

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined



Stop! No entry!

Cyber hell

The chimera  
of beauty



**KNOW INDIA BETTER**

**Art of your feet**

*The story of a swadeshi tile company*

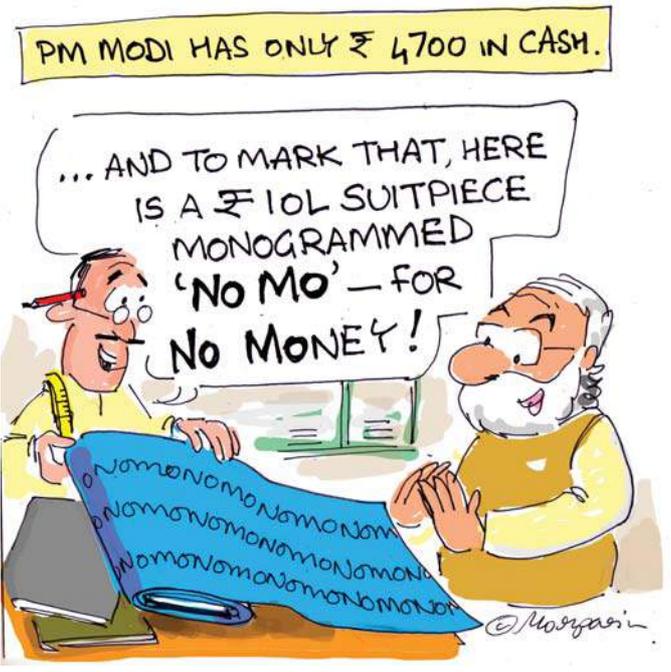


**FACE TO FACE**

**Ranejit Roy**

# stree

**MORPARIA'S PAGE**



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MARCH 2016

VOL.19/8

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**Women**



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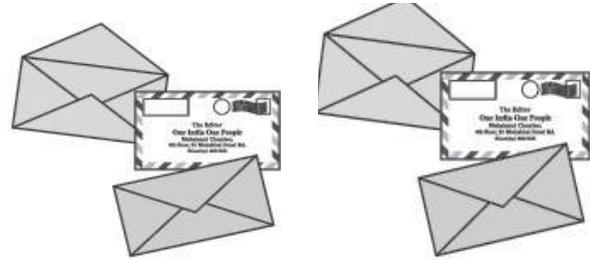
# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## “Excellent work of art”

The quality and variety of the articles in One India One People magazine as well as the careful editorial work have indeed made the magazine an excellent work of art. The students and staff of our college are really benefitting from your magazine.

– *Principal, Milagres College, Udupi District, Karnataka.*



(*GM crops-the toxic truth*). I agree that we should revive and bring back our rich grain stores and seeds, which we are losing bit by bit, with each passing day. And we should really research and study genetically modified crops in-depth before we hurry to embrace it. May better counsel prevail! I was very happy to read the tributes to Homai Vyrwalla and M.S. Viswanathan in your Great Indian section. Your magazine is indeed very informative. I also liked the Know India Better feature in the February issue about Bijapur. The writer has given a slice of history with much passion and colour. One feels like rushing to Bijapur! Best of luck to the magazine and the team.

– *M.N. Sankar, Mumbai.*

## “Good start to the year”

I have recently started receiving your magazine. The January issue (*The Indian food palate*) was very nice. It is good to start the year on a nice note! I agree with the writer Kavita Mukhi (*The safe food*) about the need for all of us to eat food that is organically grown, locally grown. If we don't patronise our local farmers, who will? That should address the farmer's needs. It's very much connected to your February issue too

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# Women, generally speaking

*Urban women are more than ready to take their place in this world, says V. Gangadhar. In fact, they already have. Will their rural sisters join them soon?*

**H**ALT, stop there. You have said enough on...Women! Yet, there are lingering doubts. Do women talk all that much as compared to men? Along with the much-written-about 'fasts unto death' in the Anna Hazare (a man) style, this kind of protest had not proved to be popular with women. Why? Women may well be able to avoid food and can well observe more 'religious' fasts than me. But ask them to keep silent and fast at the same time. They find it more difficult, not the fasting, but observing silence. The history of the freedom struggle mentions many instances of Gandhiji fasting and keeping *maun vrat*, he was way ahead of women who excel in this double achievement.

These conclusions are drawn after years and years of study of women. Such an experience is invaluable. I was born and brought up in a female-dominated environment both on the paternal and maternal sides. Grandparents on both the sides who lived to ripe old ages, uncles and aunts of the same category, cousins who could not be ignored and four formidable sisters who did not have to pull any punches to prove their superiority. The gesture of my grandparents to feed the entire village and celebrate the birth of a son did not cut much ice with my sisters and female cousins, who, when parents were not on the scene, referred to me as a spoilt brat, though I assure you, I was never one.

My strategy was clear cut, respect the majority and follow the leader. To draw a literary parallel, at the Eatanswill election attended by Mr. Pickwick and his friends, they formed the strategy of supporting and shouting with the larger mob. But, what if there were two mobs, a large one and a small one? Mr. Pickwick came out with the gem of an idea, 'Follow the larger one'. Effective strategy, which gave me no trouble for the rest of my life, and never failed me.

Mind you, women domination never hurt me. At *Reader's Digest* where I worked for more than a decade, most of my

American bosses were women and we got along famously and produced some great editions. They took quick decisions (always correct), never interfered with original ideas, and were quick in appreciating good work. This kind of work environment highlighted the tenure of the Indian women political leaders.

I was fortunate to be a journalist at the time of Indira Gandhi who was acknowledged as the only 'male' in the Indian cabinet and stood up to the arm twisting of the notorious Nixon-Kissinger clique and the *khadi*-clad

**Women may well be able to avoid food and can well observe more 'religious' fasts than me. But ask them to keep silent and fast at the same time. They find it more difficult, not the fasting, but observing silence.**

hypocrites who thronged the Morarji crowd of supporters. At the dozens of journalism schools and colleges where I taught, almost 90 per cent of the toppers were girls. At the job market, the situation remains the same. The news rooms of publications are again packed with girls. The situation is the same in business schools, medical colleges.... And I am made to wonder, where have the boys gone? Mind you, some of these avenues were not even open to women. Even in progressive homes, parents were reluctant to allow girls to opt for journalism and advertising where they had to interact with boys and stay out till late hours. At least in cities like Mumbai, the walls had crumbled, though the other cities have not done much for women's safety.

The urban Indian population is marching ahead, the question of competing with girls is almost a dead issue. Sometimes it is difficult to give a satirical twist to the Man-Woman issue. Mind you the battle is very much on. Women



are ready to take their roles as fighter pilots, submariners and several other skilful and risky jobs which were not open to them. In future, when they are joined by their rural sisters, the sky will be the limit for them. ■

**V. Gangadhar is a well-known satirist.**

# Stop! No entry!

*Women in India have opened yet another frontier in their battle for equality. They have laid siege to temples like Shani Shingnapur and Sabarimala, which are traditionally closed to women. Will these agitations lead the temples to open their minds and doors?*

**E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan** examines the issue.

FROM ever since I can remember, there have been many taboos associated with women and temples. Starting from the one on 'No entry' into temples on the days you menstruate. Now, my generation liked to conform, but we were not *goongi gudiyas* (dumb dolls). But even some of us fire-brands didn't think twice about following the temple rules. We weighed it against the startling stories told to us by our mother and grandmothers' generation, of women being physically segregated during their periods and being treated as 'untouchables'. Did you know that a menstruating woman had to be in a separate room those three days and she was handed food to eat from a distance? Separate vessels were kept for her and she couldn't come in contact with anyone. So three days out of every month you were 'persona non grata'!

In cities with crowded living spaces, segregation was not a practical thing and my generation was spared that. So not being able to visit a temple on those days seemed like a completely laughable non-issue. Unless of course, there happened to be a temple *utsavam* or festival which we desperately wanted to attend. We used to pray for our periods to be either postponed or advanced drastically by some miracle. Seldom were these prayers heeded!

Now, not being allowed to visit temples on 'those' days and not being allowed entry into a temple *at all* – are two different issues. We girls were subjected to both. The former we can live with, though some youngsters are questioning even that, and the latter, women today don't want to blindly accept any more.

## The Sabarimala ritual

Hailing from Kerala, we knew about Sabarimala and its strange rituals. In fact, the annual Sabarimala exodus in December was an exclusively and almost obsessively a male ritual. Those making the annual pilgrimage had a certain sense of entitlement that was a bit over the top. We were well aware of this exclusion. At a deep level though, I didn't have this craving to visit this temple at any cost. We had enough temples down in the plains to visit. I never thought of being excluded from Sabarimala as being 'discriminated against'.

But as I said, up until my generation, conformity was a valued quality.

Two events in the recent past have brought this issue to the fore. And have forced even women like me to question our beliefs and customs. First, the unfortunate comment by the Sabarimala Devaswom Board chief Prayar Gopalakrishnan who said, 'Till the day a machine is invented which can detect if a woman is menstruating or not, women can't be allowed to enter the holy precincts'. This led to a lot of umbrage and outrage among women. It was akin to waving, well, a red rag. Now, why did he make this extremely provocative comment? It was in response to a question whether young women will ever be allowed entry into Sabarimala.

But first a background. This temple in Kerala to 'bachelor' god Ayyappan is strictly 'No entry' for women in the reproductive (menstruating) age, i.e, women in the age-group of 10-50 years. And has always been so. But as with most things, women have in recent times questioned this dubious rule. What Gopalakrishnan seemed to imply is that women cannot be 'trusted' to follow the temple-going rules. Really? All these years, women have followed the very rigid rules governing temple entry and have passed down these archaic rules to the next generation. And here he is implying that women can't be trusted? What about the other Ayyappan temples in South India that women visit freely? Aren't women being 'trusted'?

## Pune leads the way

Maharashtra has shown the way for gender equality in other ways too. The busy metropolis of Pune houses two institutes - Jnana Prabhodini and Shankar Seva Samiti, which train women in becoming priests, an unheard of practice in modern times. The institutes offer one-year and eight-month courses respectively, and training is given in religious rituals, where they are also taught Sanskrit since most of the prayers and chants are in this classical language. Women finishing this course conduct private religious ceremonies like the thread ceremony, house warming rituals, Sarasawti *puja*, naming ceremonies and weddings and are quite popular. It is worth noting that women priests were part of Vedic traditions. How we conceded these traditions to men, is another story altogether.

to do the right thing there? The only thing Gopalakrishnan should have addressed himself to, is whether women in the reproductive age group should be allowed entry into Sabarmiala temple or not. Not whether they can be trusted to stay away from the temple during their periods, if entry is allowed. He did stir some hornet's nest here!

### The foiled Shani Shingnapur storming

The second incident was the attempted 'storming' of the Shani Shingnapur Temple by women. The provocation here was strong enough. Last November, a young girl either by accident or deliberately climbed the open platform in front of the deity where women are barred and offered a quick prayer. This very slight incident led to the temple authorities performing rituals to 'purify' the desecrated place! This created immense outrage among women in Maharashtra who are increasingly opposing such antiquated practices (see box).

Until about 400 years ago, women were not allowed into the Shani Shingnapur temple complex, but in 2011, following an agitation by rationalists, women were allowed inside, but not to the shrine's core area, a platform where a *murti* (idol) of the deity, Shani, is kept for prayers. Following the act by the young girl last November and the purification rituals performed by the temple authorities, about 400 women volunteers, mainly hailing from Pune and led by 31-year-old Trupti Desai, president of Bhumata Brigade, made an unsuccessful attempt to march to the temple when police stopped the marchers at Supa village, 70 km from the temple. But they have petitioned the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis and seem determined to hold their course on this.

If you thought Hindu temples are the only ones under siege, you would be wrong. The Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA) has petitioned the Bombay High Court seeking a ruling to lift the ban on women entering its inner sanctum.

### Why out of bounds?

Now, I don't buy this argument. I believe no temple or place of worship can and should be out of bounds for anyone. Period. And if one is worried about the 'impure' days, haven't women self-regulated their entry all these years? The taboo connected with entering the temple during menstruation is so strong that most women will think it a sacrilege to even think that thought. So why not continue to trust us on this?



Trupti Desai petitioning Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for entry of women into Shani Shingnapur temple

And if women are questioning even this belief, then perhaps it's time to do just that, question it! Just as my generation had to face a lesser penalty for menstruating, I think the current generation is going to demand more concessions. Perhaps entering a temple during their periods will no longer be a taboo for them. I may not do it. But I can imagine that many young women today will not think twice about it. But that, I very strongly feel, is a matter left between the God and His/Her believer. Do we really need to invent a 'menstruation detecting machine' for that?

### The right to pray

At the core of it, it all comes down to this: Who decides who can visit the temple and on what days? Who decides what is impure, unclean and not worthy of being allowed entry into a temple? What indeed, are temples? Temples are man-made structures – be it a small make-shift shrine under a tree or a grandiose structure housing multiple deities. Man has made the rituals and practices and some of them may be ancient rituals which most of us respect and follow. But every now and then, a shake-down of beliefs, sometimes blind beliefs is very necessary, as is happening now, across regions and temples.

There was a message doing the rounds on the social media that men who are wife beaters, rapists, eve-teasers, cheats, thieves and paedophiles are allowed into temples with no machine scanning their 'impure' minds. Touché! Doesn't it reveal a grossly patriarchal attitude which decides who to allow entry and who not to allow? Isn't the right to pray in a temple my basic, innate right, forget the Constitution?



Perhaps it's time for the impossible to become possible. ■

E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan is Assistant Editor, One India One People.

# Between curry, classes and chores

*Women are born multitaskers, bar none. Nivedita Louis gives a piquant account of what it takes to get through a day for a woman juggling with home, career, bills and kids. And she is not far off the mark.*

I bite my nail, my thoughts wandering and my fingers flitting over the keyboard. A ding from the washing machine says clothes are ready for drying and another ding from the oven says the curry is ready. As I run from the washing machine to the oven, carefully remembering my next line to be typed on the laptop, I forget somewhere about calling the electrician to fix the calling bell. As I sit to type again, there is a call from the daddy about which vegetables and fruits to buy. As I contemplate between cabbage and cauliflower, the rice cooker whistles to me indicating it will mash up the rice if I don't switch off the stove that very moment.

## And the Oscar goes to...

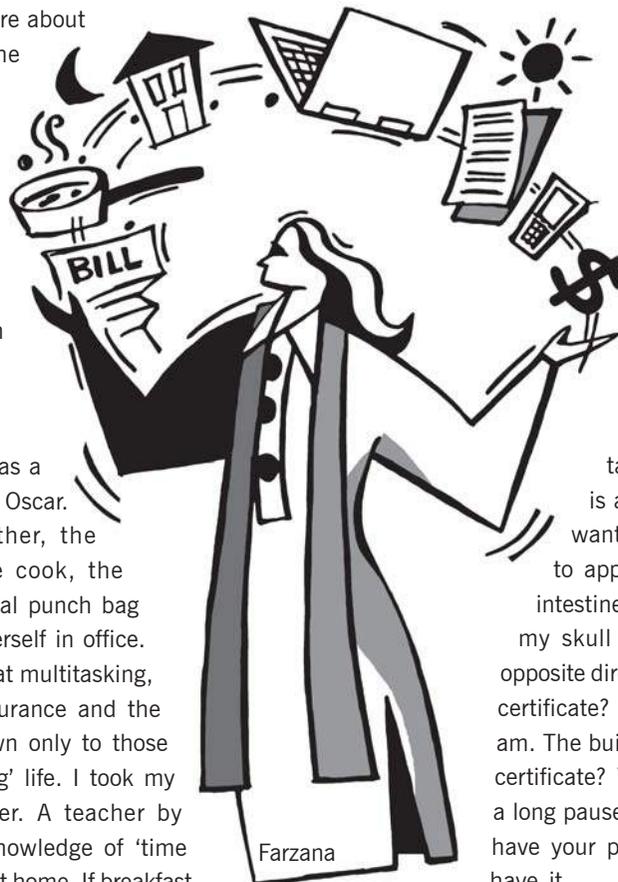
Life as a woman – that too as a multitasking woman is worth an Oscar. We don the role of the mother, the daughter, the 'iron' lady, the cook, the cleaner, the driver, the emotional punch bag and at times even the 'devil' herself in office. When everyone says I am good at multitasking, yes, I smile gleefully. The endurance and the pain behind that smile is known only to those who live the same 'multitasking' life. I took my initial lessons from my mother. A teacher by profession, she instilled the knowledge of 'time management' in every one of us at home. If breakfast was at 8 am sharp, the table would be ready, plates brimming with those white bombs that she called idlis, and she would already be by the dressing table tying her hair and speaking, i.e., yelling over the phone at her father.

Her evenings were filled with theorems and essays. She would sit nearby marking her papers as we three children sat

by her, memorising formulas and theorems. She would occasionally correct my English poetry - "See, you are again reading it as if you are a news reader. Put more emotion". I would read again aloud and poor Wordsworth would be turning in his grave. The grinder would be churning out dosa batter on one side and my grandfather chatting with his daughter about his day.

In all ways I have tried to emulate her, playing the miserable mom, dutiful daughter, happy housewife and steely career woman. Managing bills is something that I never find easy. I set alarms in mobile that go off on my electricity bill due date which I dutifully turn off. Water tax and property tax - whoa, that is another story. When the husband wants me to complete all formalities to apply for a housing loan, I feel my intestines being pulled out and placed in my skull and my brain travelling in the opposite direction. You have the encumbrance certificate? Yes, ma'am. The plan? Yes, ma'am. The building permit? Yes, ma'am. Salary certificate? Yes. Bank statement? Yes. Then a long pause. The next question will be, "You have your passport copy? Hallelujah! Yes, I have it.

Applying for a loan, applying for a passport renewal, change of address in a gas card, booking cooking gas on time, keeping alive the ration card, linking your Aadhar card, renewing your driving license, prompt payments toward your credit cards on time, renewing your life insurance, renewing insurance of your car, bike, periodic service of your two-wheelers, four wheelers,



servicing your air-conditioners, renewing your tata sky, updating your passbook in multi-various banks, mind you, they are always strategically located at two different corners of the city, paying your telephone bill, your mobile bill, paying the *dhoodhwallah* (milkman), the newspaper, phew...I am tired even mentioning all this.

Apart from this, remember, you have the parent teacher meet where you smile and smile till your ears ache at the 'achievements' of your little monsters, their dance classes, abacus classes, IIT coaching class, music class and what not. My two-wheeler has spent more time with me than the inmates of my home. We are both made for each other. He knows my emergencies and at the right moment, he will fail me, a flat tire winking at my poor self, as I stand in the mid day sun, late for an important appointment. Whenever I get the upper hand, I don't mind kicking him when the self-starter fails. Most two wheeler companies have developed bikes that always have faulty self starters, so we women can imagine the face of whoever messed up with us that day and kick the bike to a sputtering start. Yayy to that!

The whole office knows you as the 'multitasking' woman as you keep issuing tickets on one hand and the mobile is with its speaker on. 'Two Chennai', you yell and issue a ticket and the next moment it is Pythagoras theorem with the son, 'a squared + b squared = c squared'. It is always me, squared. For ages we have been trying to find x and trying to square a, b and c. All that is being squared is us, the poor multitasking women. Multitasking is like juggling a colourful array of balls, only we are not sure of which one is what. When praises are heaped on our women on multitasking, I feel it is just piling up more and more pressure on the hapless women. So much of pressure that we fervently wish someone from High Above will deliver us from Evil.

### The multitasking millstone

How do we do all this? The feeling of supporting the whole world on our shoulders - the feel of Atlas is imbibed in us right from the day we start wearing our skirts and frocks. The domestic world revolves around us. The official world cannot just tick without our strategic decisions. We are like the rope walkers, balancing our education, career, family and social life with aplomb. When I mention a 'social life', I mean the total absence of it. Every time a child is born, we may

add to our list the vaccination schedule, the feeding schedule, the diaper changing schedule and the every morning potty schedule, which reminds me of my time as a doting mother to our son who loved his potty time. The longer his loo time, the more jobs I could juggle in between. As he sat on the commode and drove it like a Ferrari all over the hall, I could chop vegetables, make his soup in the kitchen and run his bath, keeping a watch over the commode and its contents that threatened to spill over anytime!

