing touches before taking up their assignments abroad. The trend, however, is changing. Today, the same bright youngsters are opting not for foreign postings, but for the more important and less glamorous Indian Administrative Services (IAS), where they are more directly involved in running the country at the behest of their political masters.

The IAS (formerly ICS or Indian Civil Service) prepared these young men and women in more arduous duties like feeding India’s millions, preparing the infrastructure for the iron frame of the country (industry, education, defence, transport, aviation), taking care that the expenditure on these did not exceed the annual income. This is an enormous task made more difficult by constant interference by politicians. Yet, such is the challenge that it attracted not only the IFS personnel, but also crack teams holding degrees in higher management and engineering.

When a political party gets elected and forms the government, the focus is generally on key portfolios like Home, Finance, Defence and External Affairs. The State Chief Ministers tend to keep some of these major portfolios for themselves. The Prime Minister of a vast nation like India would also like to do the same, but often is unable to do so because he finds out quickly that being Prime Minister is more than one man’s job. His political advisers help him to choose the right candidates for the jobs. The ministers chosen thus may not be the best, but essentially they have strong political roots, can raise funds, and maintain discipline in their regions.

## The Nehru-Gandhi golden era of foreign policy

Foreign affairs is an acquired taste. It offers lesser opportunities to acquire political clout within the party or the chance to build a strong political base. It suits a political

leader whose interests are wide and varied. Jawaharlal Nehru, though the PM, was the best choice as the External Affairs Minister because he was a man of the world, who understood and could interpret happenings in many parts of the world, and how they related to India. A couple of junior ministers to do the routine work in the ministry were enough. Nehru himself formulated major policies, reacted to international developments, and guided a team of brilliant bureaucrats like N.R. Pillai, G.S. Bajpai and R.K. Nehru. He had the guts to appoint his friend, V.K. Krishna Menon, and stand by him when he was pilloried by the right wing media, and its powerful political supporters.

Even as the Prime Minister, Nehru was extraordinarily active as his own External Affairs minister. He founded the Third World thinking, got it the respect it deserved and his concept of ‘Panchsheel’ was ahead of its time. Nehru was a leader who had a vision of the world but the other politicians like Morarji Desai could never understand him.

To them, communism was an evil ideology and America alone could save India from the clutches of the Russian Bear. No Asian leader contributed so much to international understanding as Nehru and the respect he received from the rest of the world was fully deserved. The people who rule India today will never understand how forward thinking he was, and it was fortunate that India had a citizen of the world to guide our foreign policy during its early years.

It was another strong leader, this time Indira Gandhi, who focused world attention on India by taking on Pakistan and creating Bangladesh, even while offending the US and its Indian *chamchas* (sycophants). We often talk of Indian pride but no one exhibited it as well as Mrs Gandhi who saw through the double talk of Nixon and his Machiavellian Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. Unable to make Indira toe the US line, ‘Tricky Dick’ and Henry abused Mrs Gandhi in the vilest terms in their memoirs. Strange to say, Dr Kissinger was a hero to the strong industrial lobby in India, which kept inviting him and contributing liberally to the various ‘causes’ he supported.

The Nehru-Gandhi era was the one which kept Indian foreign policy flying. Since then, our position as a world power has waned (despite the so-called economic clout which we had supposedly acquired), and our foreign policy has remained a mute spectator. Prime Ministers came and went, hardly showing any interest in creating an impression on the world scene. The present one acts as though he was the Prime Minister of Gujarat.

### The United States world view

Weak or strong, the United States contributes strongly to the world by way of its own foreign policy and how it affects others. Men like John Kennedy were widely read in foreign affairs, fought World War II, wrote major books, and at least prepared themselves to rule their country. Kennedy formulated his own foreign policy, collected a powerful 'think-tank' from universities, industry and the media. Look at the galaxy of stars who worked for him – Prof J K Galbraith, Adlai Stevenson, Robert McNamara (Head of Ford Motors), Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger and so on.

Kennedy followed world affairs closely, though often he reached conclusions which were wrong. It was a pity he could not get along with Nehru who by that time was old and ill. Both India and the US were more concerned with economic

issues. Somehow, the noble art of diplomacy declined. The USSR had also contributed much through Andrei Gromyko (who ended up as President of USSR), Anatoly Dobrynin, the long-serving envoy to the US, V M Molotov, Andrei Vyshinsky and others. It was the golden age of debate. Wrong decisions were taken, injustice was done, but diplomacy was developed to a great art. Read the books published during this era and you will understand what I say.

But India which once perched at the top of the United Nations as a strong member, crumbled. Each succeeding Prime Minister was ready to work as a mere *satrap* and was devoid of a world view. Our foreign policy was hijacked by several vested interests. Strong decisions needed to be taken on India-Sri Lanka relations, but the issue was allowed to be clouded by the petty regional issues of the Dravidian parties.



Mamata Banerjee tells the Centre on how to deal with Bangladesh problems. State governments in Punjab and Tamil Nadu deify murderers who killed Indian Prime Ministers. In this political and intelligence vacuum, foreign policy has no role to play. ■  
The writer is a well-known satirist.

## A triumph of neighbourly relations

(Continued from page 39)

### Minor irritants in the relationship

Bhutan is the only neighbour which has always stood by India, supported India in international and regional forums. The Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was invited to be the chief guest on the occasion of the 64<sup>th</sup> Republic day celebrations of India. This reflected the importance accorded by India to its trusted neighbour.

However, the decision of the Indian government on 1 July 2013, to withdraw all subsidies on LPG and kerosene created some misunderstanding. It was the time when Bhutan was heading for general elections. India's contention was that it was a general act and not intended at sending any message to Bhutan. Nevertheless, there were some reports to indicate that India was irritated due to Bhutan's softer attitude towards China.

### The Chinese context and India's concerns

China has been equally interested in Bhutan, obviously for its geo-strategic and political interests. China has built a strong transport network on the other side of the border and has been very keen on resolving border issues with Bhutan. This

causes some concern to India as Bhutan bears immense strategic importance for us.

### Modi's visit to Bhutan

The new government in India under Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi took immediate steps to build India's relationship with the neighbouring countries, by inviting the heads of states of the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries on the occasion of the oath-taking ceremony of the PM. But what is important is that Modi decided to pay his first foreign visit as PM to Bhutan. Probably, it was a befitting recognition of the age-old friendship between the two countries. On the occasion, Modi laid the foundation of a 600 MW power station, apart from discussing a number of issues of bilateral interest.

To conclude, this is a new beginning to recognise and further consolidate India's age-old intimate ties with Bhutan. A stable and developed Bhutan is in India's best interests. ■



The writer is a Former Director, South Asia Studies Centre, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, and Senior Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi. He has authored more than 34 books and regularly contributes articles to newspapers and journals.

# “Consider us human beings. When we refuse a fare, we get abused”.

Here is an autorickshaw driver with a difference – he speaks English fluently, is very courteous and believes in never refusing a passenger! A rare auto driver indeed? Meet Pune-based **Shafique Ibrahim Patel** 46, father of three, who has spent 17 years in the hospitality industry and rose to become Senior Captain at a five star hotel in Pune. Today however, he drives an autorickshaw for a living and is quite content shocking his passengers with his language skills and courtesy! **A. Radhakrishnan** goes on a merry ride with him.