As our biological clock ticks by faster, we realise we are far better at multitasking than the most talented jugglers. We know how to handle the worst customer and the husband in his foulest mood. Almighty has bestowed on us the power to remember a lot many things, the power to remain organised under stress and the clarity to pursue our needs. The cerebral cortex of women is designed to withstand pressure, to organise in adversity and to convert short term memory to longer ones. No wonder our stay-at-home grandmothers did them well, starting from saving money in those kitchen containers, micro managing funds, saving all that is possible for the family, cooking and caring for all at home, and managing cattle and fields.

These days, multitasking has just become a tad bit stretched. In addition to homes, we have offices to manage, where files wait on our table for days till we get back to our seats and dust them off. The stress of having to do justice to both the family and career is crushing us. At times, the stress is too much to bear. There are few who just throw away career to favour the family, like me. There are few others who have opted to be better career women. For the vast majority, life everyday is a tight rope walk, oscillating between the family and career. Having been bred in a world of multitasking women all around us, we the women can always strike a balance, for God gave us a little edge over the men,

in organising and striking gold. Even God couldn't multitask and gave Himself a day off and we run around the mill, doing what we do best-multitasking! ■

Nivedita Louis is a writer, blogger and social activist by choice. Bitten by the travel bug, and smitten by nature, she loves travelling and cooking. She blogs at [www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com](http://www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com).



### You should know

*Saalumarada Thimmakka, a self taught environmentalist, has along with her late husband planted and tended to 384 Banyan trees on a 4 km stretch of highway between Hulikal and Kudur. Born in the Hulikal village located in the Magadi Taluk of rural Bengaluru, the couple didn't have kids and instead of giving in to the social ridicule, started grafting Banyan saplings to nurture and raise them as their own children. The couple would carry four buckets of water for the trees every day. The locals have named her 'Saalumarada' which means rows of trees in Kannada. She unfortunately lost her husband in 1991. She became well known after receiving the National Citizens Award in 1996 and the Godfrey Phillips Award in 2006. Sadly, Saalumarada Thimmakka still lives in poverty despite all the recognition.*

# Cyber hell

*The use of social media and mobile phone to harass and stalk women has become very common today. And will only rise, unless we teach our girls that they can and must fight back, says **Reshma Jain**. Supporting this must be a strong cyber investigation arm of the police.*

**M**ISOGYNY - described as hatred of or ingrained prejudice against women - finds ever new ways to express itself, it appears. The social media, the internet, the mobile phone - all powerful tools of communication, with the last mentioned even considered a safety aid for women are being used to stalk, harass and blackmail women and girls. Cyber stalking, cyber bullying, cyber pornography, using the mobile phone camera to blackmail or text offensive matter can have male victims too of course, but it is the women who bear the brunt of it. It is ironic and immensely distressing that technology that is considered to be empowering can actually be the source of physical, social and psychological trauma for women.

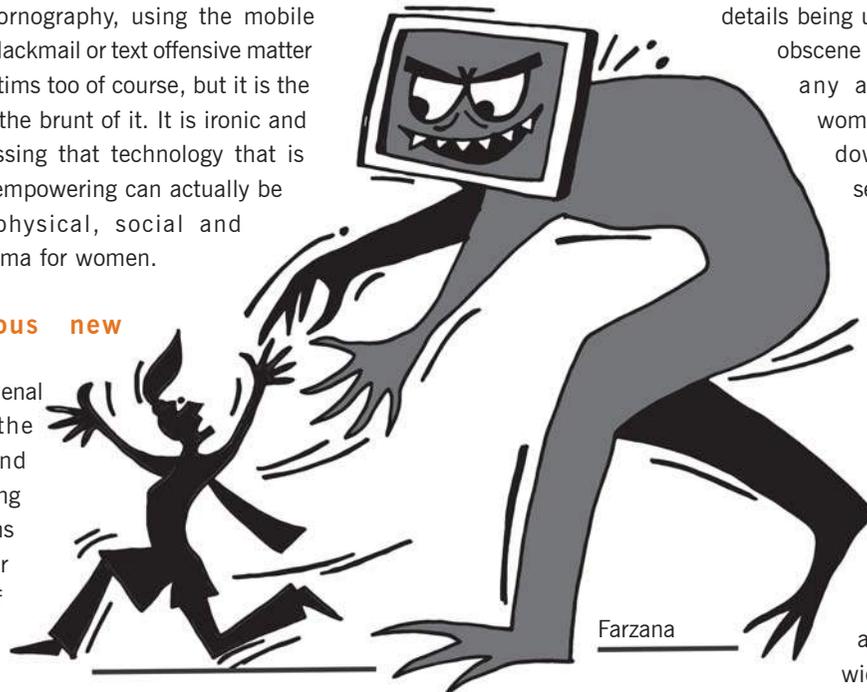
## India's dubious new revolution

India's phenomenal attraction for the mobile phone and internet is a talking point, and in terms of the sheer number of users of both, we are apparently poised to overtake almost all other countries shortly. It is no surprise then that cyber crimes and blackmail and harassment via the mobile phone is also on the rise. In the period 2010 to 2013 alone, according to the Business Standard quoting the National Crime Records Bureau, registered cases of cyber crime shot up by 350% from 966 to 4,356! Imagine how much that figure must have increased up to the present and how many must go unregistered. Of course, these figures include all forms of cyber crime, but a search on the internet shows that each state in the country is showing a rising incidence of such crimes against women.

That women make 'soft' and easy targets especially in India is a fairly obvious conclusion. All our socio-cultural prejudices go towards not only making the victim feel guilty, but also discouraging her from complaining. Almost every day newspapers report cases of girls being blackmailed and women who have sought divorce or refused a suitor or confronted a harasser, being defamed with their personal

details being uploaded or being sent obscene suggestive texts. Read any article that talks of women's issues and scroll down to the comments section. You will find any number of downright abusive, sexist and misogynistic trolls having a field day. Women journalists have also had the experience of being "targeted", whether on facebook or twitter.

The examples of all these kinds of crimes are simply too many and widely reported, to again be mentioned here.



## How equipped are we to handle cyber crimes?

Interestingly, as lawyers and activists point out, our police and other authorities concerned are hardly well trained or well equipped even to handle such cases effectively enough to ensure conviction. The collection of electronic evidence is obviously a highly skilled task.

There has been criticism that after the Supreme Court scrapped Section 66 (A) of the Information Technology Act (it allowed arrest of persons posting offensive content on social media), there has been a rise in such crimes.

(Continued on page 16)

# Why no access?

*Disabled people are asking for just one thing – right of access to public places. Indian cities are notoriously unfriendly. Unless the disabled can access shops, toilets, offices, restaurants and public buildings with ease, they will continue to feel and be seen as second class citizens, says Malini Chib. This is even more true of disabled women. Is India listening?*

**H**AVING spent half my life, in London and half my life in Mumbai, I am caught between two cities. I was born disabled in Calcutta (now Kolkata) fifty years ago. At that time nothing was known about my condition, which was cerebral palsy. My parents had to move to London as little was known about my condition. Since then, my life has been a mixture of the East and the West. I have done a degree from Xavier's, Bombay University, and my two Masters from London - one in Women's Studies, and the other in Information Management.

Currently, I live in London and have a part-time job with TCS London.

## The diverse tale of two cities

Although I am a hybrid of the East and the West, I feel a sense of belonging to both cities. In Mumbai, I grew up and spent my formative years here. The city is home for me. But London makes me feel alive because it's accessible to my wheelchair. Why, you may ask? I have negotiated London on my own despite having a severe speech impediment.

I wheel myself to work on my electric wheelchair. When it's raining, I hop on to the bus which shields me from the rain. In London, practically all the buses are accessible. Like any other colleague, I zoom in on my wheelchair and am in place at my work station at TCS London.

In London, I feel like a different human being, engaging in all activities with ease, with all places being wheelchair accessible. Due to tremendous accessibility of public places, I live a very different kind of life in London to the one I live in Mumbai.

I am seen whizzing into supermarkets, chemists, bookshops, doing the daily household chores of buying and replenishing household amenities. I negotiate the weekly laundry at the local launderette. In London, I have the freedom

to go either to an art gallery, theatre, cinema or an opera, without much ado. I can go anywhere...all this automatically gives me a sense of fulfillment. On my work days, I am seen whizzing in and out of crowds at Victoria Station and other stations. The sight is hilarious. Travelers and commuters have a look of horror as they see my wheelchair and think, "What is she doing here, she should be locked in an institution."

The freedom with which I operate in London, I can't do in Mumbai. In Mumbai, I feel helpless, dependent and like a child being helped around. In Mumbai, disabled women can go nowhere on their own. Access to a city is imperative to feel a sense of belonging. My friend Ketna Mehta who is a management consultant says:

*"I love the outdoors.... Given a choice, I would locate my workstation in a garden and work in the sun! The Mumbai coastline instantly makes me joyful and puts a smile on my face every time I drive past.... which I have been doing for 53 years....20 as a lady with spinal cord injury. I love this city and I am happy to be a Mumbaikar. I wish I could go sailing as before my accident, off the Gateway of India, and the Elephanta Caves, do window shopping on my wheelchair with curb cuts allowing me to navigate our lovely streets, spontaneously wheel into the popular restaurants, travel by our suburban trains independently, conduct all my activities without seeking support and help at every turn. Parks, banks, schools, colleges, offices, shops, buildings, theatres, movie halls, sport stadiums, public transport, municipal offices today are majorly inaccessible for me. In short, Mumbai, my city, is saying to a disabled: 'NO ENTRY.'"*

**In London, I feel like a different human being, engaging in all activities with ease, with all places being wheelchair accessible. Due to tremendous accessibility of public places, I live a very different kind of life in London to the one I live in Mumbai.**

Another disabled activist Neenu Kewlani feels that, "Mumbai Meri Jaan! the city that never sleeps, is slowing waking up to the need of a marginal change in the new structures like ramps, railings, toilets and spare



**Private buildings like the R-Mall, Mulund West, Mumbai, have ramps**



**The RTO office at Andheri, Mumbai, which doesn't have wheel chair access**

*wheelchairs made available at malls, multiplexes and a few public places.”*

### Why disabled women have it tougher

Disabled women have to think twice for their toilet needs. When I was in Xavier's for five years, I think I used the wash room about thrice in the entire period and that too because I was bursting and could not control myself. The rest of the time I refrained and held my bladder for five hours. For a city to welcome its disabled there must be accessible toilets all over the city. Actually, when I reach London, the one thing that hits me is accessibility.

Access is a major part. Although I grew up in Mumbai, I don't feel a sense of belonging. By not designing public buildings to be more accessible, it excludes mothers of infants and elderly people. If the city wants to include all its people, many more ramps, lifts and toilets for disabled people are necessary. Unless adequate thought to infrastructure is given and enough expenditure is made by the government on ramps and infrastructure, disabled people will always be excluded and marginalised. We will remain isolated, invisible, and shut away in our home.

As a citizen of Mumbai, I long for my city in which I grew up, to be accessible. I long to be visible, living a full life...But

I can't. I have tried, as I worked at Oxford bookshop in Churchgate. It was strenuous as there was no toilet. I had to come home after every two hours. This lasted five years. I felt dehumanised and I was annoyed that I could not spend one full day at work.'

Without access, disabled people will always be dependent. If we, disabled people, are not visible, attitudes towards us, will always remain negative. I end with what Neenu says that although we love our Mumbai, there is a big 'NO ENTRY' sign. Until the sign is lifted, we will remain invisible and worthless.

Access also doesn't only mean ramps and toilets. It means people's attitudes towards us. Also, we need our identities to be acknowledged with a little bit of care for us. Unless our rights as citizens are met, disabled people will always be invisible, out of the mainstream of life, and second class citizens. ■



**Malini Chib has done a double Masters from London. She is Honorary Trustee, and Honorary Co-CEO and Founder Chairperson of ADAPTS Rights Group (ARG). She is in the Diversity & Inclusion Cell with TCS London. Malini is writer, researcher, and author of the award winning book, 'One Little Finger'.**

### A gutsy woman

*If there is someone who has made her physical handicap almost an asset, it is Sudha Chandran. An accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer, she was involved in a road accident in 1981 and lost a leg. Though she was overcome with despair at this cruel twist of fate, with the help of a prosthetic Jaipur Foot, she started dancing again and has by now performed in many national and international stages to much acclaim. She also took to acting and is well-known for her TV roles as Ramola Sikand in Kaahin Kissii Roz and as Yamini in Naagin and also for playing Anand's first wife in Hum Paanch. She is known for her avant garde sarees, chunky jewellery and designer bindis. Sudha Chandran has also done several films in various languages. Her films include the 1984 popular Telugu film Mayuri in which she plays herself. It was inspired by her story.*

# Justice at last

*The Dalits are among the most marginalised and discriminated people in our country. And Dalit women are especially vulnerable to abuse and sexual assault. Hence, the work of a group of lawyers in Madhya Pradesh, many women among them, is commendable as they go about investigating and helping to build the case of those who were abused, says **Shuriah Niazi**.*

**T**HE year was 2014. In a small village in Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh, a hearing and speech impaired minor Dalit girl was brutally gang raped. When the victim's mother, Padma Devi (name changed), a daily wager, mustered up the courage to go to the police she was turned away as the authorities were 'unable to understand' what the child wanted to convey. Disappointed, she simply resigned to fate – till someone told her about a toll-free helpline she could call to register her complaint. When she called in and explained the situation, a team of legal experts from the Forum for Social and Economic Rights, a group of advocates that fights cases on behalf of victims of rape and other crimes, instantly came to her assistance. It took a month – and meetings with the State Women's Commission and the Director General of Police – but an FIR (First Information Report) was finally lodged with the promise of a proper investigation.

## The non-existent rights of Dalits

Justice, rights, equality ... these words simply don't exist in the vocabulary of the poor and socially-excluded Dalit community in the state. Most families slave away as wage labourers in the farms of wealthy land owners to make ends meet. Their children don't have access to even basic education and girls and women are extremely vulnerable to sexual assaults and other forms of violence. So what happens when a Dalit victim goes to the police to report a crime? S/he is simply sent back or threatened with dire consequences if they don't keep quiet. It's this unfortunate reality that prompted 'Jan Sahas', a non-government organisation, based in Chhindwara's neighbouring district, Dewas, to set up the Forum for Social and Economic Rights.

When Kranti Khode, one of the 25 lawyers who make up the Dewas unit of the Forum – they have branches now in districts like Indore, Ujjain and Panna – heard about Padma

Devi's daughter's case she instantly wanted to help out and went as part of the fact-finding team to Chhindwara. Accompanied by the mother-daughter duo they went to the scene of crime where the child explained everything in sign language. A woman living in the area confirmed that she had seen the girl along with two boys and that she suspected that she had been sexually exploited by them. After the Forum applied pressure, the police registered a complaint, but even then it didn't name anyone in the FIR. It was lodged against unidentified persons. Only when they approached the Madhya

Pradesh Women's Commission and the state's top cop did the local *thana* (police station) clearly name four persons in the FIR.

Khode says, "Police would not have even lodged the FIR in this case had we not intervened. Justice would have eluded the poor girl and this would have emboldened the accused persons. Over the years, I have realised that the poor need support to fight against the rich and the influential. This girl comes from a very poor family. Her parents are labourers and they have to toil all day to earn a meagre income. They can't afford to miss even a single day's work and it would have been impossible for them to leave everything and pursue their daughter's case."

## The salutary work of the Forum

In fact, lawyers like Khode have been handling a wide variety of cases. Mohan

Panchal of the Forum says, "Our group is committed to protecting Dalits and others belonging to the weaker sections of the society, particularly women and children, from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. In fact, most of the lawyers associated with the group, too, come from marginalised homes so they have natural empathy for the people they represent. The poor find it hard to speak up against the atrocities. They have neither the money and resources

**Justice, rights, equality ... these words simply don't exist in the vocabulary of the poor and socially-excluded Dalit community in the state. Most families slave away as wage labourers in the farms of wealthy land owners to make ends meet.**



**The Forum for Social and Economic Rights in Madhya Pradesh fights cases on behalf of victims of rape and other crimes belonging to the Dalit and other marginalised communities. Committed male and female lawyers of the Forum run a toll free helpline where people call in to register their complaint. Thereafter, a special team conducts a fact finding visit to the scene of crime and meets the victim and the family. (Photo credit: Shuriah Niazi/WFS)**

nor the courage to fight against the powerful elements. This is where the Forum has been making a real difference as it takes up the fight on their behalf.”

Besides standing up in the court of law on behalf of victims of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, they help forest dwellers, mostly tribals, to gain ownership rights over forest land under the Forest Rights Act and also inform people about their entitlements under government schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

In order to be easily accessible to the community, the Forum maintains a toll-free helpline service that is publicised by the grassroots activists of Jan Sahas. When someone calls in they are instantly connected to a member who makes a note of their complaint. Thereafter, a fact-finding team is dispatched to meet the victim and the family. The Forum conducts a thorough investigation to ascertain the veracity of

the case. At the same time, they ask the victim to sign on a consent letter that states that s/he is willingly handing over the case to the Forum, which would represent her/him in court.

Khode elaborates, “We take the fact-finding exercise seriously. As we are conducting an independent investigation, we plug in any loopholes left deliberately or inadvertently by the police, so that the accused can’t escape punishment in court.”

Apart from undertaking extensive fact-finding and assisting in the social rehabilitation of the victim and his/her family, the Forum diligently prepares them to appear in court and fight their case with confidence. A mock courtroom setting is recreated that they do not feel nervous while facing actual proceedings. According to Panchal, nearly 70 to 80 per cent of the complaints they receive are related to rape and sexual abuse. In addition, it has taken up several cases related to bonded labour, manual scavenging and domestic violence. “Due to the lengthy and expensive legal process, it is not easy for women who are separated from their spouse to fight for alimony. The Forum has helped many such women,” he adds.

Moreover, in order for them to do their work properly and increase outreach, the group is training youngsters to identify cases of atrocities in their villages and bring them to the attention of Jan Sahas activists or the Forum.

Of course, their main motivation to be part of this transformative process continues to be their allegiance to the idea of ensuring justice for the voiceless and powerless. Speaking for her colleagues Khode concludes, “This profession enables us to make sure that the law is enforced in all fairness. I wanted to work for the Dalits and other backward classes, which was why I joined this Forum. So far, not only have we managed to bring cases to the court of law, we have also successfully pleaded several cases. Unfortunately, for poor people, especially in the rural areas, to get their case registered is a Herculean task. To that end, we have made it easy for them and I am proud of the work our group is doing.” ■

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### **A life of conviction**

*Prajna Chowta who along with her French husband Philippe Gautier, a film-maker, set up the ‘Aana Mane’ base camp for elephants at Dubare in the Kodagu forest of Karnataka, has finished almost two decades with these giants of the jungle. In 2002, she set up the Aana Mane Foundation with a clear aim to manage semi-captive elephants in their natural habitat. The daughter of Darbe Krishnananda Chowta, a Tulu writer, businessman and artist, and sister of music director Sandeep Chowta, Prajna became passionate about elephants during college. After her mahout training at Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary in Wayanad, Kerala, Prajna spent months in many elephant camps across India. At present, the foundation is working on a project to test the first prototypes of elephant tracking collars designed in India. These GPS collars could be of huge help in the management of captive elephants in their natural habitat. There are 45,000 elephants in 13 Asian countries and the largest number of Asian elephants in the world are in India.*

# The world is her oyster?

*In an equal world, there would be no difference between how you bring up a son and a daughter. But in this messed up, unequal, volatile world, it is easier said than done, says national award winning filmmaker **Janaki Viswanathan**. Despite best intentions, she ran into some road blocks when it came to certain rules she applied to her daughter. She tells us how these road blocks taught her about herself, as much as it forced her to introspect deeply.*

**P**ARENTING is a skill, a technique, an art, or whatever you may call it, that most of us learn from our parents. Of course, there were those feverishly scanned tomes by experts. In this digital age, the internet offers a ready reckoner and Google is always readily available to clarify all our doubts.

And yet, there are still many of us who fall back on tried and tested techniques and tricks our parents practised. Being an only child and a girl child at that, I watched and learnt from my mother, the art of child rearing!