### How was your career in the hotel industry?

When I was promoted as Senior Captain it was a highpoint. It helped me interact with businessmen, corporate clients, film celebrities and foreigners. I once spent 45 minutes with the legendary Dilip Kumar. I also interacted with filmstars like Dev Anand, Dharmendra, Anupam Kher, Lalita Pawar, Salman Khan, Arbaz Khan, and cricketers like Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Ravi Shastri, Ramiz Raza and so on.

### Why were you disillusioned then?

I began with a gross monthly salary of ₹ 2,275 at the Holiday Inn in 1996, and when I left Sun-n-Sand, another 5 star hotel 17 years later, I was drawing a gross monthly salary of ₹ 10,612.

It dawned on me that the payment was not commensurate with the effort I was putting in. Though guests were charged high, employees were paid a pittance. Like every parent, I too wanted to give my children better education and save for



their future and my retirement. Taking up a part time business was also impossible due to my work shifts.

### What made you turn to auto driving?

Resigning in 2011, I started my own catering business, 'Lucknowi Chicken Biryani' with my wife Zeenat. The tiffin services we provided to the students of the Bharati Vidyapeeth had to unfortunately close shop after two years, due to a hike in raw material cost and other reasons like hiked rent which lowered the profit margin. It was around this time that one of my brothers offered me his autorickshaw to drive, as I had an autorickshaw licence since 1990.

### How has been your experience driving an auto?

Well, I do get tired sometimes, but then it is my only income source. I drive from 8.30 a.m to 9.00 p.m. Further, like other drivers, I too have to queue for around 2 to 3 hours for a CNG refuel.

People feel it's easy driving an auto, but after a couple of years one starts developing back problems, thanks to our pathetic roads. Most of the Pune roads are in a really bad condition. To top it, the narrow roads, especially inside the city, make driving difficult. Most two wheelers drive without a road sense. But I take care of my vehicle, check the oil levels and the air pressure of tyres and use genuine auto parts, gas, engine oil and so on.

By God's grace, I have not yet been involved in any major accident. But young bike drivers scare me. My only aim is to drop passengers safely to their destination.

I feel I am now able to give ample time to family and earn some good amount of money honestly. As I am educated and have worked in the hospitality industry, I am able to understand my passengers, who are also delighted to have me speak to them in English and travel becomes pleasant.

A passenger was once complaining to his friend about how autorickshaw drivers cheat, at which point I interrupted in English, explaining how my profession works. They were stunned and said that I had changed their perspective about auto drivers!

#### Is it easy to get fare? How do your passengers behave?

With the expansion of Pune and so many I.T. companies, my profession should face good times. Frankly, I don't refuse to go to any area. So it's quite easy to get a fare. We are affected by the illegal 'share auto' nexus which hits us hard. Such drivers charge the customers double or triple the fare in suburban areas.

Otherwise, it is a fun experience. Some passengers get close to you, while others don't even respond. Some offer you a big tip while others haggle over return change of even one rupee! All in all, I feel that I enjoy driving my autorickshaw and take all incidents in a positive way. If your tongue is sweet and polite, you can easily overcome all issues.

I have many regular passengers. Some of them insist that they will travel only in my auto. And if I am unable to make it on time to pick them up, they even cancel their programme!



Shafique Ibrahim Patel with actor Om Puri during his hotel days

#### What's the funniest incident that's happened to you as a driver?

Once at night I took in three passengers, who were animated and cracking adult jokes in English. Later, when I spoke to them in English, they were stunned and sheepish that I might have understood their jokes!

#### Passengers are of the opinion that auto drivers tweak their meters and demand extra money. Moreover they are unfair and rude. How true is it?

Yes, I agree. While everyone should work hard, some auto drivers do demand extra fare at times. They may have valid reasons like not being able to get return fare, or the area they have to go may be dangerous.

Consider us human beings. When we refuse a fare, we get abused. But it is also true that some auto drivers start arguing and using unfair and rude language. I definitely don't support this.

#### If you had another shot at making a choice, what profession would you pick?

As a student, I always dreamed of becoming a lawyer or joining the Indian Army. Financial problems made me join the hotel industry. While I am happy with my profession and earn enough, had I another choice, I would open an authentic North Indian cuisine restaurant, for people of Pune love such food!

#### Are you part of any union?

Yes, of the 'Pune Shahar (Zilla) Vahatuk Seva Sanghatana,' which interacts with Pune RTO and other related departments to address corruption issues and also upgrade the auto drivers' living standards.

#### How religious are you?



I am religious and strongly believe in Allah and try my best to follow the Quran's moral instructions. My only wish is that I am able to perform Haj at least once in my life. ■

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

# Food sovereignty and India's fishing communities

**Nandini Chavan** *rues the fact that India's fishing communities are neglected by both the advocates of land rights, as well as the ecological activists. Their livelihood and marine resources have to be developed in a sustainable manner, which in turn will only benefit India with its more than 7,000 km long coastline.*

**T**HE concept of food sovereignty is generally discussed in the context of land, farmers and agricultural production. In public forums, the discussion about food sovereignty is focused more on small farmers, environmentalists and indigenous peoples. Sovereignty entitles them all to define and play a significant role in their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies. The food sovereignty movement asserts policies that are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate for their specific local situations. The principles of food sovereignty incorporate the process of right to food, value for food, localised decision making capacity and also incorporates the sustainable mode of development.

## Food sovereignty and coastal communities

In the context of the fishing community, food sovereignty leads to certain measures that should be taken up for the specific protection of coastal communities dependent on marine and inland fishing. Some of these measures include prevention or expansion of shrimp or aquaculture, and the destruction of mangroves, ensuring local fishing communities have rights to aquatic resources, negotiating a legally binding international convention to prevent illegal fishing, effectively implementing international marine

agreements and conventions, such as the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and eradicating poverty, and ensuring food security for coastal communities. Fisheries are an important sector, contributing immensely to food security and livelihoods of the population. Fish is a great source of nutrition. The small scale fishery in Asia contributes to over 90% of the fishing population globally. Small-scale and artisanal fisheries face many challenges including depleted fish stocks (over exploitation of sea), pollution, encroachment for

'development', climate change and so on. It leads to threats of eviction and displacement due to development projects like SEZ, tourism, nuclear and thermal power plants, industrial aquaculture etc. Apart from these major issues of land, sea and water resulting in denial of small fishermen's access to natural and productive resources for pursuing their livelihoods, there are a number of other challenges faced by this sector. The major concern is that many of the small-scale fishing communities are marginalised and their population is electorally fragmented, which lowers their political participation and access to decision making power. Also, there has been an increase in systematic violations of rights of indigenous fisher communities, and fisherwomen; there has been an improper implementation of policies which would otherwise have ensured an enabling space for small scale fishermen to exercise their human rights with dignity.

**The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that three billion people are being provided with their essential nutrition from marine ecosystems, and that at least 50 percent of animal protein provided to 400 million people from LEDCs come from fish. Thus, the sovereignty concerns of fishing communities with means of sustainable fishing are as relevant as anyone else's.**

## Whom does the sea belong to?

Amongst activists and researchers, the concern for land movement holds a greater importance than concern for marine resources and fishermen. Just like land, sea too is a natural resource. However, unlike land, which can be claimed for private or communal ownership, no one can claim or own the sea. Thus the sea being everyone's and no one's, it remains neglected,

theoretically and physically. Also, the protests and movements from the fishing community remain limited to the coastal zone.

Economic relevance of fishing is important. Fishery is currently a source of livelihood for an estimated 500 million people, both as a source of income, and directly as a food source, especially in LEDCs (less economically developed countries). The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that three billion people are being provided with their essential nutrition from marine ecosystems, and that at least 50 percent of animal protein provided to 400 million people from LEDCs come from fish. Thus, the sovereignty concerns of fishing communities with means of sustainable fishing are as relevant as anyone else's.

### The practice of sustainable fishing

The concept of sustainable fishing was introduced in the 1980's. The core of this concept is to control illegal and rampant mode of fishing. The main agenda was to frame and develop the outlook of fishing policies. This concept even talks about the limitation of individual fish stocks in the context of environmental balance. Even the FAO provides voluntary guidelines for small scale fisheries.

A sustainable fishing method has its own ecological, economic, social and cultural dimensions. Social sustainability is based on local social customs, traditions, norms and taboos that local people are more likely to accept and adapt according to their own needs. Such people have a wealth of knowledge about their environment. They have social structures that manage and conserve common resources and maintain the social fabric. For instance, in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, traditional fishermen have adopted the traditional method of fishing called *rapan*. It is more viable to



**Traditional method of fishing called *rapan***

their biodiversity in the region and has a cooperative base. For sustainability, indigenous knowledge should be preserved as sustainable practices rely heavily on traditional knowledge and local innovation systems.

The length of coastline in India is approximately 7000 kms, but it's only 12 nautical miles from the baseline of a coastal state. The international territorial sea zone starts right beyond this boundary. In India, around 1.16 crore people are engaged in fisheries. India has 69 coastal districts excluding Andaman and Nicobar. This community though contributing in a big way to India's GDP and to the nutrition needs of the country, lacks power to effect political changes.

During the formation of fishing policies, there is need of active participation of this community to preserve and conserve the coastal biodiversity. Coastal awareness campaign in the society is important.

India prohibits fish processing units, land reclamation, discharge of untreated wastes and effluents from industries and cities, and sand mining in its coastal zone. But setting up ports, harbours and developing the waterfront are allowed in the area, for which they require CRZ clearance. Government has definitely made good provisions for

ecological protection and the fishing community benefits as well, but there is a lack of political will. Turmoil in so-called development projects leads to destruction of life of the landless fishing community.

The UPA Government had introduced a very unique scheme of a 'model fishing village', which included basic water, sanitation facilities, with the main focus on improving livelihood. But this scheme has not been adopted by many states. Sadly, this pro-fishing community scheme has not reached its beneficiary communities.

The national green tribunal and green court control the anomalies in development projects. But the main drawback in this is that the problems of the fishing community are seen in the context of ecology alone. This problem must be dealt and discussed within the context of food sovereignty. Environment and human livelihood are interdependent, so environment and issue of livelihood must be discussed in this larger perspective. ■



**The writer is Programme Coordinator of Research, Vikas Adyayan Kendra, Mumbai.**

## When we saw Red!

*India's Mars Orbiter Mission has made us proud, though it has its detractors who scoff at a 'poor' country's effort to join the 'elite' space club. An optimistic Nayanika Nambiar tells us why these naysayers are wrong, and how investing in space technology will eventually benefit our nation.*

**H**ISTORY was made when India's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) successfully entered the Martian orbit. In doing so, India became the first country to enter Mars' orbit on its *first* attempt and also the first Asian country to do so. Headlines on India's maiden Mars mission all include the words 'low-cost' or some variation of it. This is a mission that has been budgeted at Rs. 4.5 billion which, by Western standards, is staggeringly cheap. Or at least by director Alfonso Cuarón's standards, as our Mars mission is one-third the cost of his popular space thriller, *Gravity*.

I don't know what else people expected from a country in which families have possibly never bought their own chili flakes because of the existence of Domino's and its benevolence. While *that* MOM has entered the Mars orbit, *this* Mom is currently not buying any Mars or Orbit. This is all to say that cost cutting runs in our blood!

Jokes apart, this low price is due to the extremely clever use of indigenous components, parts, and technologies instead of outsourcing. Also, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientists are paid far less than what their counterparts in NASA and other space agencies make. Its scientists receive "standard government department salaries", therefore keeping the cost of expertise low. Other than this, due to nuclear tests in 1974, ISRO and many other Indian agencies came under restrictive sanctions, cutting them off from western technology like cryogenic engine

technology, for instance, which had proved to be a massive obstacle for India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) project. It compelled the scientists to make do with available resources and innovate on shoestring budgets.

While most of us cannot say exactly what the scientific definition of Geosynchronous is - at least not with certainty - what we can definitely do is criticise. Social media has been an outlet for various armchair critics who feel that India faces several problems like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, inadequate sanitation, and how exactly is a mission to Mars going to solve these problems? Why can't the money be used instead, towards making India that unachievable utopia that cynics are constantly searching for?

Now if there's anything I've learned from my Economics textbook, it is that investment in science and technology builds capability and capacity, and develops technological and technical know-how, high skills and efficiency - the sort of people who benefit the economy and society more widely. None of this should be seen as separate or other from our problems, but a long, complex, and ongoing process that will



**A generated graphic of the Mars Orbiter approaching the Martian orbit**

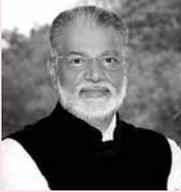
impact the country in several ways.

Indian space activity gives India a strong position in international markets for space products and satellite technology. Contrary to popular belief, space missions are not a pastime meant for the wealthy nations, but something that the wealthy nations know to be remunerative and worth investing in - which is why it is a good idea.

'Mangalyaan' or the Mars Orbiter spacecraft is equipped with an instrument that will try to measure methane in the atmosphere. The hypothesis has been that some methanogens could perhaps exist on Mars if they lived underground, away from the planet's harsh surface conditions. So no, uh, green aliens with antennae, four eyes, and a computer embedded into their stomachs *just* yet. That will require some technology beyond our means at the moment. Watch a few sci-fi movies, maybe. Or Teletubbies. It's all the same to me.

Aside from all these economic and

### The man with the mission



Leading the talented team of scientists on the Mars mission was the multi-faceted, 65-year-old, Kerala born Dr. Koppilil Radhakrishnan, the Chairman of ISRO, who described MOM's success as 'guided by wisdom and executed by youth'.

Dr. Radhakrishnan, who was decorated with the Padma Bhushan in 2014 for his contribution to science and engineering, has an MBA from IIM-Bangalore, and a Ph.D from IIT-Kharagpur. He has had a distinguished career, and a long list of accomplishments that span

40 years in space technology, applications and space programme management. He has been variously described as 'a technocrat par excellence', an 'astute institution-builder with a strategic vision', and an 'inspiring leader' credited with nurturing leadership skills in the younger generation.