When I was blessed with a son first and then a daughter, I was not unduly perturbed. A strong votary of equality between the sexes, I did not imagine any great challenge.

And when my daughter was born, it seemed like I had the routine down pat! I'd seen my mother do it after all! My beliefs proved right for the most part really till they grew into their teens.

I mean you had drilled good life values and healthy eating habits and hygiene, assuaged their fears and cheered them on in encouragement, supervised and guided their study and recreational efforts, and all of this was pretty much gender neutral.

So, I watched my children, boy and girl, glued to the TV set as they watched football late at night and swore in unison when their team messed up on the field! I did not particularly encourage my daughter to follow traditionally feminine pursuits like dance or needlework. It was all hunky dory really!

And as they grew into their teens, I began to realise that it was not going to be same, not for me and not for them!

Like with most households, it began with curfew hours!

## Some have more curfew than others!

A worrywart at the best of times, I found myself hyperventilating when it was my daughter staying out later than the time of the hour that my nerves found acceptable. While a call or text message sufficed when it came to my son, I found myself far more protective and turning into some sort of a control freak when it came to my daughter. I wanted

to know where she was at all times and with whom.

Predictably, she turned around and asked why I had two sets of rules, one for her and one for her brother. To her credit, she did not rebel and flout rules for the heck of it. She just wanted to know why I was doing what I was!

What followed was a time of introspection. I realised that for all my innate belief in equality, I was adopting different standards. I was camouflaging it in the name of care, concern and a mother's protective urge, but the fact is that I was denying her the opportunities due to her because I was terrified that the world would harm her! My concern for my son was never this extreme!

It was not that I thought she did not deserve whatever her brother got. It was only that I was terrified to let my baby girl out into the world of big, bad wolves for fear! I wanted her to get whatever she wanted, I wanted to give her whatever she asked for, and yet, I wanted to keep her within the cocoon of the safety web that I had woven for her. I realised that I was limiting her not by my prejudices, but by my fears. Prejudice or fear, the fact was that I was limiting her.

It was not enough that I told her it was fine to kick a ball rather than play with a Barbie doll, if that was what she wanted. It was not enough that I made sure that I got them toys, gifts and just about everything in equal measure, lest either accuse me of favouritism. It was not enough that I loved them both in equal measure and with all that was within me. It was not enough that I made sure to give them equal access to opportunities, be it in sports or education.

I needed to let go. I needed to let go of my fears, my uncertainties and my anxieties. Or at least learn to deal with it by myself even as I did not allow them to become impediments in the way of her living her life.

## Equip your daughter with life skills

Instead, I needed to help her develop an inner strength and a coping mechanism to deal with gender specific constraints and threats. I needed to help her equip herself with the skills necessary to deal with pressures and threats,

be they physical or emotional. I needed to help her learn to negotiate life on her terms, without letting the prejudices of the world around her cripple or limit her. And in a strange way, maybe dealing with me and my fears had given her a taste of the fight ahead, right at home!

As the mother of a girl child, my biggest threat has been my fear of the big, bad world that my daughter will have to be part of. I cannot ask her to hold my little finger all the time. Instead I must try and be the wind beneath her wings as she soars above prejudices and pettiness and meets the world on her own terms.

I am sure my mother must have encountered and dealt with her set of fears too. Our horizons have expanded significantly in the last decades and with it the dangers too. From my grandmother whose world was her home, to my mother whose world encompassed her work space to me, whose world has expanded further in the public square, the whole world is now to be my daughter's oyster. Quite naturally, the dangers are going to rise exponentially, but also the opportunities for growth. I cannot limit the size of her oyster and limit her chances for growth.

Along with instilling in my daughter a sense of equality, I need to teach her to recognise and fight for her rights. Women need to nurture and nourish, but they need to be nurtured and nourished in turn. Relationships are never a constant 50:50 at each and every instance. However, the balance has to be

achieved in the overall context. I need to teach her that self respect and self esteem are non-negotiable. A woman does not have to be selfless and giving all the time. She has the right to voice her demands and needs and selfishly expect them to be fulfilled on occasion. She has acquired this right thanks to the struggles of the women who have gone before her.

So, I've somewhat figured it out now. Learnt to chart my own path, which is probably parallel to the path of every modern mother of today. Instilling in children of both genders the need for mutual respect and space. Neither is superior nor is this a race. Both need to be taught to appreciate that differences are not to be taken as indications of strengths or weaknesses, but rather on how the genders complement each other. How combined strengths can effectively overcome combined weaknesses!

So there you have it, boy or girl, teach them the importance of mutual respect and regard. I think if the basics are in place, the war between the genders can hopefully be replaced by harmonious and peaceful co-existence! ■



Janaki Viswanathan is a journalist turned filmmaker from Chennai. She won the National Award for her debut film *Kutty* (Little One). She has three features and several documentaries and short films to her credit.

## Cyber hell

(Continued from page 10)

However, there are others who point out that a combination of the IT Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections can nail the culprit, provided the victim is ready to follow through and the police take the case seriously. Legal experts say that Sections 354 D and 292 of the IPC, Sections 43, 66, 66C, 67 and 67A cover a large gamut of such crimes including stalking, trolling and harassment. They also advise victims to keep and maintain an electronic trail of the harassment instead of simply deleting it and hoping that the culprit will disappear.

Ultimately, all these issues boil down to one prime factor: how seriously does the society and all others involved treat the safety of women? Post the 16 December 2012 gang rape case, there is a heightened sense of awareness in the media and in public discourse about women's safety. But it is a moot point if the authorities and especially the police are giving this issue the importance it deserves in terms of sensitisation and water tight investigation.

But it is not enough to point a finger at the law and order

machinery alone. News reports say that there are proposals to set up the National Cyber Crime Coordination Centre which will look into all aspects of cyber security and crime at all levels, from the individual to the national. However, until that happens, it is the other stake holders - parents, teachers, significant elders - who must also ensure that the girl child is taught to take on her tormentors. That she is not conditioned to believe that she is the one who should feel ashamed and keep silent hoping that her tormentor will stop of his own accord. Experience shows that that rarely, if ever, happens. The culprit fuelled by the anonymity offered by the 'net' feels even more emboldened to pursue the victim. In such cases, inaction and ignoring the perpetrator can cost lives. In the western countries, there are many cases of teenagers committing suicide because they are unable to bear the jeering and online bullying.



It is here that the parents' role is the most important - not just in helping the victim to fight back, but also to make their children and youth aware of the power of the 'net' and the social media. ■

Reshma Jain is a freelance journalist.

# The chimera of beauty

With the rising emphasis on looking good, for both women and men, are we going too far and losing track of all that is really important? **Disha Shetty** tries to find an answer.

**E**YES lined with *kajal*, eye liner and mascara, a smile that is accompanied by a bright lipstick and hair that is glossy from the straightening procedures – that is how the face of the average young urban woman on the street looks. You think men are far behind? Well, check out the branded t-shirt of the young man walking past you, his stylish goggles and how can you miss those expensive shoes?

With rising purchasing power, the style quotient in urban India has gone up. Young and old, everyone wants to look their best and why not? Sold on the images of beauty beamed at them every day from everywhere, everyone wants to look their best.

But even to the untrained eye, there is an eerie similarity between the way people dress in New York, London, Paris and New Delhi. With rising purchasing power among the people, brands too are responding by expanding to new markets. Mumbai alone has dozens of shopping malls. But it is not the local handicrafts selling by the dozen, but expensive designer wear imported from abroad that is catching the eye of the fashionable.

### Trends followed blindly

So what is fashion for an average Indian? “It is a temporary trend that a few people start and others follow. Most of the people who I know blindly follow trends without giving a thought to what compliments them,” says 25-year-old MBA student Siddharth Iyengar.

In UK, a dress worn by Princess Kate Middleton gets sold out within hours. Closer home, youngsters copy their favourite

Bollywood celebrity’s dress, hair, accessories and looks. Sakshi Singh, 25, IT professional states, “Anything worn by celebrities becomes famous and the trend catches on. People just copy them without giving it a thought whether or not they can carry it off. In wanting to look different, they sometimes make a fool of themselves!”



**Gia Kashyap, fashion blogger, believes in evolving a personal style**

### Aping the West, are we?

So that brings us to the next logical question. In the quest for ‘beauty’ and being fashionable, are we simply aping the West and losing our individuality? India after all has always had a rich textile and handloom industry, several ayurveda based products to enhance beauty, and emphasis on a balanced diet for good health. So why are we becoming just copycats?

“There is nothing wrong in trying to ape the popular culture because that is one way you discover yourself and your personal style,” feels Gia Kashyap whose blog *Giasays* that is followed by thousands of young adults. She adds, “However, to stand out from the crowd it is always nice to have an individualistic style.”

The fashion scene in the country is no longer gender specific. Men are increasingly focusing on looking good and grooming as much as women. Salons and spas catering to men are mushrooming across the country and the occasional



**Spas are increasingly becoming popular with the stressed urban denizens**



**Dr. Apoorva Shah of Richfeel**

haircut is no longer enough. lyengar agrees that men his age are more concerned about their looks than ever before. “Men tend to copy western fashion rather than be innovative,” he adds.

It is not just make up and haircut. Beauty today is an industry that caters to every need of an individual. Aroma therapy, reflexology, hot stone therapy are names of just some of the oil massages available in the market. It doesn't end there of course. There are facials and body wraps, full body scrub and skin lightening procedures for those interested. Beauty is a big and booming business. And why should it not be, asks Dr Apoorva Shah of Richfeel - The D-tox Spa. “The desire to look good is increasing every day and people are becoming more conscious of their self-image, prestige and confidence.”

The supply is simply there to cater to the growing demand. Richfeel spa alone has over 350 members between the ages of 20 and 75!

### Fix that smile, boost that confidence

When you are fixing everything from head to toe, how can you forget about those pearly whites? While doctors say that no dental procedures are unnecessary, patients are going that extra mile for the perfect smile. Some are even going as far as to fix a diamond on their front teeth to get that brilliant smile! Dr. Aniket Namdeowar, Prosthodontics and Implantology specialist, lists dental jewellery, smile designing and implants as some of the things his patients are taking a keen interest in. “Today, people are conscious about aesthetics and there is nothing wrong with that as everyone has the right to look good. Just as we go to the gym for health and follow the latest fashion trends to ensure that our appearance is perfect, a good smile adds to a person's personality,” Dr. Namdeowar says.

Looking presentable has become extremely important in modern day society and work life but while adults can understand where to draw the line, the young are the most gullible. Billboards with airbrushed images, and stick thin models give them a distorted sense of what beauty should be. So what can parents do about it?

### Focus on building the soul, not skin

“Parents are competing against jingles on the TV,” says Mumbai-based psychiatrist Dr. Harish Shetty. “In a globalised world which moves at a very fast pace, it is difficult to find

the time to explore one-self internally. Hence people focus more on external factors. How you look defines how you feel,” he explains.

According to Dr. Shetty, parents must focus on building strong emotional energy bands in their children. There is a need to explain to the children the need to have a beautiful soul rather than a beautiful skin, and this can start as early as the age of three. Yoga and *pranayam* can go a long way too in this. It is not just fashion though that is on the rise, but many are looking for quick fix solutions through modern day science. Procedures that evolved to treat deformity are instead used to enhance looks.

### Looking for quick solutions

Dr. Nilesh Goyal, Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Specialist at Bombay Hospital says there are times when people come to him to ask him to fix a fold of fat on their tummy or make a small mole go away. He says, “We have to convince them at times that these procedures are not needed. Some of the problems are due to their lifestyle which they don't want to correct.” He believes that people at times lose track of what beauty is and that intervention is required, only when there is a drastic abnormality.

Pressure on young children at times comes not just from the messages that the media relays, but also from their parents. Dr. Goyal shares a few instances when parents have brought their young children to him. “I have mothers who bring their 14-year-old sons because they have become dark playing in the sun. I tell them to let the children be!”

There are a rising number of salons that have popped up to cater to the grooming demands for children. They are given fancy hair-cuts and spa treatments and events are hosted for their little friends at several of these places. There is no dearth of parents wanting to spend their money to make their little ones happy.

### Media to blame?

While most of the ire is directed at the media for sending out wrong messages, not everyone agrees with the argument. Gia believes that individuals have to use their own discretion as well. “Media plays an important role in influencing the youth. However, we cannot blame media for everything that is wrong, as it is also important for people to filter out information that's provided to them,” she says.

Meanwhile, as the latest Fogg commercial on the TV becomes a rage, it is time to ask yourself what is important to you rather than following the herd. ■

Disha Shetty is a young journalist who likes travelling and writing.

# The social entrepreneurs

Social media has become a smart platform for entrepreneurial housewives to showcase and promote their businesses. **Surekha Kadapa-Bose** profiles a few of these women and tells us how their success stories were scripted.

**R**IDDHIKA Jesrani, Monya Dhingra, Sheel Mody, Chaitali Patel, Vandana Shah and Deepti Lav are not friends, do not live in the same city, are of different age groups and come from diverse backgrounds, but these women have one thing in common – they are homemakers-turned-business owners, who have expertly leveraged the reach of social media to fulfil their cherished dream of having a productive career. Technology has enabled each one of these ingenious entrepreneurs, who till a few years ago could never have imagined running an enterprise from home and without compromising on their family commitments, to “expand their universe and connect with others faster than ever.” In fact, today, there is a growing number of women who are attempting to set up their own venture because sourcing, delivering and reaching out to people is now just a click away.

## Crafting jewellery, baking up a storm

“I use social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter to inform my family, friends and friends of friends about the products I customise and deliver in quick time,” says Riddhika Jesrani, a jewellery designer well-known for her graphic designed pieces. According to smart entrepreneurs like her and others, setting up one’s own work is not as difficult as once imagined. “All you need is a good smart phone and you are good to reach out to the world. Add to that some astute entrepreneurial skills, a little smooth sales



**Monya Dhingra, another career woman who has turned to full-time baking, is glad that technology has enabled her to rescue her professional life**



**Riddhika Jesrani makes personalised and designer jewellery (above) from glass beads and metal**

talk and a working knowledge of social media platforms like how to upload pictures on Instagram or give regular updates on Facebook and you’re in business. However, you need to have a circle of friends online and offline to get going,” she says.

Jesrani, who worked as a graphic designer in New York before shifting base to her home city Mumbai, makes personalised as well as designer pieces with glass beads and metal ranging from a modest ₹1,000 up to ₹40,000. She has a very interactive Facebook page and always stays personally connected to her clients in New York, Dubai and cities across India. Besides, she also retails from fashion stores like Electric in Mumbai and Bloom in the national capital.

Her colleagues in the jewellery designing business too rely heavily on the Internet to drum up business for them. Terracotta jewellery designers, Kozhikode-based Ramya, who owns her own brand Prakrithi and Bengaluru-based Deepti Lav, the talent behind Maitre Crafts, use Facebook and WhatsApp to stay in touch with buyers spread all over the world. Likewise, Chaitali Patel and Vandana Shah of Om Creative Creations from Surat, Gujarat, love to upload pictures of their latest works on WhatsApp and clients can place orders through the same channel. Incidentally, Chaitali and Vandana’s creations were an absolute craze among shoppers in the festival season in 2015.

Apart from the jewellery designers, it’s the amateur pastry chefs who have taken the online commerce space by storm.

Sheel Mody, 29, a Mumbai-based cosmetologist, had hoped to run a clinic from her home space but when she began working towards setting it up she was informed that it was against the bylaws of the cooperative housing society she was staying in. Although her best laid plans went south, Mody was not disheartened. Instead, she began focusing on her other passion – baking. “I figured that no housing society can stop anyone from cooking! So armed with my dormant passion for baking, a good oven and some good quality ingredients I made a few cakes, photographed them and put them up for sale on my Facebook page,” she reveals.



**Sheel Mody has embraced her passion for baking to build a booming business**

That maiden batch of absolutely gorgeous looking confections was sold out in no time. And that’s when Frosted Heaven was born. “The instantaneous, positive response I received made me realise that this was a sound business opportunity. And I was right. I am constantly getting inquires and orders for cup cakes, pastries and other kinds of desserts,” she says.

With products ranging between ₹ 800 and ₹ 9,000 and a minimum of two to three orders a day, Mody is doing well and makes around ₹40,000 a month. Naturally, she has to be on her toes as the competition from other home-bakers, professionals and the large bakeries in the city is quite tough. Not only does she continuously innovate in the menu she offers, but she does a fair bit of networking to expand her client base as well.

Like Mody, Monya Dhingra, another career woman who has turned to full-time baking, is glad that technology has enabled her to rescue her professional life. Following marriage Dhingra, 37, moved to Hyderabad from Delhi. Having worked as a corporate sales executive for Hidesign she really didn’t know how to handle all the free time she suddenly had on her hands. Not ready to settle into routine domesticity she decided to revive her baking skills, which were greatly admired by friends and relatives.

Dhingra launched ‘Sweet Buds’ in 2012. In the beginning, Facebook was her avenue to let the world know about the sweet treats she baked with such care and attention to detail. These days, she operates more through WhatsApp and Instagram. “I had never once thought that I would be able to earn a good living by simply baking,” she remarks.

Two reasons drive her success. Firstly, Hyderabad is a tech savvy city where everyone is comfortable accessing the Internet and secondly, the local residents truly believe in

marking every occasion in a big way – “No celebration whether its birthdays, weddings, anniversaries or reunions are done on a small scale”. It’s not uncommon for Dhingra to get orders to the tune of 1,000 to 1,200 cup cakes per event. “On one occasion there was a couple that had ordered a 36 kilo cake to celebrate the first birthday of their twins!” she says.

What this artful baker enjoys most about her new-found profession is the kick she gets from personally giving the finishing touches to each and every item that leaves her bakery. “I have help to do the mixing, baking, packing and delivery. But when it comes to decoration, I don’t allow

anyone to touch the goods. I do it myself after talking to the client at length about the event and how s/he would want the sweets to look. Showcasing my creativity is my stress buster!” she elaborates.

This probably is why Hindi film producer Vasu Bhagnani had chosen Sweet Buds to supply cakes during the Hyderabad shoot of the Sajid Khan directed and Ajay Devgn starrer *Himmatwala*. Besides them, several other celebrities from the South Indian film industry love to order her cakes.

### No cakewalk this

Of course, it’s not all that simple for these industrious businesswomen. One major problem that the bakers in particular face is related to logistics. Whereas they are able to cater to the demands within their city there are some inherent challenges. They need to have a very good delivery service that can guarantee on time delivery without spoiling their confectionaries. Indeed, many a time, if the cake is very intricate they have to either deliver it themselves or rely on family members to do the job.

For those dealing in jewellery, apparel, furnishings or accessories, the problem of delivery is not so tough. Most use a regular courier service to send stuff within India and can even ship things easily anywhere in the world. Says Jesrani, “Only when the jewellery ordered is very expensive do customers normally request their friends or relatives to carry it with them. The rest of the time I use a standard courier to get things dropped off.”

At a time when India is ready to support the entrepreneurial spirit of its people through schemes like Make in India and Start Up India, there are definite advantages to striking out on one’s own. These social media powered entrepreneurs have shown how it’s done. ■

(© Women’s Feature Service)

*“What was amazing was how people living in such squalid conditions can create such beautiful art”*



Unlike many of his peers in the film industry, FTII (Film and Television Institute of India) graduate Ranajit Ray is so low profile that you might miss him for the wall. But he has had the distinction of making very significant documentaries and films for Indian television channels and international production companies. His *Ajopa Gacha* was selected for screening at the Indian Panorama in 2001. His

latest film *Documentation on the Clay Image Makers of Kumartuli* won the Rajat Kamal at the 62<sup>nd</sup> National Film Awards in 2014. This is the first documentary film that enters into the narrow corridors of clay idol makers whose craftsmanship, skill and artistry in image making can give the toughest competition to any sculptor and idol maker across the world. **Ranjit Ray** speaks to **Shoma A. Chatterji** about this film and his craft.

**What was the trigger that set you off on this unusual journey?**

Durga Puja is a part of the psyche of every Bengali whether he/she lives in Bengal or not. For years I roamed around the streets of Kolkata during Durga Pooja and actually felt the electric energy of the people. This made me wonder what is it that makes thousands of people from every religion, cast or creed come out on the streets to watch the Goddess in all her glory. Each idol makes us pause, muse and wonder about the magic till we move on to the next *pandal*. My childhood memories of Kumartuli were of dilapidated shanties where we went to fetch our Durga images very late into night. I had not visited them for a long time and wanted to know what it looks like now. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts came forward to produce the film.

**Has the situation of their living conditions improved now?**

Not really. Kumartuli is a narrow tract of cheap walls, tiled roofs, tin sheds and plastic awnings leading to narrower lanes. Their workshops are not only minute but also claustrophobic.

Their living quarters adjoining their workshops are little better than shanties. The real work begins from June end to October end. The workshops are crammed with Gods racing against the weather on the assembly line. But their art is produced anonymously, sold anonymously and then cast into the river year after year. In spite of contributing in a big way to the largest festival in the world, the potters of Kumartuli continue to live in neglect and many of them, on the borders of penury because this is a seasonal festival, and though the festivals keep running till January-February when Saraswati Puja is celebrated, their living conditions are subjected to many promises that have not been kept.

**The collective character of the Durga Puja held on a massive scale today did not exist earlier. What light can you throw on this?**

This widespread and colossal celebration of Durga Puja did not exist in Bengal during the Muslim rule till it ended in 1757. In 1757, Lord Robert Clive and the East India Company

won the first military victory for British arms on Indian soil at the Battle of Plassey defeating the Moghul Nawab. The story goes that members of the urban Hindu elite of Calcutta who supported the British decided to celebrate it with a Durga Puja. Clay images were made by the craftsmen of Krishnanagar most of who later migrated to Calcutta and settled in Kumartuli, of the Durga idol in her glory of triumph over the demon Mahisasura. The name *Kumartuli* is derived from *kumore* meaning potter which the craftsmen originally were and *tuli* meaning their small place of shelter. As Calcutta grew as a centre of trade and administration during the British rule, these potters by caste became the core settlers of Kumartuli or the Potters Quarters.

**You had a consultant for the research. Right?**

Right. Dr. Barun Mukherjee who is a renowned expert and scholar on folk art and culture, generously agreed to give us research support through leads which we began to follow up ourselves. What was amazing was how people living in such squalid conditions can create such beautiful art. There is no archival record about the history of Kumartuli barring a few references in old articles and published images that are outdated and done without adequate research. Along with my chief assistant Gautam Sharma, we began regular visits into the area meeting a cross-section of idol makers old and young, leaders and office bearers of their different organisations, permanent and migratory workers, skilled and unskilled workers and the few women who have stepped into the trade.

**The Durga Puja also creates an ancillary industry. Did you explore this little known area of economics and artistry?**

Yes, we did. We found pitch solar artists and makers of the idols' ornaments out of thermocol. We met artists who were skilled in giving shape to the war weapons used by the different characters like Durga and Mahisasura, the craftsmen who specialise in making *dak* and *zardozi* ornaments and so on. We discovered that all the hair used for the Durga idol, her children, the lion and Mahisasura are processed from jute, and every single worker engaged in this occupation belong to the Muslim community which gives a different and secular dimension to the festival and the pooja. We also met artists known as *chalchitra* painters who paint the designs and motifs on the background of the idols. The key source of our research was the artisan community of Kumartuli and we cross-checked their responses with other idol makers to make our work authentic and honest.

**As a documentary filmmaker, how did you prioritise the aesthetics of the film and the factual statement you are making through the film?**

It is not a question of prioritisation, but of finding a balance between the two. I always wondered why facts will over burden the emotion, which is a common fault with most of the documentation projects. Simple documentation of the crafts makes the film a dry product.

**How do you react to your own film? Would you have wanted it to be different in some way?**

I usually don't look back to see my film because it always gives me pain. I see so many mistakes in it. I have tried to do my best within the time frame of the film. There are many stories about Kumartuli which we had to leave out of the film because the time constraint of 52 minutes did not permit us to include these.

**You have cinematographed the film yourself. Was that not too much of a responsibility?**

Yes and no. Yes, because you sometimes miss the bigger frame where many other things worth capturing are happening. No, because it is easier for me to capture the moments first hand or else to explain it to my camera person and then capture may mean I would miss that valuable moment. I have used a second unit camera person at many places. But I do agree that it is a huge responsibility.

**In what way do you think documentary films on folk arts and traditional practices can add to the body of knowledge and information about cultural practices?**

Most of the folk forms and traditional practices are dying out due to market pressures. It is unfortunate that these practices are no longer sustainable. It is important to document them for the future generation. Moreover it is ingrained into the cultural ethos of the community. Abandoning all that is old and traditional is not a very good idea.

**Anything else you might like to add?**

I know a film cannot change the real problem the clay image makers are facing. But if my film can help them in any way to achieve their dream, I'll be most happy.

**Did your interaction with the idol makers enrich you as a human being?**

Yes of course. They are the most humble people, always eager to co-operate with you. The experience is quite enriching for me and I continue to communicate with them even now. ■

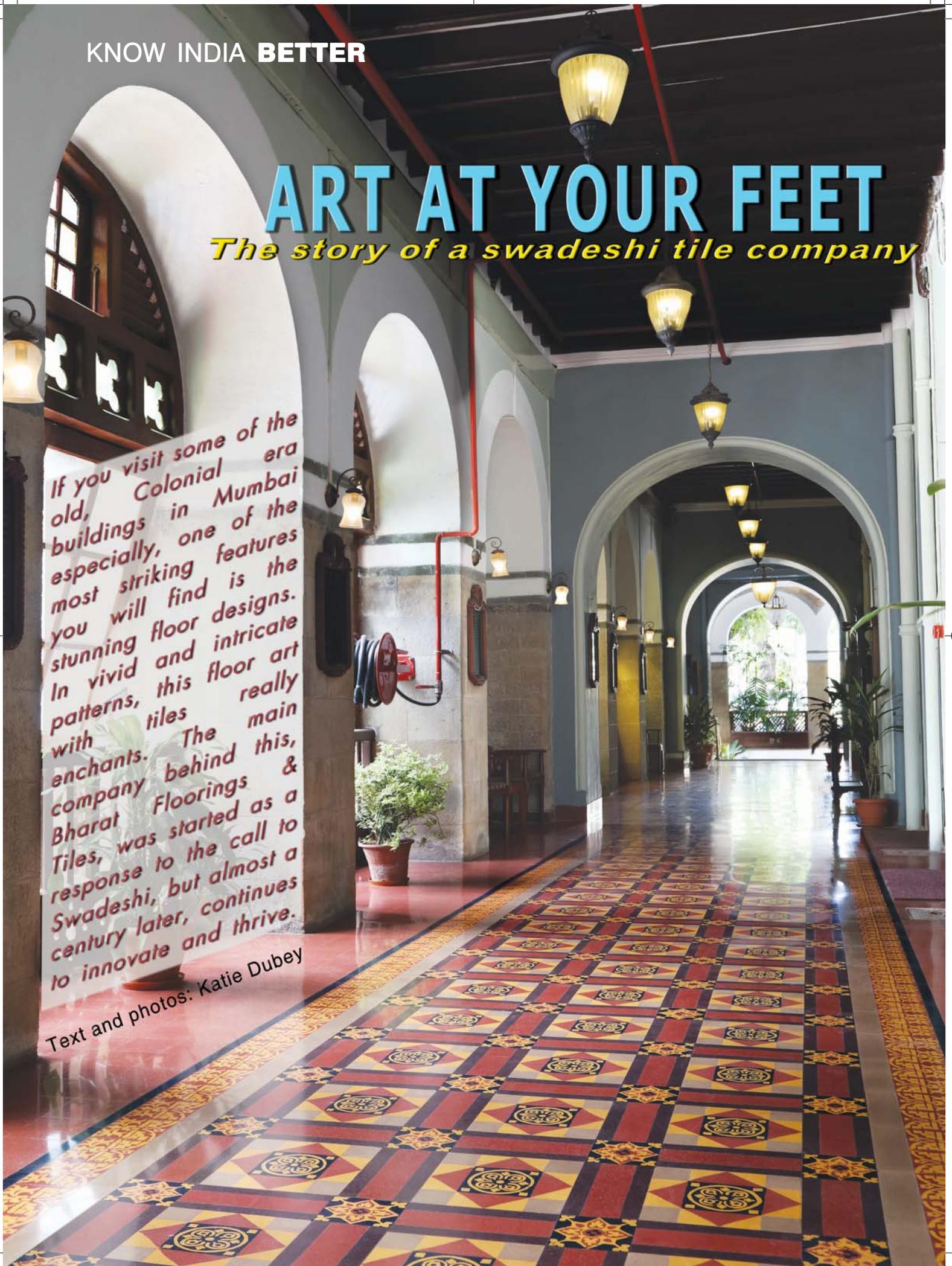
KNOW INDIA BETTER

# ART AT YOUR FEET

*The story of a swadeshi tile company*

If you visit some of the old, Colonial era buildings in Mumbai especially, one of the most striking features you will find is the stunning floor designs. In vivid and intricate patterns, this floor art with tiles really enchants. The main company behind this, Bharat Floorings & Tiles, was started as a response to the call to Swadeshi, but almost a century later, continues to innovate and thrive.

Text and photos: Katie Dubey





**T**HE ornate teak door opened. The maid stepped aside for me to enter the house. I lowered my eyes to cross the threshold and stopped in my tracks, my feet glued to the ground. The maid, baffled by this odd behavior looked quizzically at me. Mercifully, my friend stepped into the hall just then, saying “Hi. Come on in.”

“Is this floor meant for walking on?” I retorted, looking upon the sparkling patterned tiles in awe. She laughed mischievously saying, “Walk on your hands Kate, if you do not wish to tread on ancient heritage – 85 years plus flooring!” We both burst into laughter. Whistling softly under my breath, I gingerly stepped over the threshold and a visit to a friend’s home ended up as an initiation into the fascinating world of floor art. I could not get it off my mind. Patterned tiles swam across my vision ever so often and I decided to dig further.

Encaustic cement tiles, is what these beauties are technically known as. Apart from paintings, they are probably the most expressive form of an everyday art, stemming from a deep rooted desire to create a beautiful environment for oneself, in imitation of the world around; sea, sky, stars, mountains and valleys, leaves, trees, flowers and fruits, all transmute into designs and find expression in the artist’s lines and colours.



**A part of the Heritage tile collection of Bharat Tiles, this design is typically English; the deep and yellow contrast intensifies the design**



**From the same Heritage collection: Egyptian patterned tiles in Prussian blue and white**



**Readymoney Mansion, the first building to use tiles from Bharat Flooring Tile company in 1922, stands proudly at Flora Fountain**



**The entrance to the Readymoney Mansion with a star-spangled tile carpet, edged with a crown border, spreads across the length of the corridor. Although over 90 years old, the tiles still hold their sheen**

Cement, coloured pigments, water, time, an artist's vision and an immense amount of patience is what it takes to make encaustic tiles. These were the very ingredients used by the Moors ten centuries ago to produce encaustic tiles, and the tiles were crafted by hand one at a time.

### **The legacy of the Moors**

When the Moors invaded and conquered all of Spain and southern Portugal in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, they brought both the countries under the sway of Islam. A mingling of Moorish and Spanish cultures took place and its effect was deeply felt. The conquerors imposed upon the conquered, and the effect became visible in the architecture of the time. An extensive use of encaustic cement tiles on the walls of mosques and palaces in distinctive graphic floral and geometric patterns prevailed, and is still visible in Spain today.

Early Arabic architecture too had befriended encaustic cement tiles and used them to embellish their buildings with. As Islam forbids the use of any figure work or icons, the encaustic tile with its vibrant colours, geometrical patterns, floral graphics and calligraphy became the ideal medium of artistic expression. When the tiles captured the imagination of the Europeans in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, old designs became the inspiration which designers drew on, to create new designs and adapt them to



**A pigment mould having served its purpose basks under the electric bulb**

the European taste.

The technique of making the encaustic cement tile was improved during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The production technology and the cement itself developed and perfected in the course of time, but the basic method remained the same: Traditional and environmentally friendly, the tiles are made from cement and pressed over a design mould filled with colour pigment. They are then put under hydraulic presses and compressed, which transfers the pattern on to the cement, and they are finally cured. Although lengthy and time consuming, the final





**The Readymoney Mansion: A rectangle of the carpet motif positioned at the foot of the stairway, almost invites visitors to take the stairs!**

product is durable and beautiful. Cement tiles evolved into an art as the patterns gradually became more intricate and ornate.

Cement tiles first appeared in the 1850s in Catalonia and were exhibited in Paris at the International Exposition of 1867 by the Catalan company Garret and Rivet. They were produced and used since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century throughout the urbanised areas of England, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy and from thence, via British imports, they entered India.

### **India in the 1900s and the call to Swadeshi**

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the British were well-entrenched in India. Having established their colonial rule, they systematically undermined Indian products and promoted English imports in the Indian markets. The encaustic tiles, being produced by Minton were brought to India as high end flooring material, and were used in several landmark buildings.

Simultaneously, India was in political tumult. Gandhi's clarion call for freedom had the whole country on fire. The voice of civil disobedience against the British grew louder and every person in the country responded in his own way. Gandhi's call for Swadeshi took many forms.

"When we started Bharat Tiles, it was called the Bharat Flooring Tile company," says Dilnavaz Variava, daughter of Pheroza Sidhwa, who founded the company, along with his nephew Rustom Sidhwa. "To make tiles of international quality in India as part of the Swadeshi movement, the person who inspired my father was Jamshed Nuasserwanji Mehta, a friend of Mahatma Gandhi and a great patriot and philanthropist. Later, he became the first mayor of Karachi and remained so for 12 years. He is acknowledged as the maker of modern Karachi. He inspired my father and my cousin Rustom Sidhwa to start a cement tile company in India to beat the imports. He was their mentor and partner in those days. So, my father and my cousin borrowed money, launched a company and adopted the motto '*Equal to the world's best*'. That motto we retain to date."

### **Uran and its link to the iconic Readymoney Mansion**

Sunny or foggy, Uran is clearly visible on the distant horizon, when, standing at the Gateway of India one gazes across the expanse of the Arabian Sea eastwards. Sharing the fate of many territories, it was passed on from one ruling dynasty to

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**The crest of Cowasjee Jehangir set in stone relief above the entrance to Readymoney Mansion, the building that first utilised Bharat Tiles in Bombay**



**3D black and white tiles give a modern three dimensional look to the floor – an illusion of ever shifting patterns**

the next until it came to rest in the possession of the British.

The Sidhwa family owned large sheds at Uran, once used to manufacture local liquor. A prohibition order killed the activity. The sheds lay idle. The Sidhwas decided to put their idle sheds to good use and set up their tile production unit at Uran, giving the Swadeshi movement impetus, and India its first indigenous cement tile plant in the year 1922. This, at a time when there was no electricity, no water and certainly no telephone connections at Uran. The only connects from the island to the mainland were the fishing boats that plied to and fro in fair weather. Batches of finished tiles commenced their journey from the makeshift jetty at Uran in fishing boats, perhaps with some fish for company, and crossed the sea to find their final destination in other parts of India.

Giving them their first order for tiles, for his new building Readymoney Mansion, at Flora Fountain, Sir Cowasji Jehangir became their first patron in 1923. The execution of this order was marked by a dramatic event that is etched in the history of Bharat Tiles. Pheroza, dissatisfied with a batch of black and white tiles made for the Readymoney Mansion, stopped delivery and had them thrown into the sea. As the tiles sank to the bottom of the sea, so did the princely amount of ₹57,000; the cost of the tiles.

Later, he travelled to Europe to find a remedy for the flaw

**Pheroza, dissatisfied with a batch of black and white tiles made for the Readymoney Mansion, stopped delivery and had them thrown into the sea. As the tiles sank to the bottom of the sea, so did the princely amount of ₹57,000; the cost of the tiles.**

and was told that his tiles were perfect. Only the polishing needed improvement. Of the fresh batch of tiles then made, some are still to be seen in parts of this building, even after 90 years!

“Our Readymoney Mansion at Flora Fountain was constructed in the 1920s by my great grandfather, the late Sir Cowasji Jehangir. Not only are the tiles still existing and in excellent condition, but are much admired by us, by many of our tenants and by visitors to the building even today,” says Jehangir H.C. Jehangir of this building.

Now swamped by buildings and shops alongside, Readymoney Mansion must once have been a commanding edifice, when standing in solitary splendour. Peering through the tree-tops, I located the crest of Cowasji Jehangir in stone above the entrance and stepping within, once again halted before laying foot on the floor art. A star-spangled carpet design unrolled across the passage all the way to the foot of the stairs. By the foot of the stairs is a single motif, reminiscent of the auspicious *rangoli* found at the entrance of most Indian homes.

Reiterating her father’s sentiments, Dilnavaz says: “The company was founded with a clear philosophy in mind – that of Swadeshi or economic independence for India by matching or exceeding the world’s best tiles. We are proud that we employ artisans from all parts of India and are still making the



**The Marine Drive in Mumbai and the symmetrical row of Art Deco buildings facing it**

very best handmade cement tiles possible. The core values of Bharat Floorings, quality, integrity and service, remain intact. Dedication to quality means that we use only the finest ingredients, blended perfectly. It means that we design our floors to last for decades and across generations. We are a part of India's history and if you live in one of the old buildings, then, more likely than not, we are a part of your story too, as you tread on the Bharat floor tiles every day."

The 1930s ushered in the Art Deco phase of architecture and design. Says the late historian Sharda Dwivedi in her book *Bombay Deco*, "Built between 1930 and 1947 and now largely forgotten, these buildings were more than concrete and steel, more than housing and stone and cinemas. They were dramatic harbingers of India's future as an independent democracy."

### **The trailblazing Art Deco buildings of Mumbai**

Art Deco arrived in India, literally on the shores of Bombay, spurred by the great reclamations in the island city and frantic building activity that was taking place in the 1930s.

Hollywood barged into our lives with great flourish along with the theatres, the real trailblazers of the Art Deco

**Art Deco arrived in India, literally on the shores of Bombay, spurred by the great reclamations in the island city and frantic building activity that was taking place in the 1930s.**

movement in Bombay. Regal Cinema led the way and was formally inaugurated on 14 October 1933. It was followed by the Plaza in Dadar, in 1935, The New Empire theatre on 3 September 1937; and reached its zenith in the Art Deco style with the Eros theatre at Churchgate that opened in February, 1938. Bombay possessed an astounding 300 cinema theatres by 1939.

Mumbai has also received global recognition for its Art Deco precincts of the Oval, Marine Drive, Malabar Hill, Altamount Road and other areas across the city.

Says Sharda Dwivedi, "In the decade when Art Deco arrived in Bombay, although companies like Rawal Tiles imported from countries like Italy, Bharat Tiles provided most of the requirements of tiling in the new buildings. These included many of the Deco cinemas and buildings along the Oval, Marine Drive, Cumballa and Malabar

Hills. The largest order came from Raja Dhanrajgiri for the Dhanraj Mahal complex at Apollo Bunder. As a result of Bharat Tile's focus on quality, the tiling in many of the Art Deco apartments of the 1930s has endured."

Good times were followed by difficult ones. The British dragged India into its war against Hitler in 1940.