While his contribution to science and technology are known to all, few are aware that Dr. Radhakrishnan is a keen Kathakali dancer and Carnatic vocal singer too! He has excelled in music, dance and other art forms, and given vocal stage performances. Though a man of science, the ISRO chairman offered prayers before the launch, at the Tirupati Venkateswara temple about 100 km from the launch pad, with miniature replicas of the rocket and the Mars Orbiter spacecraft. Asked by the media if he was under pressure before the big event, he is reported to have smiled and said, "There's nothing like pressure if you keep doing your work." ●

— A. Radhakrishnan



Dr. Radhakrishnan (above); giving a Kathakali performance (below)

what makes this rocket power towards Mars, with such specificity in all that vast expanse of space, but I do know that it is an apt metaphor for our country. It may seem small and seemingly insignificant on the Atlas' center page, but this is proof that we can make ourselves heard and noticed.

Centuries ago, in this country, the concept of 'zero' was first put into use. And now, a combination of ones and zeros, pumps, titanium, rocket fuel, engines, and a whole lot of pride and hard work has gone into the Mangalyaan that sets out to plant the figurative 'flag' of India on the Final Frontier, and I have no doubt it

will succeed. ■



The writer is an Arts student at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. She is a voracious reader and enjoys writing and working on her blog.

scientific benefits, it fulfills the most primitive of human instincts when it seeks to answer questions about life,

climate, and the loss of a large bulk of the atmosphere of Mars; this instinct being curiosity. I'm no scientist, so I don't know



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# Kutiyattam - the last bastion of classical Sanskrit theatre

*Many consider Kutiyattam of Kerala as the purest presentation of classical Sanskrit drama, perhaps the last such bastion of ancient Indian theatre. It relies less on text and more on interpretation and performance, making it very much an actor's theatre, says Dr. Kanak Rele.*

HERE are two types of *kuttu* in Kerala. The *Prabandham Kutta*, popularly known as *kuttu*, is concerned with the exposition of Puranic stories by the actor in the role of the Vidushaka. The other is the actual staging of Sanskrit plays called Kutiyattam. Nangyar *kuttu* is not a distinct type; it is mono-acting by a Nangyar representing, through gestures alone, the story line or episode selected for enactment.

Kutiyattam is often defined as the traditional presentation of classical Sanskrit drama on the Kerala stage. It is also frequently described as the only surviving form of the Sanskrit theatre in the whole of India. Sometimes it is also claimed that it is the most authentic and pristine form of ancient Indian theatre.

The entire body of the actor and his costume are involved in this process of aesthetic communication. The actor, with the active support of the drummer, has to rouse the imagination of the spectator, so that the latter can catch up with the flights of imagination of the former, while presenting detail after detail of a specific passage.

## Less text, more interpretation

Kutiyattam seems to prefer a minimal text to one that contains descriptions of what the actor has to do every moment of the play. The playwright who specifies in advance what the character has to do before or during or after a piece of dialogue or

monologue is not the ideal playwright for the Kutiyattam theatre.

The attempt to present imagined reality taxes and teases the imagination of the actor as well as the person who prepares the manual. Ideally there is no text without performance: in fact, it is the performance that determines the text. In Kutiyattam it seems the performance is the real text. The elaboration is the contribution of the performer. It is achieved in a number of ways. One of them is the narration of the events starting at some point in the past and leading up to a particular point in time. Another device is the narration in reverse: from the present moment back to some point of time in the past. A third is the narration entirely through gesticulation without the actor or actress speaking. A fourth means of elaboration is the illustration by narrating an implied story within a story. The purpose of all this elaboration is to dramatise an interesting event or anecdote which may be interesting in itself, although it may not be an integral part of the main plot. In fact, Kutiyattam is seldom concerned with the mere telling of a particular story from beginning to end. It delights in delaying, deferring the end.

## The venue called *Kuttambalam*

Kutiyattam is performed within a *Kuttambalam*, one of the five structures (*pancha prasada*) attached to a temple, which has been sanctified with rituals. It is limited to actors from the communities

of Chakyar (each temple has particular families ordained to perform the plays) and Nambiar, and is performed as a mode of worship or offering. Kutiyattam is a ritualistic theatre (*natya yajna*) which, once commenced, should not be stopped till its successful completion.

Before Kutiyattam can start, the lamp on the stage is lighted with a wick from the sanctum sanctorum. The Chakyar offers *naivedyam* to Ganapati and Saraswati, while the Nangyar invokes these deities as well as the *dikpalas* by singing *Akkitta* verses.

## Origin of Kutiyattam

According to the Kerala tradition, it was King Kulasekhara Varman, who lived around 900 AD and authored the two dramas, *Subhadradhananjaya* and the *Tapatisamvarana*, who was responsible for reforming the Sanskrit stage in Kerala. It is said that in this work he was ably helped by a Brahmin scholar, popularly known as Tolan. The innovations attributed to Tolan and the king mainly are: (a) the introduction of the local language by the Vidusaka to explain the Sanskrit and Prakrit passages, (b) the addition of the humorous element by introducing extraneous matter such as the parody on the four *Purusarthatas*, and (c) the confining of the staging of Sanskrit plays as a temple-art to be performed exclusively by the Chakyar and the Nambiar community. The art of staging these Sanskrit plays in Kerala has been handed down from

generation to generation as an exclusive hereditary profession by the Chakyars and Nambiar. The real actors are the Chakyars, and the women of the Nambiar community called Nangyars. There are several references in literature about the Nangyars as great dance experts. The Nangyar's duty is not only to play the role of the female characters wherever required, but also to sing songs and to use the cymbals to keep the *tala*. The women of the Chakyar community have nothing to do with the stage.

### The staging of Kutiyattam

The Sanskrit plays were staged by the Chakyars only in the vicinity of temples. It was developed exclusively as a temple-art. Some of the big temples like those at Trichur, Perumanam and Irinjalakkuda have theatres called *Kuttambalam*. On one side of the performance area is the green-room, in front of it is the stage, and the rest of the place is for the audience -this is the general arrangement in the theatres. At the back of the stage, inside a wooden frame are kept two big drums called *Mizhavu* which are big pots about three feet high made of copper, with the mouth covered tightly with leather. The Nambiar plays on them with his hands. There is a high seat for the Nambiar to sit upon while playing on the drum.

The decoration of the stage, *Rangaprasadhana*, is done with tender leaves of coconut palms, bunches of tender coconuts, plantain trees with fruits, red silk and the cylindrical measuring vessel called *para* filled with rice. The pillars are decorated by covering them with silk. There is one stool on the stage for the actor to sit upon when necessary.

The Natyashastra prescribes an elaborate series of preliminaries called *Poorvaranga*, which must be performed before the actual drama can begin. This is the basis for the preliminary rites performed by the actors on the Kerala stage. The preliminary rituals and the



A Kutiyattam performance on stage

first introduction of the main character get over on the first day. From the second day onwards begins the *Nirvahana* of the hero, which is the description of his earlier life prior to the incidents to be actually staged. Next comes the first introduction of the Vidushaka (jester or clown) followed by the *Purusartha* discussion which takes four days to finish. Then the actual *Nirvahana* of the Vidushaka begins.

Broadly speaking, the *aharya* or make-up for the Kutiyattam may said to be similar to that of the Kathakali, but simpler. In Kutiyattam, *chutti* or the lining made with rice-flour paste around the cheek and the chin is narrower; the head-dress is also smaller.

There are in fact, different types of make-up like *paccha*, *pazhukka*, *kari* and *katti*. Kings of magnanimous nature have *pazhukka* make-up, and their face is painted in a reddish colour. Haughty characters like Ravana have the *katti* type; as in Kathakali here also there is a round ball on the tip of the nose. The female characters have also the *pazhukka* make-up and have special dress, jacket and an upper garment (*uttariya*) rolled like a sacred thread.

### The role of the Vidushaka

The Vidushaka is the most prominent character in *kuttu* and *kutiyattam*; his

role has grown in size and importance in the course of time, and has almost overshadowed all the other characters of the plays enacted. He is the only person who speaks in the local Malayalam language, and explains the Sanskrit and Prakrit passages spoken by the other characters in his presence. Both by his words and by his actions he adds to the humorous element. It is no wonder that he has come to occupy a unique position in the traditional Kerala stage.

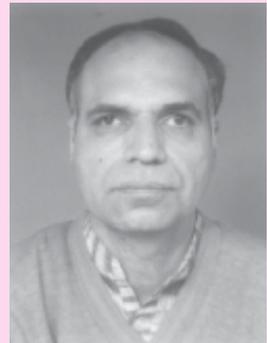
He has absolute freedom of speech. Personal references, pointed allusions and innuendos were the weapons put into the hands of the Chakyars, and these they used unsparingly, whether the victims were princes or nobles, patricians or plebians, when the good of the society necessitated an exposure of their conduct. The Vidushaka gets ample opportunity to criticise the administration, and point out the defects of corruption, with sharp thrusts. Being a fool he has the liberty to criticise even the king! ■



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

# Protectors also need protection!

*It is a remarkable fact about our country that despite the hostile environment for social activism, there is no dearth of sincere and committed activists who strive to help in the implementation of government schemes. Then, it is the State's duty to provide them with protection.*



**Bharat Dogra**  
is a Delhi-based freelance journalist who writes on social concerns.

**A**N important source of strength for India's democracy comes from organisations and individuals who have devoted their life to protecting the rights of the weaker sections. They go from struggle to struggle to make available land to the landless, fight corruption to ensure that development funds reach the poorest, and organise protests to ensure that hospitals and schools properly meet the needs of the poorest sections.

In the process, these social activists and organisations incur the wrath of many vested interests. At the village level, these may include the most powerful persons of the area, who then gang up against the activists and their organisations. Earlier, they attacked such activists more directly. Now a cleverer ploy is to use the name of someone from the weaker sections to lodge false complaints against these activists, and then pay bribes to ensure that these charges are not withdrawn easily. Some activists are attacked; others find their resources depleted by false cases and investigations which can drag on for a long time. Even if the charges are proven entirely false or the cases are withdrawn after a while, during the interim period the registration of the organisation can be cancelled or the permission to obtain donations can be withdrawn.

This is why it is important to create conducive conditions in which such threats are minimised for honest and dedicated social activists. Political leaders keep calling upon the youth to devote more time to national work. It is imperative then that these leaders also come forward to ensure that some protection is available to these youth.

Let's take a case in point: Raja Bhaiya is a social activist of Banda district (Uttar Pradesh), who decided to devote his life to helping the weaker sections. At a very young age he started teaching children from the economically weaker sections, and succeeded in starting two schools. Later, when he was able to get resources for working in a more organised

way at a larger level, the organisation founded by him 'Vidyadham Samiti' grew rapidly and ended up confronting powerful vested interests. Whether it was a matter of fighting corruption or securing the release of bonded workers, or carrying out a campaign against hunger deaths and farmers' suicides, Vidyadham Samiti was always in the frontline - collecting facts, organising protests, helping the poorest families in various ways.

This annoyed the vested interests and they ganged up to file false complaints and cases against Raja Bhaiya and his organisation. But it is to their credit that they faced the situation with patience and courage. One by one, the inquiries were completed and the complaints against them were found to be false.

These efforts of Vidyadham Samiti were helped by the fact that several senior officials were by now well aware of the conspiracy hatched against this organisation. Several senior social activists had written to the officials regarding this matter, and the officials themselves examined the field-level realities to confirm that the Samiti had indeed done very good work. The Commissioners of the Supreme Court and their advisers in the right to food case had initiated efforts in some vulnerable areas to improve the performance of poverty-alleviation programmes. In this work too, Vidyadham Samiti had made a valuable contribution, which was recognised by officials and advisers.

Thus, the help initiated by senior social activists and the understanding attitude of senior officials came to the rescue of these very dedicated social activists at a critical time. Similar efforts are needed when other social activists and organisations are threatened in numerous ways in various parts of the country.

After all, those who devote themselves to protecting the interests of weaker sections also need, and deserve, protection! ■

# Make in India

*Small and micro enterprises contribute eight percent to India's GDP, yet they are vulnerable to business cycles and changes in the market, with not much support or credit to fall back on. Strengthening this 'bottom of the pyramid' will result in strengthening livelihoods and local production.*



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**A**RMIES of micro and small enterprises make products and provide services in India. They work out of tiny spaces, literally holes in the wall, with or without power, usually with none or only one or two apprentices or wage earners making traditional and simple products. (This does not include the army of small and marginal farmers). These are the recorded non-farm livelihood of millions of Indians, often identified as Own Account Enterprises (OAE) - with family labour, but no hired help.

According to the last, 4th All India Census of Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSME) estimates, there were 26 million such enterprises employing 60 million people. Only 1.5 million are registered and 95.05% of these are micro enterprises, mostly OAEs. Microenterprises have investments of less than Rs. 25 lakhs each and one or two hired help. They contribute to 8% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), 40% of manufactured output and 45% of exports according to the Prime Minister's Task Force on MSME 2010. The enterprises fall into categories of traditional handicrafts, handlooms and modern activities like machine repair and assembly. The modern ones tend to be captives of larger enterprises. They often exist in clusters that resemble beehives of mutual dependence and completion. Many schemes, including priority sector credit at concessional rates have been put in place. Many commissions have studied their problems (including the famous Arjun Sengupta Report of 2006, the Prime Ministers Task force on MSMEs in 2010), but there has been no study of the felt needs of the micro entrepreneurs. There is no institutional arrangement whereby their multidimensional needs can be addressed locally and promptly. They remain vulnerable to losses, business cycles, changes in market demand and credit shortages, while they provide low quality employment to many.

Beneath this thick layer of micro enterprises there is yet another new and even tinier sized layer of enterprises, that of women's self -help groups (SHGs), that produce or market products all over India, but most noticeably in Kerala, by members of their poverty elimination mission called 'Kudumbashree'.

Of all the programmes, the most well-designed and calibrated micro-finance programme implemented for financial inclusion based on the livelihood approach in urban India, is the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP) dovetailed into the centrally-sponsored SJSRY, now NULM and NRLM. There are about 20 lakh SHGs linked to banks with credit. Many of them are venturing into production and the sheer range of micro enterprise and welfare related activities that, for example, Kudumbashree is involved in throughout the state, is an indication of its possibilities.

For instance, they are today involved in manufacturing (Kudumbashree brand of coconut oil, food products, Nutrimix baby food for anganwadis, curry powder, chappals, production and marketing of milk, computer units, waste collection and recycling), provision of health services in the form of clinical services, solid waste management systems, running 'Gramashree' hotels, identifying destitute and handicapped children for state support, enrolling children to schools, micro housing schemes, to agriculture (lease land farming programme, goat rabbit quail project, and dairy farming).