## The magic of floor art

(As narrated by Dilnavaz Variava of Bharat Tiles)



The J.N.Petit Institute, Mumbai

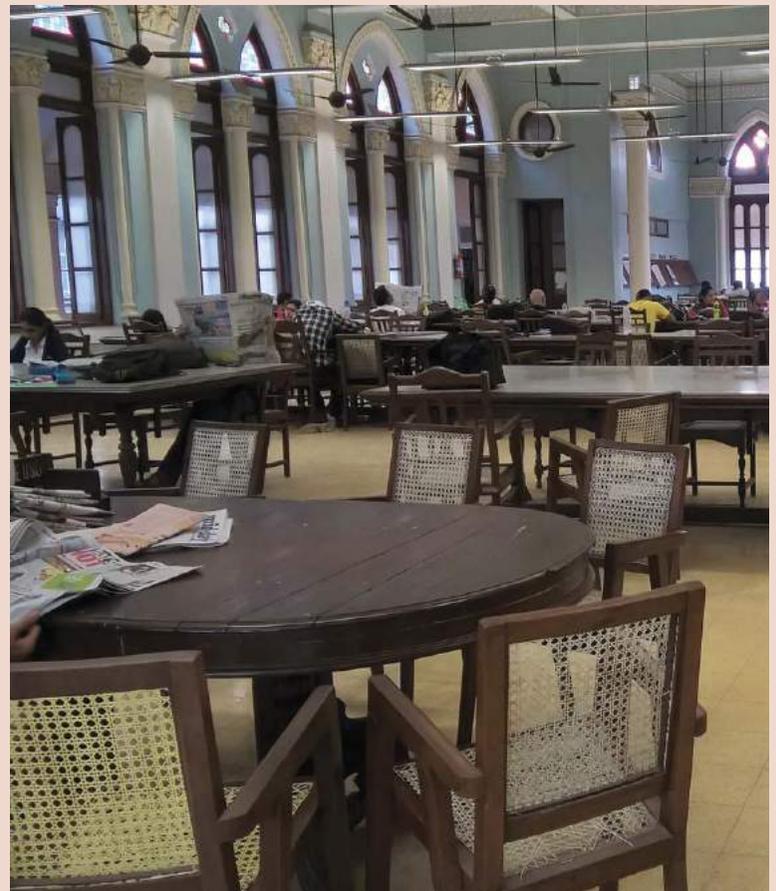


Patterned floor tiles at the entrance of the J.N.Petit Institute

**B**ASICALLY, we have been into floor art ever since our inception, until now: That is, to create very beautiful floors; floors that reflect an individual's personality and create the ambience that the individual wants either in a home, in a club, in a hotel or an office.

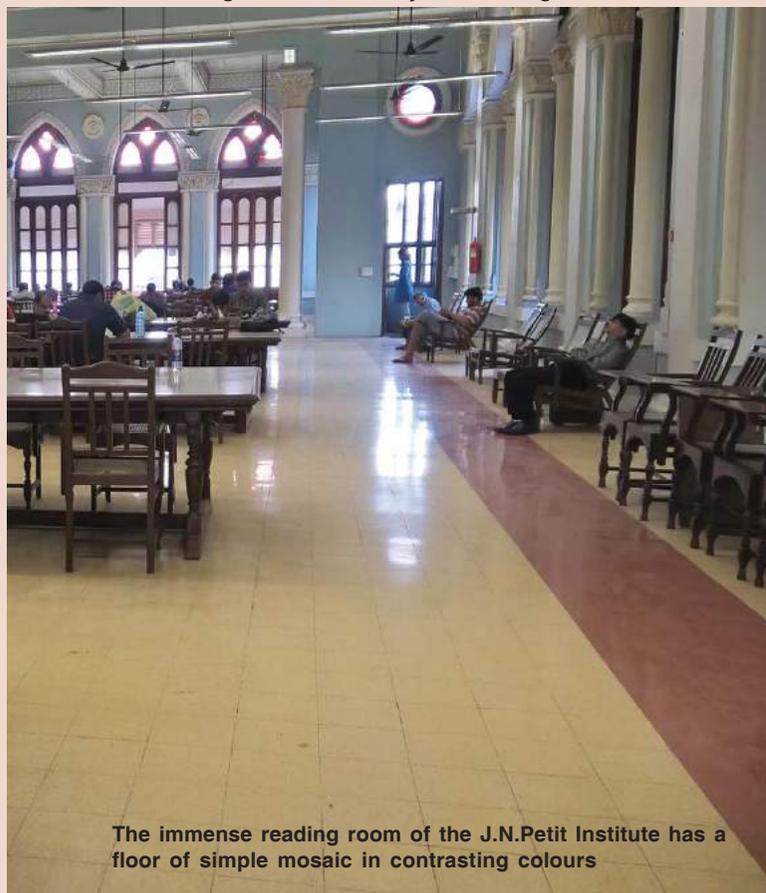
We give them the design or help to create one. We have always had a design department and the design department works with the client or their interior designer to find out what is most appealing for that particular space and that particular client's needs. So, it could be that some people like a particular colour or want a specific pattern; maybe a combination of styles; sometimes, the reality is working not just with the individual, but with the entire family, because different people have different tastes. The floor is something that everybody will be living with for many, many years. We try and help them to find the kind of floor that will best reflect their own particular desire. *Their* dream of what their home or office should look like.

So, within this ambit lies a whole range of options available to the user, because this is the oldest tile company in India; *probably one of the oldest in the world now!* Everywhere I have visited across the globe, just one or two of the tile manufacturing factories now remain, and most of them are not quite as old as we are. So, we are now covering over 90 years of the full gamut of floorings from Victorian and Edwardian tiles – what we call the Raj tiles, which we have





The star patterned tiles in the J.N.Petit Institute, shining and bright even after 70 years of usage



The immense reading room of the J.N.Petit Institute has a floor of simple mosaic in contrasting colours



The Bombay High Court, the seat of highest justice in the state, is also the oldest in the country. Ironically, this stern structure has beautiful floors over which the most hardened criminals tread, perhaps unmindful of the beauty beneath their feet

named the Heritage® range – to the ultra modern designs created by us.

Heritage®, Minton-style carpet patterned tiles have been Bharat Tiles's most significant contribution to the tile making industry. Our Heritage® tiles have graced the grandest mansions, majestic palaces and stately Raj Bhavans, as well as public buildings and private homes in the country.

Several iconic buildings still sport the original tiles laid by Bharat Tiles. Among the most outstanding is the J.N. Petit Institute – an incomparable Neo Gothic structure built in 1898 and extended in 1939. The extension accounts for the different floorings laid in different parts of the building. Bharat Tiles grace the floor of the librarian's room and extend the length of the floor in a bright star pattern. The vast reading room above the library is floored with simple mosaic in contrasting colours. Spikes of light pouring in through the stained glass windows further enhance the sheen of the tiles, creating a soothing ambience for young scholars.

The entire Bombay Central building, now Mumbai Central, with the exception of the concourse hall, was tiled by Bharat Tiles in 1930 with marble mosaic that is walked on by thousands, everyday. After the opening of the station, in a public lecture Professor Claude Bately spoke of 'the far-reaching services which Bharat Tiles Company had rendered by establishing the industry of manufacturing cement tiles on a stable basis in this country. The highest seat of justice in the city, the Bombay High Court's floors bear Bharat Tiles. Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to access its august corridors due to stiff security. The situation is similar with the sprawling Times of India building whose publication touches our lives every single day. The floors moved into mosaic or Terrazo tiles, laid in a particular pattern with a particular size, which we call Art Deco tiles, for the period commencing from late 1930s to the 1940s. Those were also colourful floors, with tiles laid out in specific patterns to reflect the engineered and geometric look of the rest of the building décor. ●



The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum building at Byculla, restored to its former glory, sparkles in the noon sun

As World War II picked up momentum, the British Government diverted cement to defense installations. The tile business suddenly came to a halt.

### The uniqueness of Bharat Tiles

Uniqueness has always been their strength. A report of the Deputy Chief Engineer of the Bombay Port Trust, before the Bombay Engineering Congress in 1933 comments on the paving of 40,000 square feet of Ballard Pier Station. "The platforms are paved with cement tiles of a special *non-slip* chequer pattern..... it was thought that the light grey and cream tiles might in a short time be spoiled with betal nut juice, but exhaustive tests on sample tiles indicated that the surface was so dense that the stain would not penetrate....This in practice has proved correct. The tiles have been laid 12 months and there is no sign of staining. The whole platform is washed periodically and this removes the dried



Beauteous heritage tiles adorn the entrance to the Bhau Daji Lad Museum at Byculla

up juice without leaving any mark."

Another important historical building, whose entrance has been re-tiled by Bharat Tiles using their Heritage tiles, is the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Muesum, at Byculla. The oldest museum in Bombay, it was built by funds from prominent Indians like Bhau Daji Lad, Jagannath Shunkerseth and Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy in 1862, and opened to public in 1872 as the Victoria and Albert Museum. It was later renamed as Bhau Daji Lad. Among its treasures are also ancient tiles, gazing at the viewer through their glass case! Walk into any building along the Marine Drive or the Oval Maidan and one is in the Art Deco precinct, where it is still possible to find original floors in some of the homes and in the foyer areas. As Dwivedi points out, "Unless an undiscerning person has uprooted them to be replaced by marble, original Bharat Tiles, still pristine, will be there."

All of the old clubs, The Willingdon, Bombay Gymkhana, The Royal Bombay

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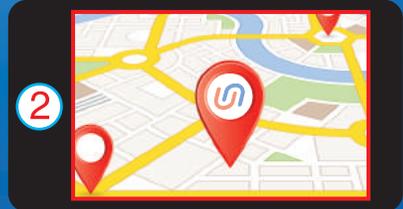
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**Tiles fashioned for the outdoors to enhance the driveways and pathways of gardens of country bungalows. Stillan are a collection of patented designs**



**The modern look: Playing with squares and dots in black and white**

Yatch Club, Brabourne Stadium and a host of other clubs, places that we frequent everyday, but seldom bother to notice, have elegant floors laid by Bharat Tiles way back in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Mumbai, where the population of Parsis is the largest, several fire-temples or *agyaris* were built in the early 1900s. Almost all the *agyaris* and residential Baugs have Bharat tiles because, at the time, no competition existed. Bharat tiles found their way to the Panchgani *agyaris* and several other distant places. After art deco, it went to plain mosaics. "After which," says Dilnavaz, "the fad shifted to ceramics and marble, but that too has worn off. People are fed up of these floors,

because every house looks like every other house; there is no character to it. Some interior designers find it convenient to put a plain floor and pep up the room with a few curtains and matching upholstery. It saves them the time from working on a personalised ambience. But some really do want to create something unique. Then they come to us. because the options we offer are immense. The permutations and combinations that can be achieved are mind boggling. We can help a designer create any kind of ambience desired. You can have personalised options with colour and designs and in India, fortunately, we can still afford the luxury of a custom designed work of floor art!"



**Ancient tiles showcased at the Bhau Daji Lad Museum**

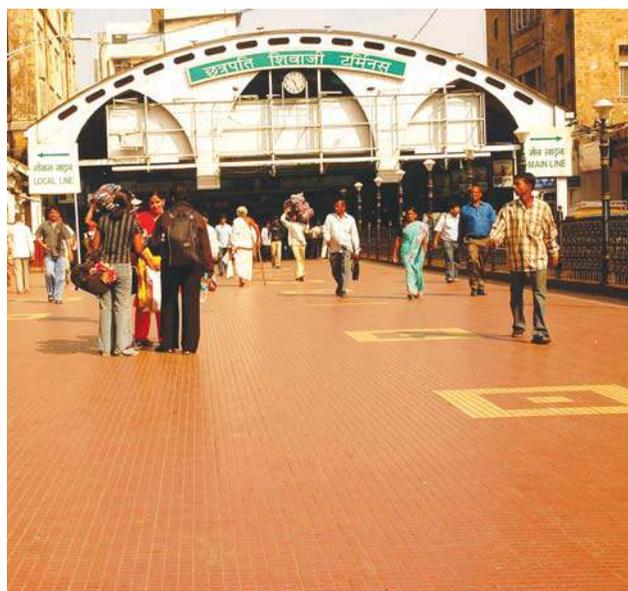
From the modest tile manufacturing unit set up by the founders, in what was then a wilderness at Uran, to gracing the floors of the most eminent citizens of the land, has been a momentous journey. One closely linked to the country's stirring freedom struggle. Beginning production at a time when Bombay was the largest importer of foreign floor tiles, Pheroza and Rustom Sidhwa were determined to contribute towards reducing the import of foreign tiles. This was an uphill task, yet they persisted, in the face of innumerable production and sales snags – including having to surrender, overnight, every bag of cement to the British in 1940. But, the founders were men of steel. "They were, at every step pioneers: Years ahead of their time", says Dilnavaz.

Bringing the company in line with the more modern and contemporary trends of living is Firdaus Variava, Dilnavaz's son and Vice Chairman of the company. "My son's tastes are quite different," she smiles. "He creates modern, funky styles for the younger generation! I have retired. Now the company is his baby."

"We have to move ahead and be with the times" says Firdaus modestly. "People keep looking for new innovations for changing conditions of space now. We have to provide them with their requirements". He has engaged design artists from various parts of the world and created a brand of designer tiles. The company has garnered national and international awards and accolades. Firdaus has brought in innovation without acrimony and as one of their oldest hands, Rumi, says admiringly of him, "He is doing really well. We are looking at a lot of new products without any compromise on quality, and some very different services that no other company can match".

"Confident that we can convert any motif given to us into a tile, we offer a unique service given by no other company", is what they all say. A client can give them a pattern or motif of his/her choice and have it converted to a tile that will adorn his/her floor. This engages the client in a most unusual way to participate and be creative, allowing them the satisfaction of being the designer of their own space.

The pictures or drawings of the designs developed are



**The Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus is paved with Sitlan non slip tiles over which lakhs of commuters tread everyday**

converted into the actual tiles. Samples are occasionally made for approval, pretty much like one would submit a sample poster to a customer per-production. The client is able to see before his eyes his own dream tile come to life and that certainly adds spice to doing up one's space. Once approved in every way, the final stage of production is commenced. This is a lengthy process, but the end result is something amazing!

As its centenary year in 2022 approaches, Bharat Tiles is spreading its wings, preparing to soar. Today, a lot of iconic enterprises have folded up in Mumbai. Each day, another old company downing shutters makes the news. It will be hats off



indeed for Bharat Tiles when it steps into its centennial year, all guns blazing, still proclaiming 'Equal to the world's best'. ■

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

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## SPECIAL EVENT



The team of Kala Ghoda and actor Siddharth Malhotra (sitting, centre) at the book launch

# The Kala Ghoda razzmatazz

The 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual Kala Ghoda festival saw dozens of events, grand installations and diverse stalls, offering large doses of fun and culture to the thousands who flocked to this small but iconic precinct in South Mumbai over nine days. **Disha Shetty reports.**

**T**HE magic of Kala Ghoda, the annual festival that brings the streets of South Mumbai alive, is such that Mumbai residents are treated to street art, literature, workshops,

panel discussions, open air music concerts and dance performances – all for free. Held between February 6 and 14 this year, for most Mumbai residents, attending the festival is

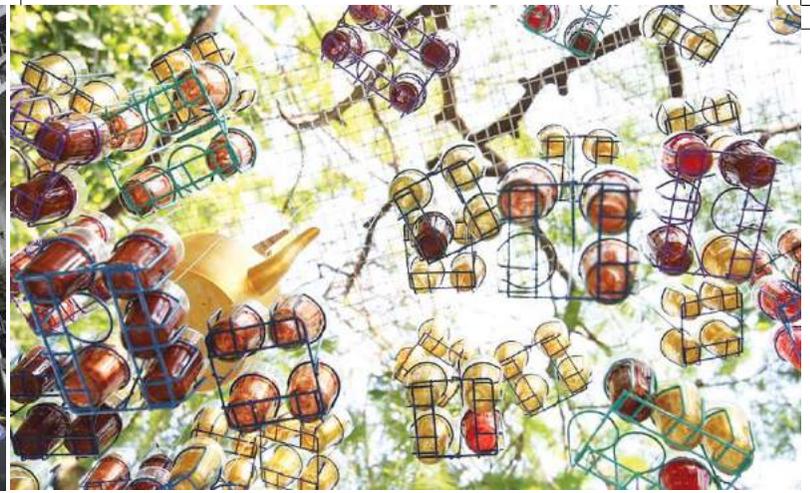


Clockwise from above: Ustad Amjad Ali Khan performs at Kala Ghoda; Vir Das's *Alien Chutney* entralls the audience on the final day of the festival; Ayushman Khurrana performs at the closing ceremony





**A visual installation at Kala Ghoda**



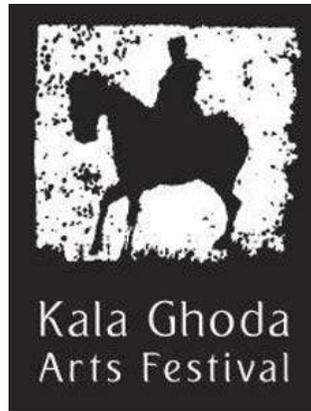
**An eclectic art installation called 'Cutting Chai'**

a ritual they follow just as they would celebrate Christmas or Diwali.

### Many firsts this year

What took the festival to another level this year was the tie-up with the central government's 'Make in India' programme. A first in the history of Kala Ghoda was that it was inaugurated by the Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis who said at the inauguration, "The team of Kala Ghoda and the people of Mumbai are grateful to the government who considered Kala Ghoda as a correct platform and we are honoured to be a part of Make in India as that is what the festival is about, Indian arts, culture, food and celebration!"

The festival saw the likes of Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasiya, Shubha Mudgal and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, leaving the audience members spellbound. The book *Kala Ghoda – Celebrating Mumbai's Art District* by Abha Narain Lamba, about the iconic history of the Kala Ghoda Association and the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival was launched at the start of the festival.



### Quirky installations

What has always attracted visitors to the festival are the art installations which are always quirky, thought provoking and innovative. Over the years, Kala Ghoda festival has had a huge role in introducing Mumbai residents, who are always in a rush to reach somewhere, to the world of art, culture and heritage. The theme for the festival this year was 'Crossing the Threshold' (*Seemaprabhava*). The crowds admired the installations, clicked selfies around them and some went back with food for thought. The departure

from the usual this year was that the Cross Maidan that normally hosts music and dance events also played host to 25 food stalls and 20 artisanal stalls. This was as a part of the 'Make In India' tie-up. So while the music and dance events continued, the Maidan also turned into a food lover's paradise. Open air, food and entertainment - all in one place. What more could one want?

### Closing with a bang

While the entire festival was packed with activities like a panel discussion on organic food to workshops in theatre and film screenings, the closing of the festival was no less interesting. The final weekend saw Vir Das' *Alien Chutney* take to the stage as the audience crowded around the Asiatic library steps, and delivered a comedy rock musical that had everyone in splits.

The festival came to a wonderful end on Valentine's Day with a nearly two-hour long concert by Ayushman Khurrana. The versatile actor/singer had the audience on their feet, dancing to his Punjabi folk tunes. He entertained the audience with anecdotes from his time as a budding actor in Mumbai and even spoke about his memorable journey and his love for his hometown, Chandigarh.

The festival ended on an upbeat mode as the focus shifted to the Make in India week. ■

Disha Shetty is a young journalist who likes travelling and writing.



**A dance drama performance at the festival**

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# The anatomy of waste

*The garbage disposal system of a city shows its true character. Mumbai's abysmal attitude towards disposal of its waste shows it to be a callous, uncaring city. The recent fire at its Deonar garbage dumping ground and the resultant toxic pollution should teach Mumbai that it will have to take better care of its waste disposal and environment. It will also do well to spare a thought to people living in abject poverty around its dumping grounds, who are most affected by what Mumbai discards, writes **Rishi Aggarwal**.*

**O**n the night of 27 January 2016, a big fire broke out in the Deonar garbage dumping ground. This is Mumbai's oldest and largest dumping ground, receiving almost 4,000 tonnes of garbage everyday from the 10000 tonnes that the city generates, as per municipal statements.

The fire burned strong, generating thick acrid smoke, which soon spread in a broad swathe about 20 km long and 5 km wide, but the effects were felt even further than the immediate influence zone. Winter winds ensured that Central and South Mumbai were the worst affected.

## What was burning?

What was burning was just about everything that you can think of. Household garbage, which forms the bulk of the waste coming to the dumping ground, is unsegregated as a rule in Mumbai. There are roughly 12 million citizens as per the last census and half of them stay in slums. Each



**People scavenge the dumping ground looking for things to salvage and sell**

citizen generates roughly 500 gm of waste everyday, which is collected either at the building doorstep or from community bins. Since people do not bother to segregate the waste into recyclable or non-recyclable, food and non-food or dry and wet categories, one can imagine everything from paper, plastic, metal, electronic waste, food waste to all be mixed together in a bhelpuri mix and being transported to the dump. The burning of plastic, metal and any electronic waste in an incomplete

combustion like was happening at the dump, releases toxic fumes containing carcinogenic elements, and thus almost three million citizens were immediately affected by these very harmful fumes.

There is a strong recycling industry in the slums surrounding the Deonar dumping ground, which employs an army of collectors who scavenge the dumping ground in groups, very efficiently identifying different categories of waste, collecting them in large bags and then bringing them down to be sold to the recycling units.

I visited the dump 10 days after the fire. I met a 60-year-old man who was moving around with a gunny bag collecting materials from the dump. On reaching out to him he was very happy to have a conversation and even up turned the contents of his bag to show



**The charred aftermath of the fire which raged for days at the Deonar dumping ground**



**The city of Mumbai looms in the horizon of this wasteland**

us what he was collecting. It turns out that he was collecting coconut shells and husk only; he had super specialised in collecting only one kind of material found in the dump. He was forthcoming in admitting that he was addicted to alcohol and selling this material helped him get about ₹30 a day, which helped him buy his daily fix. His food and lodging was taken care of by some charitable dormitory close by.

The coconut shells and husk he was selling to bakeries, which found it to be a good fuel. The shells which had been crushed in a compactor truck, had been mixed with all other kinds of waste, and travelled many kilometers to be thrown at the dump and then retrieved to be burnt in a bakery furnace.

A casual look around showed numerous other rag pickers very assiduously going about with their collections. All materials easily recognisable as daily discards from urban lifestyles and existence. It needs no great expertise to realise that almost all the items that get classified as garbage and to be dumped somewhere far away are actually resources, which have other uses. None of them should have reached the dumping ground in the first place, having been collected and transported from the source of generation to the source of consumption in the recycling unit.

For as long as I have been involved with solid waste management, the simple principle for management has been to price right each waste item. Once the price has been established, an ecosystem of collectors and transporters develops for every item, ensuring that no garbage reaches the dumping grounds.

All of this has been well observed and documented in numerous court appointed committees, pollution control board committees and other government wings. In 2000, the Government of India formulated the Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules 2000 under the Environment Protection Act of 1986. The rules were a result of the extensive research by the Burman Committee which itself was formed as a result of the Public Interest Litigation in Supreme Court by Almitra Patel in 1996. The rules very simply translated, mandated all municipal corporations of Class I cities to ensure that they reduce the amount of waste reaching dumping grounds by enforcing segregation of waste at source, and giving support and encouragement for treatment of food waste at source by means like composting.

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai was undertaking commendable measures for a few years till 2005, until the concept of PPP (Public Private Partnership) seemed to take root in the thinking. A consultant

was hired and the report formed the basis for increased centralisation of waste disposal and an over emphasis on using centralised facilities like garbage dumps or landfills for disposal. All of this was completely contrary to the spirit and key recommendations of the MSW 2000 Rules.

Mumbai is in the process of making a new Development Plan and in early 2014 numerous inputs have been provided to the corporation along these lines.

### **TB and lung cancer – gifts of the garbage dumps**

The Govandi area in the immediate vicinity of the dump is a hot bed of tuberculosis (TB) and lung cancer. I spoke with a group of about 20 youth in the age group of 10-25 playing cricket at the edges of the dump, everybody expressed concern and had a tale of woe to share. Apparently, 80 percent of Mumbai's tuberculosis cases are from this area. Not everybody here is involved with collection of waste at the dump and the recycling industry, but they are held hostage due to the writ of the recyclers, which runs large in this area.

The Deonar fire to me is not just about the health of the citizens, but it is also about the insight it gives into the character of the city as a whole. Deonar is a potent symbol of the abundant apathy and low levels of integrity, which have come to unfortunately be representative of India. I started active participation in solid waste management in 1994 in the post Surat plague era. After a few years of great work reducing waste going to dumping grounds, everything returned to the same, and we have the big fire of 2016 showing that as a society we have no learning curve on these issues.

At climate change talks India keeps speaking of climate justice and demands the same from the industrialised west, but where is a sense of corresponding justice from the State of India to its most marginalised sections of the city? And as was borne in the case of



**Salvaged waste is segregated and sold**

the Deonar fire, even the wealthiest in Mumbai were not spared. Segregating garbage at source, supporting waste management entrepreneurs in the hundreds and ensuring that minimal waste reaches dumping grounds is not rocket science. It is not something which needs financial support from the West or technology.

In the past decade I have seen numerous western business delegations pitch in the city to help with managing the city's waste. The hotels and tour organisers become rich by organising their visits, but the delegation members themselves never get any business, finding it impossible to navigate through the mess of dealing with the municipal

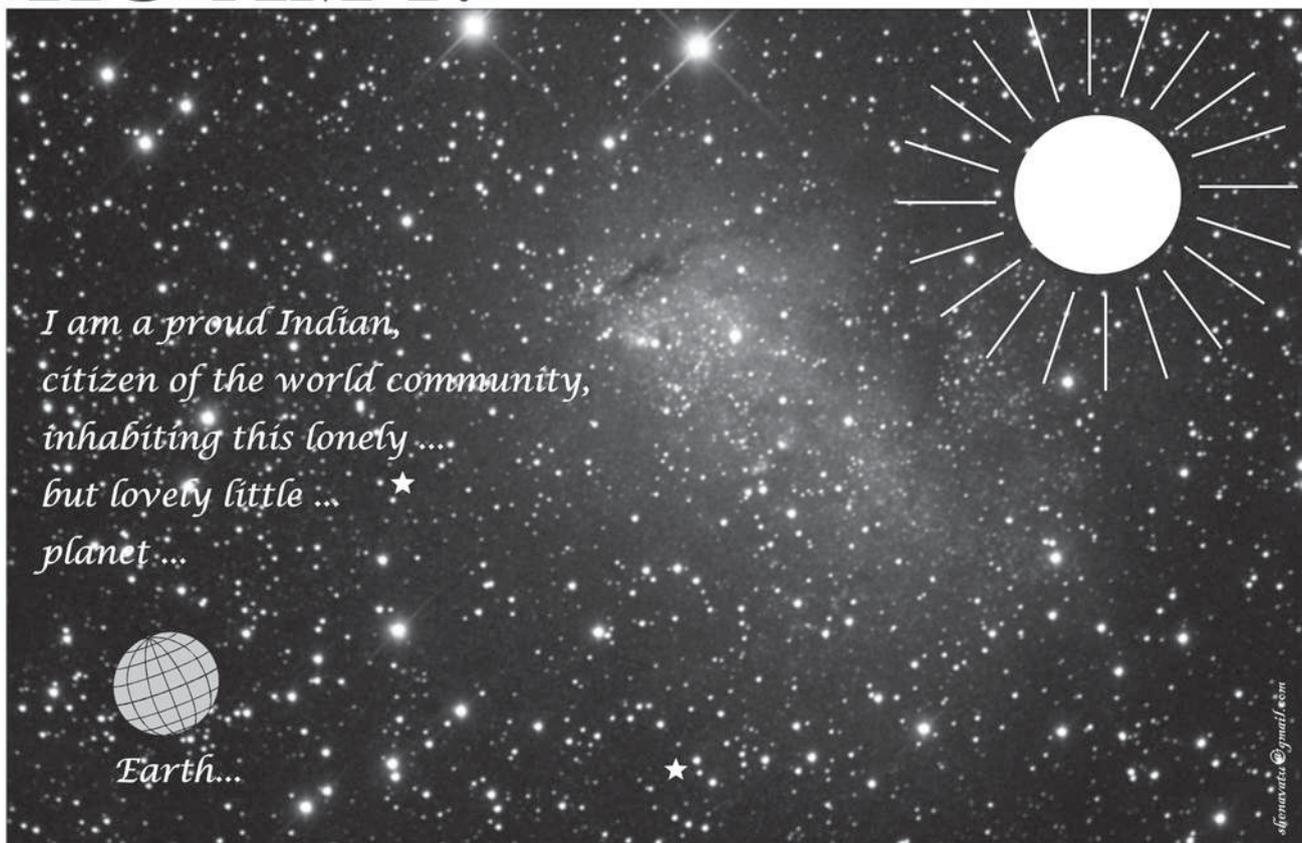
corporation. A far larger number of local entrepreneurs keep struggling even after willing to bring their own funding.

At a time when as a nation we are communicating that we are serious about a number of developmental goals, it would be good that numerous slogans like Swachh Bharat, Make in India and Startup India are combined to usher in an era where the government provides a healthy ecosystem for thousands of waste entrepreneurs to flourish, thus completely doing away with the need for garbage dumps in any city of India. ■

**Rishi Aggarwal is an environmental activist based in Mumbai and has been closely engaged with a number of issues of Mumbai for the past 15 years. He is also a Research Fellow at Observer Research Foundation, Mumbai.**



# WHO AM I?



# Sustainable tourism

*Eco-tourism and eco-resorts are slowly becoming popular with a weary, fed-on-excess urban population. G. Venkatesh profiles an eco-resort in Bhopal which is trying its best to adhere to the ideal way of living, which must soon become the norm, rather than the exception.*

RETREATS are a special segment of the hospitality sector. At once, their socio-economic contributions become evident. They offer a distinct social service – albeit for those who have a little more money to expend – in the form of providing the opportunity to get away from the hubbub of the workaday city life with its noise and air pollution, and inordinate levels of stress. Economically, they would make the beneficiaries loosen their purse strings and redistribute their affluence to those working at the resorts (the support staff for whom this is a wonderful employment generator), who in turn are able to support their families and send their children to school. The government would be at the receiving end of taxes from the resorts, a good part of which in a well-functioning, non-corrupt, efficient democracy (are we one such?), is pumped back into social welfare.

While the aforesaid is quite obvious, and all retreats would characterise themselves as fulfilling this double bottom line, discerning the third bottom line – environment-friendliness – often adds this extra dimension and creates a ‘new normal’, so to say. Of course, readers may have experienced sojourns at different resorts in India, and this article focuses on just one of them – the Jehan Numa Retreat, which is located in Bhopal ([www.jehannuma.com](http://www.jehannuma.com)).

## Retreat, forests, biofuels et al

My wife happened to spend two days with her parents at this retreat



**It is only fitting that plantain leaves sourced from the retreat serve as plates, at this ecological haven**

early on this year. This drove me to get in touch with the General Manager Murugan Thevar through e-mail. The gist of the e-interview was the environmental profile of the retreat. The resort organises tree-plantation programmes in which guests are invited to participate. Each sapling is marked with the name of the planter and the date on which it was planted, and photographs of the development/growth of the saplings are sent to the guests on e-mail to keep them updated about how their ‘botanical children’ are faring.

Thevar says that the property (12 acres of land in all) was earlier used to grow alfa alfa (horse feed), as the family which owns the resort was in the equestrian business. The periphery is dotted with 30-year-old eucalyptus trees. The tree-planting programme referred to, is now three years old, and over this period of time, about 2000

fruit and forest trees have been added on to the property, on the expert advice of the resort’s landscape architect. At the time of writing, only about seven acres are under cultivation. When quizzed about the possible need in the future to cut down some of the trees to keep the programme going, Thevar responded, “Our concept is based on forests and so we believe that trees must be allowed to grow wild and adapt to their surroundings. We avoid planting them in straight lines and equidistant from each other.” The late Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam’s belief in afforestation being a very useful tool to combat global warming comes to mind at once.

I was curious to find out if some of the acres could be devoted to growing biofuel crops like *jatropha*...another one of Dr Kalam’s pet projects. Thevar says that alfa alfa is beneficial to the soil as it adds useful nitrogen to it and keeps it

fertilised. While some patches are being used for organic farming of vegetables which are also used in the resort's kitchens, he thinks that *jatropha* could be put on the anvil and perhaps it may take off in the future.

Growing plants which soak up some of the carbon dioxide and then harvesting them to replace diesel or petrol (a good deal of which is imported into the country), is a great contribution to the economy and the environment at the same time. The farming team at the resort, he says, is from the local village close to Bhopal, and they have been associated with the pedosphere and the biosphere all their lives. They have a wonderful connect with Mother Nature. Thevar finds it a great and rewarding experience to be working with peaceful, nature-loving people at the resort. Terms like global warming and climate change may be foreign to them, but they know for sure the value of trees to human existence.

Trees get their energy from sunlight and soak up carbon dioxide. The Sun can be used in many other ways too. Like for instance, solar heating. This is operational at Jehan Numa Retreat. Solar water heaters handle up to 85% of the heat demand (for water heating) at the resort!

Bhopal, as many readers would know has been plagued by water scarcity from time to time. Borewells and overhead water tanks are common sights in the city. The resort has a captive sewage treatment plant and 70% of the water used for irrigation is sourced from this plant. It is also equipped with an extensive drip irrigation and pop-up-sprinkler system to optimise water use. Rainwater harvesting is also in vogue at the resort; canals dug around the resort reduce runoff and trap the rainwater, some of which seeps into the soil and sustain the ground water levels in and around the resort.

What about biogas? Food waste, horse dung and other organic waste



**Ecologically sensitive living is the need of the hour and shouldn't be confined only to retreats such as this**

from the village around could be anaerobically degraded to produce biogas to plug the remaining 15% of the heat demand (85% coming from solar energy as mentioned above). Excess biogas could be looked upon as a source of revenue – sold to an external market in Bhopal as a source of heat for cooking or industrial purposes. It can also be blended with the natural gas supply by constructing feeder pipes to the main gas pipeline network. Well, electricity generation is also possible if the resort intends to reduce its dependence on the electricity grid of the city. This is a good idea, according to Thevar...not to be dismissed but kept at the back of the mind for possible incorporation in the future.

Currently, in the absence of a biogas-generating facility, the food waste is composted for use as fertiliser on the property itself. The staff have been trained to identify and segregate the compostable food waste. Still on food, the GM tells me that instead of paper or metal or plastics (the latter requiring wash water later), banana leaves are used as plates at the resort, compostable thereafter, or for that matter, even feed for cattle in the city! When it comes to frills – decorations and festoons etc., especially on festive occasions like New Year, Diwali or Christmas or Id – the resort thinks 'organic'. Flowers,

fruits and leaves from within the property are used as much as possible to reduce the demand for paper, plastic or metal. Whatever non-organics are used, if they are recyclable, they are duly sorted, and a local waste handler collects the same from the resort. However, the author is not aware of the effectiveness and efficiency of the recycling system in Bhopal. So, it would be difficult to say what happens to these recyclables after they are collected and taken away. One hopes that they are recycled – close to 100%.

There are retreats aplenty in India. The potential to unearth more and more possibilities of coexisting harmoniously with Mother Nature and contributing to the control/mitigation of the climate change concerns which have now been globally accepted as real and to-be-tackled, is immense. A little here, a little there, cumulatively will result in something conspicuous, as India marches on in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a pot-pourri of challenges to surmount. ■

**G. Venkatesh is a Senior Lecturer, Department of Engineering and Chemical Sciences, Faculty of Health, Science and Technology, Karlstad University, Sweden. He is also a freelance writer for several magazines around the world.**



# An actor for all seasons

*Saeed Jaffrey was truly an actor who straddled the worlds of Indian and British cinema effortlessly, displaying remarkable sangfroid. We will surely miss his excellent voice, diction, presence, and the characters he played with so much ease, says Shoma A. Chatterji in this tribute.*

WITH the passing away of Saeed Jaffrey at the age of 86 (1929-2015), an era of scholarly, versatile and talented actors seems to have ended. Jaffrey was multi-talented and is an actor who spanned every performing media in several capacities in radio, theatre, television and cinema. Fluent in several languages such as English, Urdu and Hindi, Jaffrey could smoothly slip from one language to the other as seamlessly as he could from a historical film to a contemporary one.

He charted out the story of his life in his autobiography, *Saeed An Actor's Journey* (1998), with as easy a candour as he essayed in varied roles in theatre, television and films across continents that span India, UK and the USA. He has worked in nearly 200 films in Hindi, English and Urdu over a long span and many successful television serials. His first Indian film was Satyajit Ray's *The Chess Players* (*Shatranj ke Khiladi*) in 1977, in which he plays Mir Ali one of the two Nawabs, the other having been portrayed by Sanjeev Kumar, where the two Nawabs as so obsessively addicted to chess that they are oblivious to their respective *jagirs* (estates) being taken away by the British.

Richard Attenborough who portrayed the role of Lord Outram in the film, must have been impressed by Jaffrey's performance because when he made *Gandhi* (1982), he cast Jaffrey in the historic role of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The year 1984 saw him perform

important characters in three important mini-series on television that explored the complex relationship between India and the British Empire. These three series that became popular despite their historical context are – *The Far Pavilions*, *Jewel in the Crown* and *A Passage to India*.

His stepping into acting was almost by chance. On a trip to Delhi on holiday after college at Allahabad University, he befriended a group of young students on the train who invited him to a coffee house. He happened to overhear that All India Radio was looking for English-speaking announcers and he applied, and that led to a good job not only as an announcer, but also as writer of small stories and radio skits, monologues and plays. One of these demanded a cast of 35 actors and he performed all the characters himself! He got starring roles in amateur productions organised and presented by the newly formed Unity Theatre and this led him to bag a Fulbright scholarship to study drama in the US. He portrayed Professor Godbole in the Broadway production of *A Passage to India* in 1962.

He almost fled to London when his marriage to Madhur Jaffrey ended in divorce, leaving the three daughters to



Saeed Jaffrey

be brought up by their mother. Because of his command over Urdu and English diction, and his wonderful voice, in London, Jaffrey landed a job with the BBC World Service.

His television experience is dotted with memorable performances in the *Gangsters* series (1976-1978) followed much later by *Tandoori Nights* (1985-1987). Much earlier however, even before *The Chess Players* happened, he drew notice with his role in the John Huston directed *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975). He landed this important role because he and Michael Caine became good friends when they worked together in *The Wilby Conspiracy* (1975) and this brought him instant attention, and he had carved a niche for himself in films.

(Continued on page 48)

# Before the virus goes viral

*The latest virus to join the world's health panic bandwagon is the Zika virus. Dr. Roopa Vernekar gives us an insight into a virus, which has not reached India yet, but may cast a pall over the Olympics to be hosted by Brazil later this year.*

**E**XPLORATION and invention have been a part of human evolution, occurring since ages. Starting from the invention of the wheel to fast cars. The invention of new gadgets, new and advanced version of electronics, new edition cars, and new range of beauty products. Lifestyle changes and modernisation have been a constant phenomenon.

Similar changes are also evident in the medical field. The medical field has advanced to great levels, the invention of vaccination for small pox led to the eradication of small pox; poliomyelitis is another disease that would be completely eradicated in another few years. In spite of such great advancements, the medical field faces many challenges with new microbes (viruses and bacteria) causing diseases. Apart from exhibiting various characteristics, these viruses also undergo mutation, making it a challenging task for the medical fraternity to diagnose, manage and treat the different kinds of signs and symptoms caused by these microbes. In recent times, the dengue virus and Zika virus are the ones causing havoc as they are spreading at an alarming rate.

## A virus called Zika

Outbreak of the Zika virus in April 2015 in Brazil has been alarming, and has spread to South and Central America and the Caribbean. In January, the US CDC (Centre for Disease Control) issued an alert for people travelling to these countries. In countries like Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, Columbia, Ecuador and Jamaica, pregnant



The Aedes mosquito

women were advised to terminate their pregnancies, and women who had travelled to the affected countries were advised to postpone pregnancy for eight months as the virus is shown to cause microcephaly - a neurological disorder in the new-born. About 3500 microcephaly cases have been reported in Brazil between October 2015 and January 2016. The World Health Organisation has declared Zika virus as an international public health emergency due to its link to cause birth defects in the new-born. Brazil faces a greater challenge as a host to the Olympic Games in the summer of 2016.

India has not yet reported any cases infected with Zika virus causing birth defects, but the Zika virus forced the Tata Motors group to change the name of their new car ZICA!

## History of the Zika virus

Though the outbreak of the virus in 2015 was alarming, it existed much before. This virus was first isolated in 1947 from a rhesus monkey in the Zika forest, and hence was called the Zika virus. There are two forms of the virus strains - the African strain and the Asian strain. Studies have shown that the recent outbreak in America is due to the Asian strain.

## How does this disease spread?

Like dengue, this disease is known to spread through mosquito bite during the day time. The mosquitoes belong to the Aedes family, the *Aedes aegypti*, *A. apicoargenteus*, *A. furcifer*, *A. hensilli*, *A. leuteocephalus*, *A. vittatus* are some mosquitoes that act as vectors carrying the virus. The person gets affected 8-10

days after the bite from the infected mosquitoes. The virus has shown to cross the placental border and infect the foetus. It can also affect the new born during the time of birth from the infected mother. The virus can also be transmitted through sexual contact. Recently, the virus has been isolated from the urine and saliva of the infected person, indicating the potential for transmission through local contact, but the same has not been confirmed.

### The Aedes mosquito

These mosquitoes are distinctive as they have white and black marking on their body and their legs. They are found in the tropical and the subtropical zones and are active during the day time, and usually bite during dawn and dusk. The genus of mosquito Aedes is known to cause other diseases like the dengue, yellow fever and chikungunya.

### Signs and symptoms

The symptoms begin as any other viral infection like headache, fever, fatigue with joint pains, conjunctivitis and maculopapular rash. The fever is self limiting and resolves by itself within three to seven days and requires symptomatic treatment, but Zika fever in pregnant women can cause complications to the new born. The virus crosses the placental barrier and

causes microcephaly in the new born.

The Zika virus is known to cause the Guillain Barre Syndrome. It is a syndrome in which a person's immune system attacks the peripheral nerve cells damaging the myelin insulation. There is tingling in the beginning, leading to numbness, muscle weakness, which usually begins in the hands and feet. And finally leads to paralysis of the body parts. In some, the face and the neck may be involved, causing facial paralysis. Some recover within weeks, but in a few, the diseases may cause permanent paralysis. Death can occur in a few with the involvement of the vital organs.

### Diagnosis and treatment

The Zika virus can be diagnosed through:

- \* PCR (polymerised chain reaction)
- \* Virus isolation from the blood samples.

No specific drug is available for treating Zika, so the symptoms are treated with paracetamol (for reducing the fever), consuming lots of fluids (as it causes dehydration), and rest. One has to avoid aspirin and pain killers until dengue is ruled out. Research is in progress for developing a vaccine for the Zika fever.

### Prevention is better than cure

May it be dengue, chikungunya or the Zika, the best way to prevent them is by

avoiding mosquito bites, as mosquitoes are the vectors that carry these viruses and transmit them to humans. A few measures one can take are:

- \* Prevent stagnant water near human dwellings as they provide an excellent site for breeding of these mosquitoes
- \* Use mosquito repellants, creams, coils and nets
- \* Wear full sleeved clothing
- \* Spray insecticides
- \* Avoid travelling to infected countries

In spite of the outbreak in Brazil, the government of Brazil has assured of a minimal risk from the Zika virus and has assured the safety of the athletes, as the virus does not cause any serious complications, except in pregnant women. The government of Brazil is apparently taking all measures to reduce the breeding of mosquitoes and has provided assurances to reduce the mosquito count by August 2016, when the Olympics are hosted by them. ■



Dr. Roopa Vernekar is a dental graduate and a writer. She likes to write articles on medical and dental topics, as well as travel.

## An actor for all seasons

(Continued from page 46)

He will always be remembered for his portrayal of Naseer Ali in *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985) that fetched him a BAFTA nomination, his fleshing out of Raaz, a boatman, in an adaptation of Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*, about a man traumatised by the First World War finding spiritual solace in India and Nepal. He is the first Indian actor to have been bestowed the OBE (Order

of British Empire). His narration of the *Kama Sutra* titled *The Art of Love* (1996) was listed by *Time* magazine as "one of the five best spoken word records ever made". He voiced all 86 characters in the 1997 BBC World Service broadcast of Vikram Seth's novel, *A Suitable Boy*.

From Shakespeare to Paul Scott to Somerset Maugham to Munshi Premchand, he has done it all and he

leaves behind his works to learn from. ■

Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among



many awards. She is currently Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, Delhi, researching the politics of presentation of working women in post-colonial Bengali cinema 1950 to 2003.

# Ah-choo!

*Down and out with a nasty cold and a running nose? **A. Radhakrishnan** gives you some simple and effective home remedies which will help you through this common illness.*

**W**INTER, it is said, can 'leave you out in the cold'! On a cold winter's morning, you wake up feeling 'under the weather.' You're sneezing, coughing and hacking up a storm, signs that you'll be spending your day sick and 'groggy'.

When someone sneezes, we almost automatically say 'God Bless You'. The belief is that when one sneezes, their heart stops. Saying this is believed to make the sneezer return to life or make their heart continue to beat!

## What is common cold?

The common cold (also known as nasopharyngitis, rhinopharyngitis, acute coryza, head cold, or simply a cold) is a viral infectious disease of the upper respiratory tract that primarily affects the nose. It may occasionally lead to pneumonia, either viral or secondary bacterial. Signs and symptoms include coughing, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, and fever which usually resolve in seven to ten days, with some symptoms lasting up to three weeks.

The incubation period for a common cold is usually around two days. Only after this time will symptoms start to appear. It's hard to believe, but colds are not very contagious. The virus after landing on your body takes several hours to work its way up to your nose or eyes - the place where the virus develops. In fact, colds are at their most contagious before a sufferer shows any symptoms.

Cold-causing microbes can survive for up to two days outside of the body. Rhinoviruses (from the Greek word rhin, meaning 'nose') evolved from



**A cold can lay us very low, but natural remedies can help**

enteroviruses, which cause minor infections throughout the human body. It causes 30 to 50 percent of colds, usually live for three hours on your skin or any touchable surface, but can

sometimes, survive for up to 48 hours.

The list of touchable surfaces is a lengthy one: door knobs, computer keyboards, kitchen counters, elevator buttons, light switches, shopping carts, toilet paper rolls - the things we come in contact with on a regular basis.

But it's impossible to tell how long humans have been battling colds. They could have been infecting hominids before our species appeared. Well over 200 virus strains are implicated in the cause of the common cold.

How far do germs travel after a sneeze? Remain six feet from infected people, and move quickly when they gear up to sneeze. Humidity levels help those droplets whiz through the air quicker: the lower the humidity, the more moisture evaporates from the droplet, shrinking it in size so it can stay airborne for larger distances.

**When someone sneezes, we almost automatically say 'God Bless You'. The belief is that when one sneezes, their heart stops. Saying this is believed to make the sneezer return to life or make their heart continue to beat!**

By the time you are 75, you've probably suffered from 200 colds and spent around two years of your life coughing and sneezing. But experts say colds among older people are likely to lessen but develop into secondary bacterial infections such as respiratory-related health problems which can become killers.

Surprisingly, common cold viruses are not easily spread through kissing. You are more likely to catch cold through snuggling up in bed for eight hours with your cold-suffering partner.

### Ignore at your peril

Yes, it can be dangerous too if neglected, as Mumbai resident Chandrakant Tupe (32) found out sadly. He ignored his chronic cold for two years. The result was complete loss of hearing!

The doctors at a hospital operated and removed the diseased remains of his left ear. Though he had suffered constant headache, ear discharge, tinnitus – a constant buzzing sound in the ear as well as movement imbalance, he took medicines only for the symptoms he suffered on the day.

The infection had started in his throat and moved to his inner ear, dissolved some of the ear bone and even affected the venus-sinus cavity of the brain.

Thus, no actual cure for the common cold exists, but the symptoms can be treated. It is the most frequent infectious disease in humans with the average adult getting two to three colds a year and the average child getting between six and twelve. Cold symptoms typically last a week, but in children and older adults, and those with multiple medical issues, it may last longer.

### Prevention is everything

Tips to prevent being affected are:

- Stay warm.
- Use face masks when out walking

**By the time you are 75, you've probably suffered from 200 colds and spent around two years of your life coughing and sneezing. But experts say colds among older people are likely to lessen but develop into secondary bacterial infections such as respiratory-related health problems which can become killers.**

early on wintry mornings or walk at a later time. If asthmatic, take a course of leukotriene inhibitors as the cold air traps pollutants and keeps them close to ground.

- Use a nasal spray, enjoy a hot cup of water, go for a flu vaccine if necessary.
- Build immunity. Get more protein, zinc, water, silver and vitamin C. Half a teaspoon twice a day of pure organic *haldi* (turmeric) in milk will make our immune system sing.
- Steer clear of infections by washing hands frequently and of course follow granny's remedies like salt water gargles and take steam often to keep your throat and nasal passage clear.
- Avoid spicy fried foods, chew cough lozenges, drink plenty of honey and lime juice in warm water with a pinch of pepper.
- Rest, take plenty of fluids.
- Hot soup is good.
- Some even advocate having ice-cream and everything cold, but this is debatable.
- Staying physically active through moderate exercise has a number of

health benefits, including supporting our immune system to fight off germs.

- But how about when you are already sick? Exercise can boost endorphins (our body's natural pain killer), has an anti-inflammatory effect, and may help break up congestion. But if you have heart or lung disease or a fever, exercising while ill can exacerbate these conditions.
- Dark chocolate contains a chemical called the obromine. It lacks the side effects of feeling sleepy or dull.
- The pungent odour of raw onions comes from its sulphur-containing compounds, and is also believed to bestow some antibacterial properties.
- Raw honey unfiltered, unstrained, or not heated above natural hive temperatures, does not destroy the beneficial enzymes, nutrients, and antioxidants.
- Antibiotics are of no use against cold viruses and it is important to note that most have side effects.
- Though over-the-counter medications are available for aches, pains, congestion, nasal discharge and postnasal drip, the key is to always discuss with your doctor or pharmacist if these medications are safe for you.
- So when you start to get those dreaded chills, body aches, sore throat or cough - don't let these common cold symptoms put your body, mind and soul in the doldrums...the miracle is in the house!! Get some rest, keep positive and take care of yourself by utilising

these time-proven wisdoms. ■



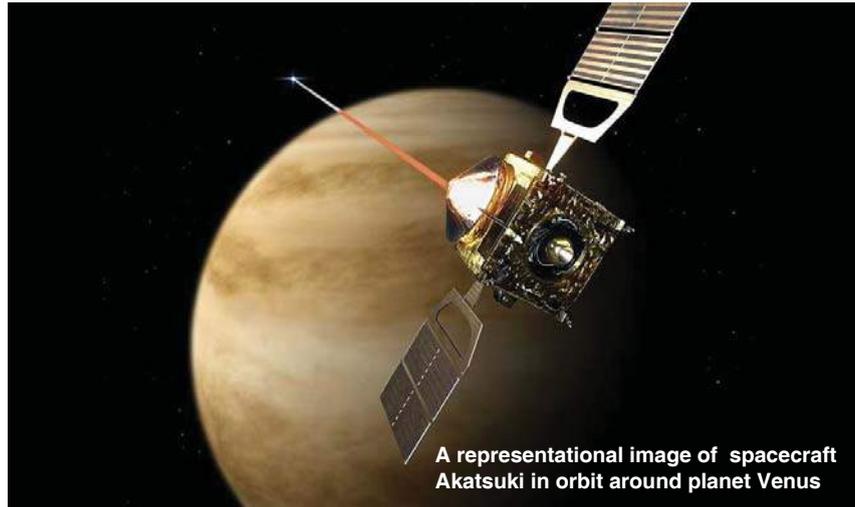
**A. Radhakrishnan** is a Pune-based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer, who loves to interact and make friends.

# Orbiting Venus

*Our fascination for our co-planets of the solar system continues. The latest under investigation is Venus. With the Akatsuki spacecraft in orbit around Venus, there is now hope among space scientists that finally, this planet, so close to Earth, will yield at least some of its secrets.*

**P**LANET Venus is similar to Earth in many ways and is often referred to as Earth's 'twin planet'. Yet, it is also very different. This has been an area which has fascinated space scientists for some time now. Since 1962, Venus has been investigated by many spacecraft – from fly-bys, orbiters, descending probes and even two balloons. Yet, the planet, shrouded in a thick global cloud cover made of dilute sulfuric acid droplets, has not given up its mysteries, said Dr. Sanjay S. Limaye, Senior Scientist, Space Science and Engineering Center, University of Wisconsin, USA, who recently delivered a lecture on 'Venus – So near, Earth like and yet so very different', at Mumbai's Nehru Planetarium.

Dr. Limaye, who was NASA's (USA's National Aeronautics and Space Administration) participating scientist in Japan's Akatsuki mission, said in his lecture that on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015, the Akatsuki spacecraft made history by succeeding in its second attempt to go



into orbit around Venus, after missing it on the first attempt in 2010 December. Equipped with cameras to image Venus in reflected sunlight and emitted infrared light, Akatsuki will primarily observe the weather on Venus to answer its main scientific goal – What makes the atmosphere of Venus rotate faster than the underlying planet? – an outstanding problem in atmospheric science.

Even though Venus is a small planet, its proximity to Earth makes it the second brightest object in our night sky. Its atmosphere also makes it the hottest planet, even though Mercury is closest to the Sun. Dr. Limaye mentioned that though formed at about the same time as Earth and similar in size and mass, Venus today is much warmer, so even though the planet

harboured liquid water on its surface in its ancient past, its evolutionary path has been very different from Earth and that of Mars. According to him, there are many more questions about Venus compared to Mars that puzzle us. Why does Venus rotate backwards slower than any planet in our solar system? When did its surface start getting warmer? Are there active volcanoes on Venus today? Did life evolve on Venus? What substance or substances cause the contrasts in the cloud cover? Why does the atmosphere super rotate? Akatsuki hopes to reveal the answer to the last one at least.

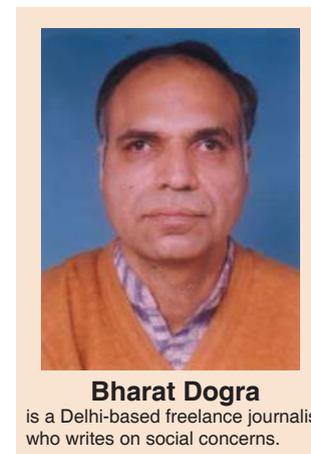
He ended his talk by affirming that Akatsuki will certainly raise more questions about Venus and also shed some light on the existing questions. Without the ability to make measurements from within the atmosphere, we will need to wait for future missions from the international agencies to answer them. ■



**Dr. Sanjay Limaye, delivering the lecture on Venus at Mumbai's Nehru Planetarium**

# Farmers in distress

*Our farmers get the least priority even in times of acute drought. Isn't it time the government initiated an efficient drought relief scheme apart from MGNREGA?*



**T**HE situation in mid-January is that the central government has so far released about ₹ 10,000 crores as drought relief to eight states. At the same time, however, earlier allocations for rural employment and nutrition were much below need, so overall there has been a funds crunch for initiating employment and nutrition work in drought affected villages. There is a sense of loss of hope among people, which in turn is leading to a very tragic situation including suicide.

It is very important to provide timely relief to people and to keep alive their hope and resilience. Recently, I spoke to people in many villages in Bundelkhand region (which is one of the worst affected regions) regarding their needs and requirements.

These villagers said with one voice that they badly needed employment in and near their villages. The government has a rural employment guarantee scheme in place, but it was shocking to know that in the villages where it was needed the most in the year 2015, this MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) was almost completely absent. In villages where people were being forced to migrate in huge numbers due to total lack of employment and income, we did not see any sign of work under this scheme. Why was this legislation enacted if it was not to be implemented in the most needy places during the most difficult times?

Another problem is that even when NREGA has been implemented on a small scale, those who worked at the employment sites did not get their wages in time. Now at the time of a serious drought when there are no food grains in stock at home, people need to be paid immediately for their work or else they will simply not survive. This is why people started migrating in large numbers.

So it is very important to implement rural employment guarantee scheme on a large scale and for the local administration to have enough ready funds for this. Also, the work should be of a kind that will help to genuinely improve soil and water conservation and agricultural productivity in the long term. For example, the work of field-ponds has been useful for many farmers. Strong steps should be taken to curb corruption and to ensure that these funds are utilised for genuine work.

The government should also clarify whether it is going to confine itself only to NREGA work (which is meant for normal times as well) or whether it will also initiate special drought relief work, including food for work. If the government is going to rely on NREGA, then it has to make necessary changes to ensure that payments are made to villagers, very quickly. Also, the standard of work cannot be very rigorous for villagers weakened greatly by hunger and malnutrition in a serious drought year. It may be necessary to start additional drought relief work in the more acutely drought affected areas like Bundelkhand and Marathwada.

Farmers of several villages to whom I spoke last December, said that they had not yet been paid the compensation for the very heavy damage caused to the *kharif* crop. They also complained that the compensation rates are decided in a very arbitrary way.

The greatest distress is in the families affected by suicides of farmers (or farm workers or other villagers). In their case, a significant help was promised but this has been paid to less than half of the affected families. The government should also ask the administrators to remain responsive to the needs of these families, as some of these families particularly widows have been facing many problems after the suicides. ■

# Smart Cities, anyone?

*What is the purpose behind creating Smart Cities? Who will decide the public agenda for these cities? Will every citizen benefit?*



**Anuradha Kalhan**  
is an independent researcher. She was earlier a Fellow at NMML, Teen Murti.

**T**HE government says it will create 100 smart cities over the next five years under its Smart City Mission. This is in addition to rejuvenating 500 existing cities under a mission called AMRUT (A Mission for Rejuvenation of Urban Transformation). Twenty cities have already been picked in February 2016, on the basis of their track record in generating internal resources through user charges, online publication of budgets, grievance redressal systems, completion of past urban renewal projects, citizens participation, vision and goals etc.

People are impatiently looking forward to living in smart cities instead of the cities that we do inhabit; a promised city where they can work and live without suffocating in toxic air or risk being disabled by tap water. Who would deny the need to commute to work smartly without losing three hours every day, or go out for a long walk without tripping over loose pavement stones and skipping over garbage? Which one of us would not like to sit in a beautiful park and watch children play? And who would not like to live in a decent, affordable home or have city corporators answerable to the tax payers? Who can contradict the need to improve quality of life in our cities? But how important are these concerns in the proposed smart city map?

So far, the plan seems to suggest that massive private partnership and foreign funding will be needed to fund this Mission. The government will make available only one lakh crores rupees through the centre, state and municipal budgets. Four times that amount will be obtained through private parties and loans from World Bank, ADB, BRIC Bank, Chinese Asian led Infrastructure Bank, German, French and Japanese and other such sources. More will come in from other private players. Some accounting firms estimate that \$150 billion will be needed over the next five years! Funding numbers are still evolving. Meanwhile, large real estate developers, internet service providers, and foreign urban infrastructure consultants are getting organised for major

contracts, and hence the market excitement. For real estate players, this is a much needed shot in the arms. The market has been stagnant, saturated at the top and largely ignored at the bottom.

For want of genuine citizen participation what is being projected in a smart city are basically ICT enabled services, Wi-Fi services, and mobile phone applications that inform citizens about other available services. With no agenda to increase affordable public services, all that this can amount to is calls/ messages to private taxis and autos, private garbage cleaners, oxygen cylinders, power suppliers, water suppliers and so on.

For its IT based conception, enormous role of private players, debt and sheer scale, this mission is indeed unique. The implication is that user fees and local taxes will have to go up. The Urban Development Ministry suggests that local urban bodies will have to be creative in raising funds because many of their traditional taxes like octroi are being included in the GST. Special Purpose Vehicles created to make and manage these cities will circumvent elected LUB (Local Urban Bodies) or make equal partnerships with them thereby circumscribing local democracy. So who will decide what is priority in the Smart City is? Will basic services be priced fairly?

The city will eventually fall into two or more parts depending on what the citizens can afford in terms of roads, power services, garbage disposal, schools, hospitals and other public services. These parts will live cheek by jowl as is the custom in India; servants, drivers, washer men in dense, unhygienic clusters around the cybernetic smart city residents. The Census of India 2011 estimates the urban population to be 377 million (37.7crores) - an increase of 31% (11.69 crore or 1.17 per year) since 2001. Inescapably, as poor migrants pour in, it will be difficult to envisage where the old city ends and the smart city begins. ■



## ART BEAT

# YOUNG

## The Dancing Diva

*Eminent danseuse Mrinalini Sarabhai passed away on January 21*

**M**RINALINI Sarabhai was born in Kerala on May 11, 1918, into an illustrious family of freedom fighters. Her father S. Swaminathan was a lawyer and mother Ammukutty was a Gandhian. Her older sister, Lakshmi Sehgal, served as the captain of the Rani of Jhansi regiment of the Azad Hind Fauj. Mrinalini married Vikram Sarabhai, the father of the Indian space programme.

Herson Kartikeya is an environmentalist, while daughter Mallika is a noted dancer and activist.

Mrinalini learnt Western dance in Switzerland where she spent her childhood. She began her traditional training at Rukminidevi Arundale's Kalakshetra in Chennai. She later trained at Shantiniketan with Rabindranath Tagore. Thereafter she trained in Manipuri, Kathakali, and

Mohiniyattam dances. She also learnt dance in Java and acting in USA. Her mentor was the Bharatanatyam exponent, Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai.

Mrinalini set up the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts in Ahmedabad in 1949 with her husband. It provides training in dance, drama, music and



puppetry.

She was also involved in reviving Gujarati handlooms and establishing organisations promoting women's welfare, Gandhism and environmentalism.



Her immense talent and contribution to the arts earned her the Padma Shri in 1968, the Padma Bhushan in 1992 and the Kalidas Sanman in 1996, among several other honours.

Fondly known as Amma, Mrinalini was a prolific writer. She authored 35 books including many novels, poetry, plays and stories for children. *Understanding Bharatanatyam* is an important work on the classical dance form. Her autobiography is titled, *Voice of the Heart*.

## CURIOSITY

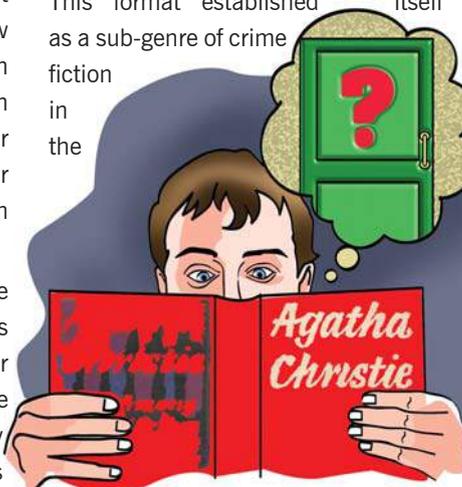
## What are 'Locked Room' mysteries?

**T**HE locked room mystery is an intriguing type of crime fiction that revolves around an offence being committed in such a way that it seems impossible to determine how it was done. Usually a murder victim is discovered in a room locked from inside with no other apparent exit or entry route, making the readers wonder how the killer gained access and then vanished into thin air!

The plot uses the 'red herring' technique in which the author deliberately casts an innocent person as guilty in order to distract or mislead the reader. The true culprit is armed with a seemingly unbreakable alibi and remains

undetected till the end. The intelligent murder mystery is solved in a dramatic climax.

This format established itself as a sub-genre of crime fiction in the



19<sup>th</sup> century although some examples are also found in ancient Greek literature. The format gained popularity in the 1920s and 30s thanks to writers like Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Cummings and Agatha Christie.

John Dickson Carr is considered a master of locked room mysteries. His story 'The Hollow Man' (1925) was voted as the best locked room mystery ever by a panel of eminent mystery writers and reviewers in 1981.

Locked room mysteries are generally short stories as it is difficult to sustain a puzzle format in a novel.



## STORY

### The woodcutter's prayers

A woodcutter climbed a tree to cut firewood. He went on climbing and cutting branches till finally he had reached the top of the tall tree. Then he looked down and saw to his horror that he had cut all the branches below him. He could not climb down. He was terrified.

"Oh God," he prayed, "if you help me get down safely, I'll give my cow to the temple." While he was praying he had slipped a little way down the trunk, and seeing that he was not as high as he was a moment ago, he felt a little better.

"Not the cow, Lord," he corrected himself. "I'll give you my goat."

By then he had slipped down some more.

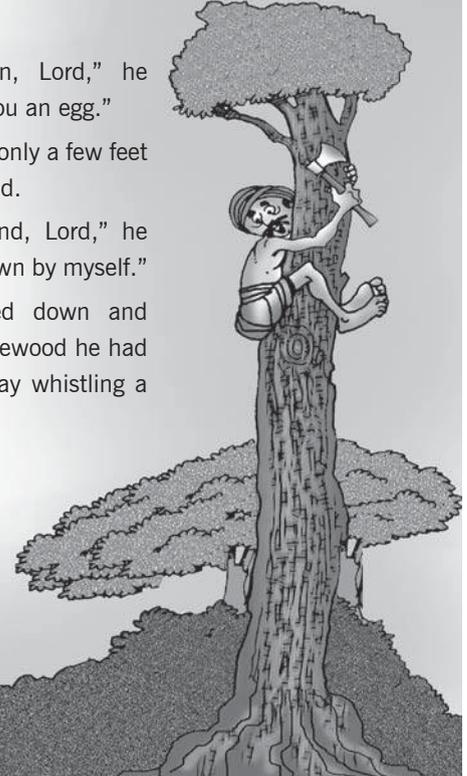
"Not the goat, Lord," he prayed. "I'll give you a chicken." When he looked down, he saw that he had slipped even more.

"Not a chicken, Lord," he said. "I'll give you an egg."

By now he was only a few feet above the ground.

"Er ...never mind, Lord," he said. "I'll get down by myself."

And he jumped down and gathering the firewood he had cut, walked away whistling a merry tune.



## AMAZING LIVING WORLD



### Transformer owl

Though many owls are known to fluff up their feathers to appear larger than their attacker, the Southern White-faced Owl has mastered the technique of changing its appearance.

It transforms itself into different forms depending upon the size of its potential attacker. For example, when faced with a barn owl — a bird that is only slightly larger — it puffs up its feathers to appear bigger, thus scaring the predator away. However, when confronted with a bird that is much larger, the owl does the opposite. It elongates its body, flattens its feathers and squints to resemble a dead branch, thus camouflaging itself effectively.

The Southern White-faced Owl grows to a height of about 20cm. It has bright orange eyes and a greyish-white body. It is found in sub-Saharan Africa.

## PUZZLE Work it out

Five children take part in a badminton tournament. Each one has to play with every other child. How many matches will have to be conducted altogether?



Answer: 10 matches (The first child will play with 4 others. The second child will play with 3 children as he has already played with the first child and so on. Thus the total number of matches will be  $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10$ )

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## RAVINDRA JAIN

A gifted composer (1944-2015)

INDIAN cinema lost one of its most prolific music composers in the demise of Ravindra Jain, who died recently of multiple organ failure at the age of 71. Jain who was born visually impaired, developed a liking for music at a very young age. His keen interest in reciting Jain *bhajans* prodded his father to send him for basic training under reputed music teachers, who put him through his paces. Ravindra Jain entered films in 1960 after shifting base from Aligarh to Bombay (now Mumbai). He entered Hindi cinema with films like *Kranti* and *Balidaan* and soon found his footing in the industry. In a career spanning over four decades, Ravindra Jain composed music for several blockbusters including *Saudagar*, *Chor Machaye Chor*, *Geet Gaata Chal*, *Chitchor*, *Paheli*, and *Nadiya Ke Paar*. Jain who was also a talented lyricist wrote many of the songs himself and what was really creditable was that almost all the numbers in the aforesaid films turned out to be chartbusters. His lyrics for the film *Akhiyon Ke Jharokhon Se*, especially the title song by the same name took him to the heights of fame. Ravindra Jain had a keen ear for spotting talent and it was he who brought the famous singer K.J. Yesudas from South Indian films into Bollywood. Yesudas's numbers in Basu Chatterjee's *Chitchor* including *Gori Tera Gaon* became a rage and some of the numbers like *Oh Goriya Re (Nayya)* remained on the top of the charts for a very long time. The composer and the singer shared a great rapport and Jain even eulogised the singer as the 'Voice of India'.

Ravindra Jain also used the voices of celebrated singers like Mohamed Rafi and Kishore Kumar, and composed the music for many of their popular numbers. He also composed the music for an album brought out by versatile singer Asha Bhonsle titled *Om Namoh Shivaya*. His association with Raj Kapoor too earned him many admirers and the thespian's film *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* got a distinct fillip due to the very popular songs for which Jain had composed the music. He

was later to also wield the baton in another Raj Kapoor film *Do Jasoos* and for the Randhir Kapoor directed *Henna* where again music by Jain was to the fore.

Other top directors with whom Jain collaborated, which catapulted his career to dizzy heights were the legendary filmmaker B.R. Chopra for whom he scored the music in films like *Pati Patni Aur Woh* and *Insaaf Ka Tarazu*, and with Rajshri Productions's Sooraj Barjatya in films like *Geet Gaata Chal*, *Tapasya*, *Chitchor*, *Akhiyon Ke Jharokhon*

*Se*, *Abodh* and *Vivah* and its sequel *Vivaah Aisi Bhi*. Jain was also in demand in

other languages as well and his filmography included compositions in Malayalam, Telugu, Haryanvi, Punjabi, Bhojpuri, Bengali, Oriya and Rajasthani. Mythological films were his forte and he excelled in scoring music for *Navaratri*, *Gopal Krishna*, *Raja Harishchandra*, *Brahmashri Viswamitra* (Telugu) etc. His score in the Malayalam film *Aakashathinte Niram* too, was critically acclaimed.

The famous composer also had a long stint with the small screen and his music compositions for mythological serials like Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan* and *Lav Kush* too swelled the ranks of his admirers.

He also collaborated with Ramanand Sagar in serials like *Sri Krishna* and *Alif Laila*. The famous actor Sanjay Khan who later carved a niche on TV too, had Jain composing music for his popular serial *Jai Hanuman*. Famous Bollywood heroine and dancer Hema Malini had a long association with Jain and commissioned him to compose the music for her dance ballets.

He won a number of awards culminating in the Padma Shri bestowed on him by the Government of India. Musicians like him might shed their mortal coils but their creations far outlive them and in the case of someone like Ravindra Jain, who left his indelible imprint in the hundreds of films that he worked in, this belief certainly rings true. ■

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



# AROON TIKEKAR

Mumbai's tireless chronicler (1944-2016)

**A**ROON Tikekar was more of a scholar, a historian of Mumbai city, than a mere journalist, though he donned many hats during his chequered career spanning five decades. He dominated Marathi journalism for two decades, provided long needed depth to daily coverage and analysis of socio-political happenings in Maharashtra.

He was an expert on history of Mumbai University, was an excellent raconteur of Mumbai city, and knew its landmarks and stories behind them. He was more comfortable with the company of books which he loved, rather than spend time with socialites of the day. He spent months in Mumbai University library to unearth its history before he wrote *The Cloister's Pale – A Biography of the University of Mumbai*. He donated a part of his personal collection of books to the same library. He played a major role in modernising the Asiatic Society during his long tenure as president of the institute.

Tikekar was born in a family of scholars and journalists and continued the tradition. He originally hailed from Solapur in Western Maharashtra. He began his career as a lecturer, then shifted to Delhi as an officer with the US Library of Congress office before venturing into the field of journalism by joining the *Times of India* as Chief Librarian. He also worked as the visiting faculty for journalism in Pune and Mumbai University.

As Chief Librarian of the *Times of India* group he got into preservation of books, conservation and classification of newspaper clippings, and slowly shifted to daily journalism as an assistant editor of *Maharashtra Times*. He later joined the *LokSatta* as its editor for a long tenure. Subsequently he shifted to the *Lokmat* and became editorial director of *Sakal* daily newspaper published from Pune.

Tikekar was strict in his professional role and demanded equal competence from his colleagues, sometimes leading to bitterness. He was known for his voracious reading and disciplined way in writing as well as delivering speeches. His two excellent speeches on Justice Ranade delivered in

the Mumbai University have been published in a book form, providing a glimpse of contemporary life and values in pre-Independence era in Mumbai city.

I met him just before he passed away suddenly when he enthusiastically talked about his new project on recent developments in Maharashtra. I used to meet him when I did a research on R.K.Laxman's cartoons for a BBC documentary.

He was a prolific writer in Marathi as well as English and contributed occasionally on important issues to the *Times of India* and other publications. He

cherished high moral values and always kept a distance from the ruling class. He was basically a non-conformist, liberal editor. His motto was, editors must be read and not be seen with the high and mighty of the society. He extensively wrote about contemporary Maharashtra and always took a moral stand on controversial issues, unmindful of what the people in power wanted. This gave an edge and sharpness to whatever he wrote in his columns and editorials. He continued the long tradition of Marathi journalism set by Lokmanya Tilak, of fearless journalism. He wrote a book on former Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and edited the compilation of speeches by Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad

Pawar delivered in the Parliament. He has written more than two dozen books on various topics. Very few know that he was also a good cricket player and represented Mumbai University as a student.

As a PhD student, his thesis was on the Kincaids, the father-son duo who worked in India as civil service officers in the pre-Independence era. The thesis has also been published in a book form. He was very fond of Mumbai city and wanted the authorities to preserve its culture and historical monuments. He was a voice of reason and wanted the city to be remembered as a city of intellectuals, rather than as a city of commerce. The city has lost an erudite friend and a book lover. ■

– Prakash Bal Joshi is a Mumbai based journalist and artist.



## MAJOR MUKUND V. VARADARAJAN, AC

A gallant brave heart (1983-2014)

**M**UKUND Varadarajan was born on 12 April 1983. He was a brave courageous child, naughty, hyperactive and always the leader. He graduated in commerce from Sri Chandresekhendra Saraswathi Viswa Mahavidyalaya at Enethur and acquired a diploma in journalism from the Madras Christian College, Tambaram. His grandfather and two of his uncles had served in the army and his heart was set on following in their footsteps. He joined the Officers Training Academy, Chennai, and was commissioned into 22 RAJPUT on 18 March 2006. He served as instructor in the Infantry School, Mhow and in the United Nations Mission in Lebanon. He was posted to 44 Rashtriya Rifles in December 2012, located in Shopiyan in Jammu and Kashmir.

On 25 April, Mukund received information about the presence of three militants in Karewa Mamloo village, who had killed one election officer and injured five personnel. Mukund cordoned the area and evacuated the civilians. He personally led the team to tackle the terrorists who were forced to shift their position to the outhouse in the compound. Mukund and Sepoy Vikram Singh crawled to near the outhouse and Mukund lobbed a grenade killing one militant. The second terrorist opened a burst of fire and Mukund was seriously wounded. Without regard to his injuries, the officer crawled ahead and eliminated the second terrorist. The gun battle had lasted more than 20 hours. Mukund was evacuated to the hospital but succumbed to his injuries. Major Vardarajan exhibited most conspicuous bravery, raw courage and exemplary leadership according to the highest traditions of the Indian Army. He was awarded Ashok Chakra, the highest peace time award for gallantry. The award was received by his wife on 26 January 2015.

His father, R. Varadarajan, is a retired officer of the Indian Overseas Bank. He mentioned how his son's death had shattered the family. It is difficult to overcome the loss of a son, but he was happy that his services had been recognised by the award of Ashok Chakra (AC). He recalled that Mukund

could take brave decisions with ease. He was a proud army officer and never talked about the dangers he had faced. Once a bullet had grazed him but he never told the family about it, lest it may scare them. When his father enquired about the injury mark, Mukund just shrugged and said, "Even if you walk on the road, you can die in a road accident." The family understood the perils of the job. His grandfather whose army service had motivated Mukund to join the army said that many young boys

come to him to seek his blessings to join the army. In a choked voice, he added that it reminded him of his grandson's gallantry.

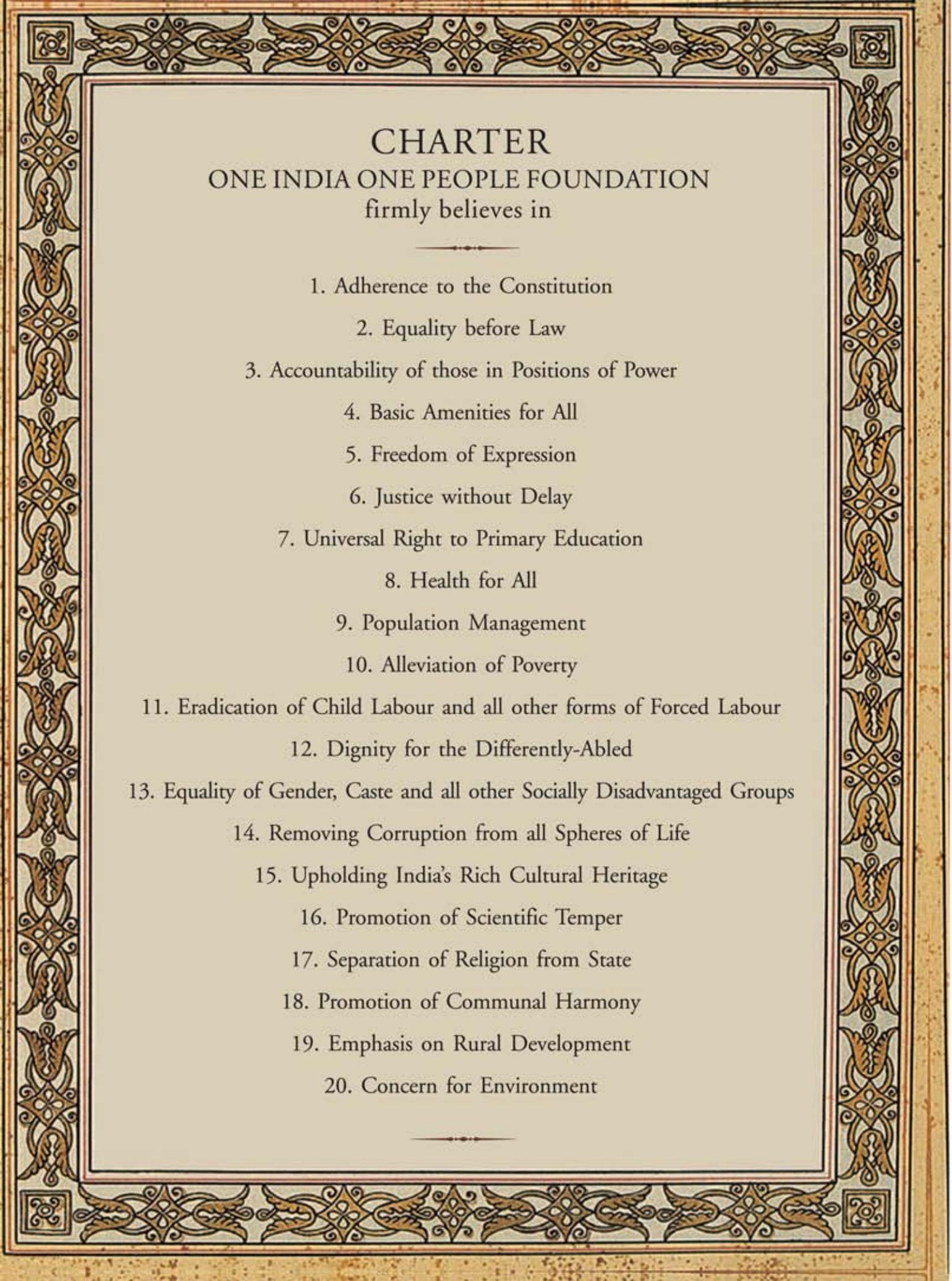


Mukund's family members learnt about the tragedy from a relative in Dubai who saw the news of death online. He is survived by wife, Indhu Rebecca Varghese and daughter Arshea. Mukund had told his father that he would be coming home on leave. But his body arrived in a coffin in Chennai on a Sunday. His body was carried from his house to the crematorium in a convoy of 20 vehicles. More than 150 youth on two wheelers carrying the Indian tricolour followed the cortege chanting slogans about Major Mukund's heroic sacrifice for the nation. He was cremated at the electric crematorium in Besant Nagar

on Monday morning. Fourteen soldiers offered a 42-gun salute to the departed soul in an impeccable ceremony complete with full military honours.

It was a touching moment when Mukund's three-year-old daughter said 'good night' and 'goodbye' to her father as the cortege left the house. Two senior officers broke down at that moment. The family was escorted by army officers. In her condolence message, Chief Minister Jayalithaa wrote that Tamil Nadu had lost a brave son and India a courageous soldier. She announced an award of ₹ 10 lakhs and the cheque was handed over to the family by minister K.M.Chinnaya. Vardarajan's wife Indhu Rebecca Varghese has now joined the Army Public School in Bangalore as a teacher. ■

— Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)  
(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)

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