There is therefore a possibility at the so-called bottom of the pyramid, for strengthening livelihoods by reinforcement of local production. This would yield far greater inclusion than any manufacturing policy based on FDI. That may be more dazzling, more newsworthy, but unfortunately it does not generate adequate jobs. ■



FESTIVAL

# YOUNG

## Wangala Festival

THE Wangala or the Hundred Drums is a harvest festival of the Garo people of Meghalaya. The festival is essentially a thanksgiving ceremony expressing gratitude to the God of Fertility Misi Saljong for blessing the people with a bountiful harvest after a year-long toil.

On the first day of the festival, the village chief performs a ritual called the *rugala* in which offerings of rice and vegetables are made to the gods. On the second day a ceremony called *kakkat* is performed. People of all ages, dressed in colourful costumes and feathered headgear, gather to perform the Wangala dance to the rhythmic beat of the oval-shaped drums. The drums are accompanied by gongs and flutes made of buffalo horn.

Although the festival has been celebrated since time immemorial, its modern version was organised to preserve and promote the cultural identity of the Garo people. Since 1976, the

Wangala dance festival is organized at Asanang in November each year, in which ten troupes each comprising 30 dancers and 10 drummers participate. Hence the festival is also known as the Hundred Drums Festival.

The Wangala ceremony is usually held at the famous limestone caves of Siju in the Garo hills. Many tourists visit Meghalaya around this time to witness the colourful festival.



### STORY

## Last Job

A carpenter who had worked for a builder for twenty years decided to leave his service to take up employment with another man who had offered him a bigger salary.

"I will miss you," said his employer. "You have served me well for so long. Before you go, work on one more house."

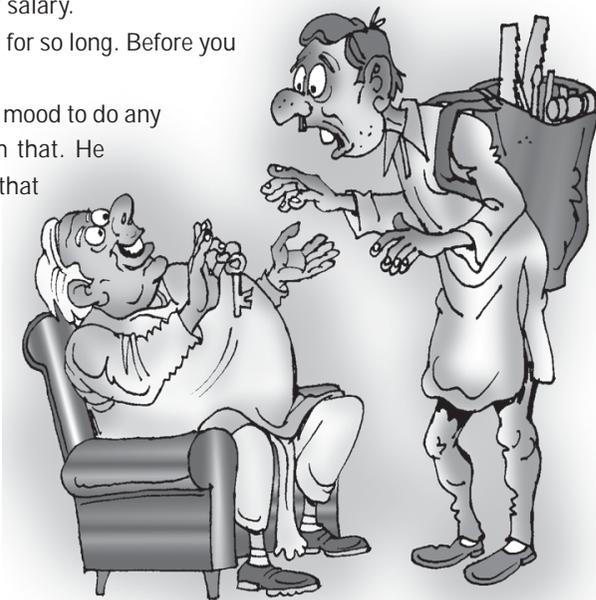
The carpenter was eager to take up his new job and was in no mood to do any more work for the man. However, he didn't want to tell him that. He did the work, but hurriedly and shoddily, knowing fully well that whatever he had made would fall to pieces within a few months.

"Serves him right," he thought. "I've slaved for him for twenty years but he has never ever given me a paisa more than my salary in appreciation."

He went to the builder and told him he had finished.

"My best wishes are with you," said the man. "As a reward for your services I've decided to give you a house. Here's the key. It's the house you have just finished working on."

**Moral:** Whatever you do, do it honestly and to the best of your ability. Dishonesty never pays.



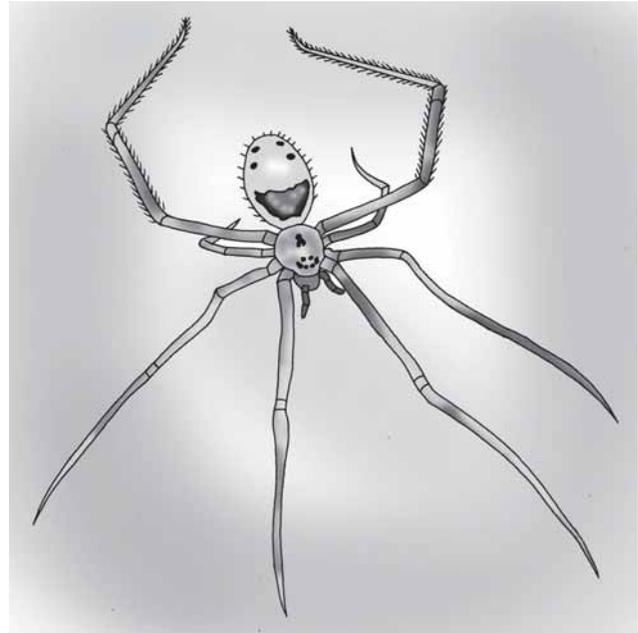


## The Happy Face Spider

AMAZING LIVING WORLD

THE happy face spiders, which are found only on the islands of Oahu, Molokai, Maui and Hawaii in the Hawaiian archipelago, sport coloured markings on their backs that look like smiling faces. Each spider exhibits a unique pattern which is determined by the genes it carries. Spiders with different forms of smiles and even frowns on their abdomens can be seen on the islands.

Scientists believe the spiders have developed these markings to confuse birds, their only natural predators. The survival of the species, whose scientific name is *Theridion Grallator*, is threatened by large scale destruction of rainforests- its natural habitat, and introduction of foreign species on the islands. Environmentalists have chosen the happy face spider to be the face of the conservation movement to protect Hawaii's endangered wildlife. The 5-mm long arachnids appear on T-shirts, baseball caps, postcards and even removal trucks in the island archipelago.



## ART BEAT Somnath Hore (1921 - 2006)

SOMNATH Hore was a national award winning printmaker and sculptor whose works featured the human form like few others.

Hore was born in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

He turned sculptor by accident when he was 53 years old! In 1974, Hore playfully created figures with lumps of wax discarded by students of sculpture at Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan. One of the students cast them in bronze. Then on, Hore became fascinated with creating bronzes.

In May 1975, Hore began designing a bronze sculpture of a Mother with Child to commemorate Vietnam's victory over USA. Two-and-a-half laborious years later, on the very night Hore completed his sculpture weighing almost 40 kg, the statue was stolen from the Kala Bhavan.

The episode left him very dejected. Hore is best known for his sketches of the 1943 Bengal famine titled *Janayuddha* (People's War) and the 1946 peasant unrest in Tebhaga, Bengal. Hore's work was characterised by its simplicity. He evolved a distinct style of depicting elongated suffering human figures.



## SPARKLR

### Ball Brawl

ENGLISH fast bowler George Thomas had taken two quick wickets and was bowling to Vivian Richards. Richards played forward to the ball and missed it. "It's called a ball," said Thomas, looking contemptuously at Richards.



"It's red, shiny, has a seam and you're supposed to hit it with that thing in your hands"

Richard hit the next ball for a six.

"You know what it looks like," said Richards, grinning at Thomas. "Now go and find it."

# ZOHRA SEHGAL

A legendary actor loved for her *joie de vivre* (1912 – 2014)

**A** PART from her contribution to creative and performative art forms like Indian classical dance, choreography, theatre and cinema, what stands out in the life story of Zohra Sehgal is the courage of her convictions that made her transgress seemingly regimental rules of religion and community. Way back in 1942, this 30-year-old lady from a Sunni Muslim Pathan family from Rampur, Uttar Pradesh married a Hindu Punjabi Kamleshwar Sehgal, a like-minded partner who was a young, scientist, painter and dancer from Indore. They remained wedded till he passed away in 1959. Not only was Kamleshwar from a different religion, but he was also eight years younger than Zohra. Naturally, there were objections from family quarters, but the two overcame all obstacles and tied the knot.

Zohra was an irrepressible tomboy who lived to climb trees and play boy's games, instead of playing with dolls like other girls of her age. The turning point came when as a teenager, while on vacation at Dehra Dun, she happened to watch an Uday Shankar performance. She remains the first Indian to have enrolled in Mary Wigman's ballet school in Wesden, Germany, and after graduation, she travelled to Edinburgh with her cousin where she did her apprenticeship in theatre under a British actor.

Before her graduation, Zohra travelled across India, West Asia and Europe by car with an uncle. When she came back, she joined Queen Mary's Girls College in Lahore where she had to attend college in a *burqua* as tradition in aristocratic Muslim families dictated. After this, she joined Uday Shankar's dance troupe and travelled across Japan, West Asia, Europe and USA. This trip became the platform for love between Zohra and Kamleshwar who was also a part of the same troupe. The pair worked with Uday Shankar's troupe at Almora and then formed their own dance troupe and went away to Lahore. But the pre-Partition years were filled with communal tension so the two came back to Bombay when the troupe pulled down its shutters. They

joined Prithvi Theatre and Prithviraj Kapoor became a willing mentor to Zohra. Zohra's first role in films was perhaps in *Neecha Nagar* (1946) adapted from Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, which won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival that year. She also choreographed a few films that included Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951). Her first interaction with television in India was as an actor in a serial called *Mullah Naseeruddin* based on adventures of a folk hero from Muslim folk tales.

She travelled with the theatre across India and performed everywhere including for jail inmates, which was an event far ahead of her time. After the death of her husband, Zohra first shifted to Delhi and then to London. Western audiences became familiar with Ms. Sehgal in 1962, when she appeared on television in several episodes of *Doctor Who*. This was followed by *The Courtesans of Bombay* and the mini-series *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984), besides a Merchant Ivory docudrama directed by James Ivory (1982). One of her most popular films in London was *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002). Hindi

films saw her in grandmother roles from 1996, in films like *Dil Se*, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, *Veer Zara*, *Saawariya* and *Cheeni Kum*. She was 90, when she did the film - *Chalo Ishq Ladaye*, and she was shown riding a bike and fighting the villains.

She was awarded the Padma Shri in 1998, the Kalidas Samman in 2001, the Sangeet Natak Academy Fellowship for Lifetime Achievement in 2004, the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF)-Laadli Media Awards in New Delhi, named Laadli of the century in 2008, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2010. She passed away on 10 July, 2014, at the ripe age of 102. She spiked her performances with her wonderful sense of timing, her humour, and that heavily lined face crinkled with her unceasing smile. No one perhaps has ever seen an unsmiling countenance in Zohra Sehgal. ■

– Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author, who has won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema.



# MADHAV VITHAL KAMATH

A doyen passes away (1921-2014)

A doyen of journalism, prolific author with nearly 50 books to his credit on a wide gamut of subjects, former Chairman of Prasar Bharati, educationist and political analyst par excellence, M V Kamath born on 7 September, 1921, passed away at Manipal on 9 October, 2014, after a brief illness. Ninety three-year-old Kamath was active till his last breath and his last column for the *Free Press Journal*, where he cut his journalistic teeth, appeared just a fortnight ago.

Having shifted to Manipal after a long stay in Mumbai, Kamath was instrumental in the setting up of the Manipal School of Communication and was its Honorary Director from its inception till his demise.

A graduate of the Bombay University in Physics and Chemistry, Kamath had dreamt of securing a degree in medicine. But fate had willed that journalism would be his calling, and after serving as a chemist for five years, he landed a job as a cub reporter in the *Free Press Journal* and had the privilege of being put through his paces by S. Sadanand, a legend in the field at that point of time. He was to later become the paper's Delhi correspondent and Editor.

He also edited 'Bharat Jyothi' and went on to become the United Nations correspondent of the Press Trust of India in the late fifties. Kamath also had a distinguished tenure in *The Times of India* serving in Bonn, Germany, and in Washington, where he was the paper's correspondent for nine years from 1969-78. His long assignments abroad turned him into an expert in international relations. He also had a successful stint as Editor of the then popular and now defunct journal, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, also from the Times stable, before hanging up his boots in 1981.

In well over six decades in journalism, M V Kamath earned a fair name for his honesty and integrity and had the distinction of being a witness to memorable events like the hoisting of the national flag and the lowering of the Union Jack on 15 August, 1947, and also covered the Nathuram Godse trial among other landmark events in the country's history. Not one to be bitten by the technology bug, Kamath remained wedded to his 'Olivetti' typewriter and typed out

all his articles and books himself. He also had a fascination for the written word and writing at least a thousand words every single day remained an abiding passion for him till his last days. While his weekly column in the *Free Press Journal*, 'Odd man In', covered topics of interest and was translated into other languages including Kannada as well, his books, each of which was eminently readable thanks to his free, flowing style, devoid of highfalutin prose, covered a wide range of subjects, including journalism, history, politics, biographies and even fiction.

Among the books that won him considerable acclaim from all quarters were tomes like 'Gandhi – A spiritual journey' and 'Reporter at large'. His last book released in 2009 was a biography on the present Prime Minister Narendra Modi, titled 'Narendra Modi – The Architect of a Modern State'. Strange as it may seem, Kamath who had no links with banking as an insider at any time in his life, authored the biographies of six banks with 'A Banking Odyssey – The story of Canara Bank', setting the ball rolling. He once confessed to this writer who was associated with him in penning the sequel to the biography of Canara Bank to commemorate its centenary, his teething troubles vanished after he completed the first book, and this enabled him to do adequate justice to the other assignments as well.

When the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government came to power, M V Kamath was chosen to head the Prasar Bharati. The Vajpayee government also honoured him for his contribution to Journalism, by conferring on him the Padma Bhushan award in 2004. Incidentally, M V Kamath also served on the Advisory Board of One India One People (OIOP) since its inception, and remained a source of inspiration and guidance from the days of the founder of OIOP, the late Sadanand A. Shetty and thereafter. Soft spoken, affable, accessible, and an avid conversationalist as well, M V Kamath's spartan habits, adherence to principles and his writings are certain to serve as a beacon light to the present as well as to the future generation of journalists all over the country. ■

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



# MANDOLIN U. SRINIVAS

And the mandolin falls silent (1969-2014)

**H**IS untimely death has stunned the music world. Courteous, soft-spoken, unassuming, with a child-like innocence, his mandolin spoke for him. Name and fame didn't affect him and he treated all fellow musicians and everyone in society with respect. Mandolin U. Srinivas, the child prodigy and quiet rebel, died following a liver failure in Chennai on 19 September, 2014. He was just 45.

Hailing from Palakol in Andhra Pradesh, Srinivas picked up his father Sathyanarayana's broken mandolin with precocious ease at the tender age of six. At the age of 9, he had his first public performance at the *Thiagaraja Aradhana* where he stunned all the well known musicians with his mastery over the instrument.

Srinivas's first guru was Rudraraju Subbaraju. In 1981, the 12-year-old gave his first major public concert in Chennai for the Indian Fine Arts Society.

Criticised initially for choosing the mandolin, as among the several conservative rigidities Carnatic music has, is a reluctance to admit unfamiliar instruments, Srinivas proved the sceptics wrong by how well he adapted the instrument.

He then stormed the Carnatic music scene as the swift-fingered mandolin artist. He then took the instrument, not just to stages across the state, but across the country and globe.

With his head - topped with a shaggy mane of hair - bent over his mandolin, Srinivas seemed to conjure music out of thin air; his technique gentle and seductive, his fingering immaculate. Srinivas learned by ear, listening to Carnatic singers and picking out krithis and ragams.

Like the great D.K. Pattammal in her youth, who battled barriers of her own and included improvisations considered too complex, in her repertoire, Srinivas ignored those who criticised him, and created his own kind of honest, beautiful music, convinced that he could carve his own niche in the field. He proved that the mandolin could be true to, and even enhance, the exacting demands of Carnatic music.

Apart from his Carnatic concerts, Srinivas also collaborated with western and Indian classical musicians for

fusion music performances. When McLaughlin revived his old ensemble Shakti under the name *Remember Shakti*, in 1997, Srinivas joined him, along with Zakir Hussain, singer Shankar Mahadevan, and percussionist V. Selvaganesh, all artistes raring to push beyond the boundaries of their immediate sphere of music.

Incidentally, the late Tamil Nadu chief minister, M.G. Ramachandran, after hearing Srinivas perform at a wedding, instructed his attendants to make sure Srinivas played at all AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the party founded by MGR) functions.

For all the flourish of his mandolin strings on stage, Srinivas's personal life was in doldrums. The death of Sathya Sai Baba, in 2011 depressed him, as he was a great devotee. Later, his marriage with his wife Sree came to a bitter end in 2012, on the grounds of her cruelty. She got the custody of their only son, Sai Krishna, though they had already been living separately from Srinivas since the past 16 years.

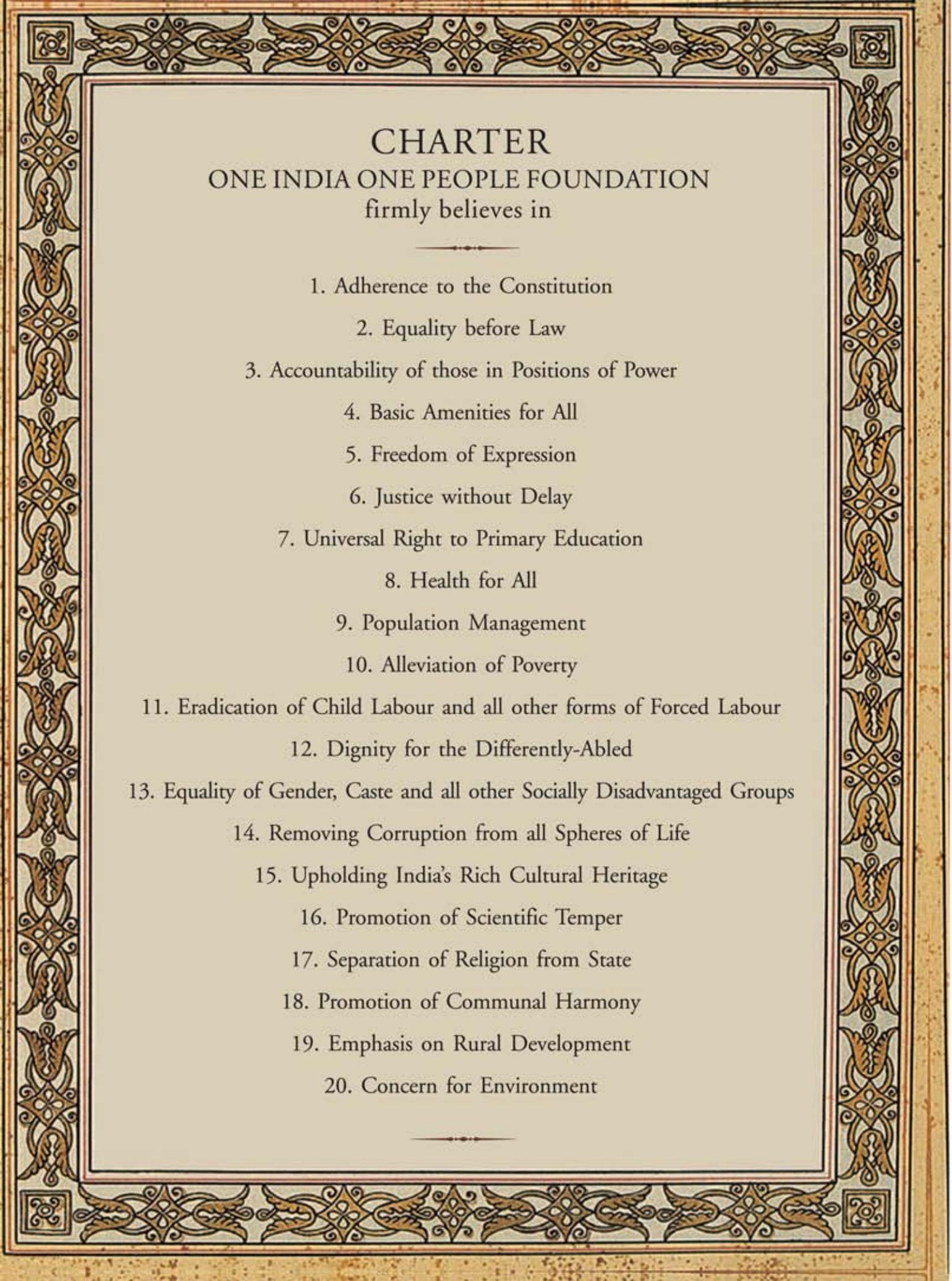
Srinivas was appointed Tamil Nadu State Musician at the age of 15. He received Sangeeta Bala Bhaskara award at the hands of M.S. Subbulakshmi. He received his Padma Shri in 1998, when he was just 19, for his contribution to the arts, although awards meant not much to him.

He gave many concerts along with his brother in several countries. He was honoured with many awards both by the State and Central governments. Other awards he received are Sangeeta Ratna, Sanatana Sangeeta Puraskar, Rajalaxmi Foundation award, National Citizen award, Rajiv Gandhi National Integration award and so on. But the irony of his life is not lost, as dancer Dr. Padma Subramaniam says:

"I would say everything about him was premature. He became a musical genius much ahead of his age. He became globally popular much ahead of his age. And he died much ahead of his age. The music world has lost a gem and a genius." ■

— A.Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist  
(Sketches of Great Indians by C.D. Rane)





CHARTER  
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION  
firmly believes in

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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 9<sup>th</sup>, 1930 – February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE