

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

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## Water woes

Are we  
water wise?

Save the rain!

India's water  
women

Industries and  
water use

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**

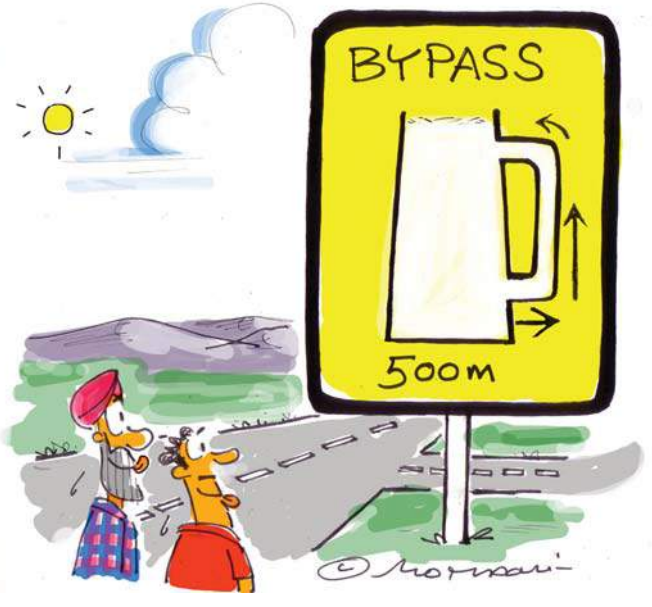
**Champawat:**  
The lesser-known gem of Uttarakhand

**FACE TO FACE**

Vinod Ganatra

Great Indians: Vice-Admiral S.B. Soman / Kishori Amonkar / E. Ahmed

MORPARIA'S PAGE



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Water woes



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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### “What are we actually developing?”

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we talk about development, innovation, technology, advancement and what not. But are we actually developing? With so many crimes relating to female molestation, rape, sexual abuse, can we really say we are progressing towards social development? Eve-teasing is so dominant that every teenage girl in every corner of the country has witnessed female abuse of some kind or the other. In a country which is projected to be a global superpower and economically equipped, how can we live with such backwardness in the society?

Eve-teasing has posed a serious threat to the women of our society. There is hardly any girl or woman who has not been the target of eve-teasers. Bus-stops, auto-rickshaw stands, etc., are the favourite haunts of the eve-teasers who seem to have no other business than passing lewd remarks on women who happen to pass by. Eve-teasing is a crime and to put an end to it, women themselves must take the

initiative. But women generally ignore the eve-teasers as they fear the evil consequences that might befall them in future.

It is this baseless fear of the women-folk which gives the eve-teasers the courage to pass objectionable comments on them as they know that women are too meek and timid to confront them. It's high time women shed their fear and confront the eve-teasers boldly. This is the only way to teach a lesson to such culprits so that they will not dare to tease another woman in the future.

– Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

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## WHO AM I?



# From H<sub>2</sub>O to M2O

*Since we have proven to be very bad water managers, maybe it's time to start manufacturing this depleting, but most precious commodity, says **Nivedita Louis**.*

**M**OM, you know what? We are going to witness the next World War. Do you know what it will be for?' she quips, as I try to hide my unease and nod my head. "For water, mom!", she says and keeps on babbling. "Baby... I need some water, who will bring mommy a glass of water?" I ask, and the two devils point fingers at each other. There starts a verbal sparring, and then a full-fledged war!

If you ask me which is the most valued property in the summer, I would say it is nothing other than H<sub>2</sub>O. The water-tables of our plains move vertically in tandem with our stock markets on a bear hug. Come summer, the *aam aadmi* can conveniently lick off his *aam* juice-smearred fingers than look for water.

Most of us in our part of the country have the luck of fetching water from trucks that carry water supplied by the government. Like all government queues, the queue for water is always filled with proxies in all colours – plastic pots in hues of yellow, green, blue and red. The brighter the colour, the easier it is to spot the pot from a distance. Have you ever witnessed the cat-fights on street corners for water? The gentry have to shut down all their audio mechanisms, lest they hear the choicest of 'blessings' showered bang on their faces. Copious hair-pulling, sari-tearing, scratching and yowling later, the two fighter women will find themselves alone with empty pots and emptying streets.

Want to detect the presence of water on a parched summer morning? Follow the milkman. The *dhoodhwallah* of small towns and villages knows the best tap that can deliver, so much so that his milk pail jumps with glee and sits under the tap all by itself. Another most effective way to combat water scarcity would be our 'summer vacation' trips to the relatives.

Pack your things, lock up the waterless desert that you call a house, and just leave. Always choose your emotional 'proximity' to those relatives residing at river basins. It would be a double whammy if their residences are at hill stations.

Serves you one more purpose – saves on your grocery for the month, so you can concentrate on robbing the banks to pay the school fee for the children, come May! One word of caution, though. Be prepared to host the same bunch of guests next vacation, you repay kindness with kindness...

Try replacing paper towels at home. We Indians always have our own reservations against dry cleaning. High time we introduced wet wipe bath, paper dried backs, and 'waterless' washrooms in our homes. I really wish the TV people stop

showing Liril ads every ten minutes, where the lady splashes about in tons of fresh water, while we poor souls have to be content with writing "fresh water" on a paper and read it. And oh...should we not recycle our water? The human body has 90 percent water. How delightful would it be to unzip the stomach, insert a straw and sip up some water on a hot summer afternoon? We are badly designed museum antiques. Maybe we should improvise in casting our genX.

Water, and can we forget the disputes between states for it? Neighbouring states that remain *bhai-bhai* during monsoons turn up sudden WWF fighters with the onset of summer. They glare, rear up and charge, fighting down every drop of water, taking the issue to courts, Parliament and down to the streets.

At the rate our governments strip off the rivers of sand, the river beds would be craters the size of a married man's wallet by the end of the month. We have been building nuke reactors at alarming speed, and the dams remain long forgotten. Still, much of our monsoon waters empty in vain into the oceans,

untapped and unused. I wonder if we will have to 'manufacture' water only in laboratories in future. It will be, M2O or Made To Order! ■



**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).**

**Pack your things, lock up the waterless desert that you call a house, and just leave. Always choose your emotional 'proximity' to those relatives residing at river basins.**

# Are we water wise?

*How our future generations judge us will depend a lot on the wisdom we show today with respect to precious resources like water. Are we being wise and prudent in managing our resources and environment, especially in our cities? No, says **Rishi Aggarwal** and tells us what we need to do.*

**T**HE need for information which establishes the dire situation around water are long over. In India, we are especially vulnerable due to our large population which is still growing, and has many competing needs for water. We have also reached a stage where we have severely depleted groundwater in several regions in the country, river flows are reduced, and there are frequent fights between residents in some regions over water.

The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the world under the United Nations framework has Goal Six as “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.”

Proper management of water, conservation and reusing water can ensure that there is nothing to worry, but all of this can only help if there is a sense of urgency and action upon all that we know. As a collective we need to show impatience with business as usual. We cannot have the best of knowledge being shared at conference, academic papers and pilot experiments, and the worst of practices in our municipal corporations and society at large. Our ability to bridge the gap between what we know and how much of it we use to productive advantage, is at test right now.

### Treating the waste

The theme for this year’s Water Day is waste water. In India this is an issue of great concern because not only are we facing the challenge of providing water for a very large population and shrinking water supplies, but we are also polluting the available supplies with all kinds of untreated effluent. In the Western nations which industrialised early, this scale of pollution was seen once upon a time, and it is unimaginable now there to see water bodies being treated the way they are currently treated in India.

On any river, waste from one city becomes the intake water for a city downstream. Treatment of waste water is becoming an absolute necessity. A succinct report by India Spends presented earlier this year and compiled from multiple sources, highlighted the situation and estimated that 62,000 million litres of waste water is generated in urban India every day. Of this, only 30% is treated, and the remaining 70% is released untreated into water bodies. This is completely



**Sewage treatment plants are vital, but they shouldn't be centralised**

unacceptable and needs to be addressed as a national priority.

Take the example of Mumbai which generates approximately 2,500 million litres of waste water every day. This is being generated in residential buildings, commercial buildings, restaurants, hotels, various industries and in government buildings.

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) seems to favour centralised means of treating this sewage. The idea being that all the untreated sewage should be first transported by a network of pipes to centralised water treatment plants, where this sewage would then be treated. This has enormous implications in terms of setting up of a sewerage system, treatment facilities, and a large amount of energy consumption in transportation. Even the quality of treatment and what is finally released into the seas is questionable.

We live in an age when there is enormous expertise available on treating waste water exactly where it is produced and to reuse a certain percentage of the same. Such an approach has so many benefits that one would be suspicious about why municipal corporations around the country should not be encouraging the same.

Large residential colonies and commercial complexes can carry out the necessary investments to carry out decentralised treatment. In several cases, space is not the problem. Just that we are still not seized with a sense of urgency that I stress on above. It should be the role of the municipal corporation to facilitate all of this. Numerous successful case



studies exist – the proof of concept is well established.

Mumbai has a large number of slums and consequently community toilet blocks. These toilet blocks are used by thousands every day, and become bulk generators of sewage. In some cases, the sewage is discharged directly into a neighbouring river or creek. Using well developed techniques all this sewage can be treated on site. Even if the same is not used locally, the treated sewage would have a considerably reduced nutrient load, and will help in reducing the pressure on the centralised system and allow it to work more efficiently.

Reusing water and aiding the water cycle is one of the most effective and easily doable methods available to reduce the water stress being faced by the planet. This also has important forward and backward linkages.

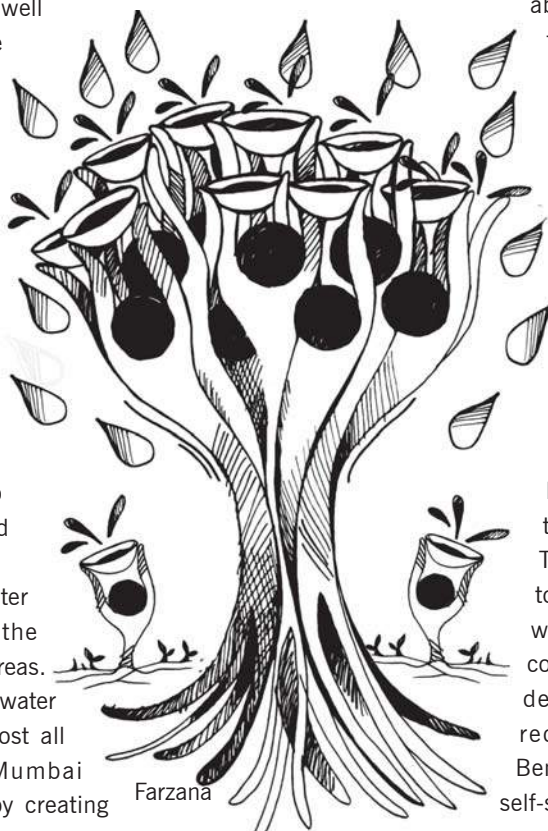
Not only does it help reduce water stress, but it also helps avert the damage to ecologically important areas. Most water comes from impounding water in catchment areas of rivers. Almost all the water supplied to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region is supplied by creating reservoirs on rivers.

### The flawed strategy

In the absence of good water management, the approach followed by the authorities is what is called supply side management. They calculate the total water requirement of a city and the rate at which the demand is growing, and provide the supply by creating new capacity by impounding rivers and tributaries with dams. In the process, forest land is submerged, natural flows of a river are disrupted with severe consequent damages. If demand side management is carried out along with water recycling, then the need for additional capacity would be much less.

The linkage between forests and our natural areas and water is a very important one to be brought out. The natural

ecosystems and forests are like a precious water making factory provided free of cost by nature. Let us remember that we do not manufacture water in our treatment plants, we only process it. The water is manufactured in nature. When we damage these systems, we cause damage to the ability of future generations to be able to access water the same way as we do now.



Take the example of Bengaluru. Unlike Mumbai where the rains are concentrated in just one season of four months of monsoon, in Bengaluru the rain is more widespread throughout the year. This makes rain water harvesting not only feasible, but is very well demonstrated by several passionate water experts like Vishwanath Srikantaiah who goes by the twitter handle of @zenrainman which is a treasure trove of everything water. There is little or no need for Bengaluru to draw water from the Cauvery River, which has become a bone of contention between two states. Using demand side management, water recycling and water harvesting, Bengaluru could become completely self-sufficient in its water needs for the present and the future.

The current government's flagship programme AMRUT – Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation – has identified among its thrust areas the treatment of sewage in urban areas. The programme needs to stop relying only on the government machinery for execution, and should have equal involvement from water experts.



Being serious about water will require every individual who is concerned with the issue to demonstrate sincere action within their sphere of influence. ■

Rishi Agarwal works with the Mumbai Sustainability Centre, a research and advocacy organisation focussed on pathways for urban sustainability.

### Did you know?

*Trying to lose weight is always a challenge, but water can be a valuable and easily adaptable component of a diet plan. Water acts as an appetite suppressant and is instrumental in breaking down and reducing fat deposit. The rate at which we burn calories (our metabolism) is a chemical process requiring water. We need adequate water to ensure the smooth functioning of this process. Water helps to flush toxins out of our system. The more toxins in our body, the less capable it is of losing weight. If you are dieting, keep your system functioning properly and maximise weight loss by drinking plenty of water.*

# Save the rain!

*The only way to conserve water and make it perennially available is rainwater harvesting, says **Ayyappa Masagi**, India's waterman. Isn't it better to save our rainwater and replenish the groundwater than build expensive dams on rivers to store water, he asks.*

**W**ATER is perhaps the most basic element of all. Our water needs, be it domestic, agricultural or otherwise, have been met by rain water retained on the surface of our ecosystems in various forms, which were in harmony with all other forms of water in the ecosystem, thus creating a hydrological balance, popularly known as the 'Water Cycle'; this helped replenish the depleted water in a timely manner via evaporation, circulation, and precipitation. However, for over the past century, human intervention has disrupted the hydrological cycle in ways varying from deforestation to industrialisation.

We, at the Water Literacy Foundation and Rain Water Concepts have been striving to restore the hydrological balance in our ecosystems by increasing water literacy and promoting efficient and sustainable water management practices through exclusive systems.

The organisations collectively envision the world to turn into such a place where the water needs of each individual and the community at large are delivered through self-sustainable systems that are in complete synchrony with the natural balance of the host ecosystem, thus effectively nullifying the water crisis that has been increasingly affecting us in detrimental ways, posing a risk to civilisation as we know it today. Water crisis has been a frequently fought battle in the past few decades, but is seldom won.

## Are we losing this battle?

We have over three decades of experience in fighting many such battles of water crisis. Yet, we have been losing these battles, not due to the unavailability of rain or water, but due to the attitude of individuals and the community towards rain and water.

Growing up in the arid regions of north Karnataka, my mind had registered the many abysmal issues associated with water as a resource, and I was determined to eventually find solutions; hoping one day to arrive at the ultimate formula for the efficient and effective eradication of the water crisis worldwide.

The availability of water to a perpetually increasing number of people and organisations have been, for the past few decades, decreasing sharply. However, one may observe that

the availability of water in India – be it in deserts or rainforests, across all her terrains, during the pre-Independence era, was never a problem. This fact is rooted in the practice of our ancestors adapting their lifestyle to live in harmony with their existing ecosystems. For instance, the people of Rajasthan pioneered roof-rainwater harvesting and storage, grew and consumed non-water intensive crops, and wore clothes suitable to their region, while the people of the Deccan Plateau pioneered a system of community rainwater harvesting in larger amounts to form an intricate network of reservoirs. They grew, consumed and exported relatively more water intensive crops, while the people dwelling in the rainforests focused more on the optimum channelling of the water resources available, after storing the necessary amount in tanks, via gravity, to places that required more water. However, the phasing out of these scientifically designed traditional methods, and the introduction of centralised *one-size-fits-all* systems have hampered the water security in different parts of our country. The local, state and national governments have been short-sighted resorting to *quick-fix* solutions which are non-sustainable and hinder the development of our communities in the long run.

We would like to stress this fact that, we, the people, need to understand and realise that our primary source of water should and must be rainwater, as in the long run, that is the most sustainable option to ensure water security to our establishments. Thus, harnessing and managing rainwater sustainably would be the most apt way to ensure that our communities never run out of water. In addition, encouraging our communities to be more in sync with the ecosystems they dwell in, can enhance the lifestyles of the people, eventually.

A relatively insignificant percentage of rainwater is actually being harnessed and put to use. Since the introduction of borewells a little over five decades ago, we as a community have significantly used up if not nearly emptied the reservoirs of water that have been in existence for almost as long as the hydrological cycle of our planet has existed.

Runoff is increasingly becoming a major issue with rapid urbanisation, for two reasons. Firstly, it poses a threat to infrastructure as it has the potential to cause floods and destroy



property. Secondly, it is a reflection of how inefficient we are, as a community, in handling our resources. We let all the rain water run into the seas and go waste, while building great amounts of infrastructure to artificially retain water in dams on rivers, that also cause significant damage to the ecosystem. It is apparent that the most efficient and effective direction would be to use our primary source of rainwater, a very significant part of which we are wasting; and utilise it to replenish the ground water tables that we have so rapidly depleted. Additionally, such systems also would have solved the availability of lands to store such dramatically large volumes of water.

However, as mentioned earlier, the short-sightedness of people, as a collective, and the regulatory/governing authorities, in addition to the wide acceptance of the myth that rain has been decreasing in intensity, have kept us away from taking significant steps in the right direction.

At an individual level, harnessing and managing rainwater requires less technical skill than basic logic. However, at a community level, it would require an intricate level of planning and design to arrive at an effective and efficient system for harnessing and managing, sustainably, rainwater. The initial costs are outweighed by the long term benefits with returns on investment higher than traditional methods of managing water resources, such as building dams or canals and linking rivers.

In short, we have been:

- Neglecting rainwater as the primary source of runoff, resulting in increased runoff into oceans.
- Abandoning surface and sub-surface water storage systems.
- Abusing groundwater by drilling of excessive borewells.
- Failing to replenish the groundwater, posing hydrological and geological risks.
- Increasing dependency on centralised systems, as against in-situ harnessing of rainwater.
- Disrupting catchment areas and feeder channels due to improper construction of civil structures and rapid deforestation, leading to repeated dents in the natural ecological and hydrological balances of the place.

These have impacted us in the following ways:

- Erratic and unreliable rains
- Dried up surface water bodies
- Dried up water tables – Sub-soil (wells) and underground (borewells)
- Inevitable use of unclean water, leading to the rise and spread of water-borne diseases

### The only solution

The Water Literacy Foundation, has been designing and

refining numerous (100 plus) systems to replenish water in all the four realms: Surface, sub-surface, sub-soil, and underground, that utilise rainwater *as and when it falls*, in varied and erratic intensities, thus ensuring prolonged availability of water. In addition to recharging the depleted water, our systems also restore the natural balance in the ecosystem, as a virtue of their indigenous design, thus requiring negligible maintenance. By implementing our systems, results can be seen within two to three rains. In many cases, our customers have also reported excess water that they were able to give back to the community.

### Our proprietary systems

The systems we use are way past the conventional rainwater harvesting systems that channel roof-water into sumps. Over time, our systems have evolved into something seemingly complex, yet simple, in the context of the natural hydrological balance of the ecosystem.

A few such are:

- Direct borewell recharging: Replenishing ground water through the borehole, for swift results
- On line filters: For domestic use
- Filtration Units: Proprietary filters that use bottom-to-top filtration technique (for large volumes)
- Lakes: Indigenously designed lakes that facilitate surface water retention and act as collection basins for direct borewell recharging.
- Soak pits, infiltration wells, and soak trenches: These facilitate indirect recharging of water tables
- Stream water harvesting: Sub-surface dykes that intercept stream water to replenish ground water.
- Patta, compartment, and *nala* bunding: Help retain soil moisture and recharge underlying water tables.
- Tree-based agriculture: For restoration of atmospheric hydrological balance in farms.
- Integrated Farming Practices: This facilitates sustainable farming in synchronisation with the host ecosystem.

Ayyappa Masagi is the Founder and Director of the Water Literacy Foundation (WLF). In his childhood he faced acute water shortage, and this inspired him to start experimenting with rainwater harvesting and non-irrigation agricultural methods in 1994. In 2002, he quit his Mechanical Engineering job after almost 20 years of service with L&T Bangalore, and



focussed entirely on his research on water conservation techniques. In 2004, he earned the Ashoka Fellowship for his work concerning water conservation in the agricultural sector. Masagi founded the non-profit organisation WLF in September 2005. Three years later he founded Rain Water Concepts (I) Pvt. Ltd., a company to support WLF financially in its efforts, and to provide affordable water conservation techniques to everyone.

# Flowing from the forest

*We turn a tap and water gushes out. Do we pause to think how long this will last? Will water be always available to us despite the severe degradation we subject our environment to? Eminent environmentalist **Bittu Sahgal** forces us to ponder on a situation which could turn dire very soon.*

A city is an act of faith. Each one of us living in the city must presume that the police will protect us, that motorists will not intentionally run us over, that the water sources which sustain us will be protected forever.

“A river is unforgiving”, I replied in an interview to the *Economic Times* after heavy flooding in Mumbai. “You can try to forget it, but one day it will make its presence felt. When urban planners consider rivers, they always tend to plan for its minimum level. But there will always come a time – maybe in four years, maybe in 40 – when today’s calm stream will become a raging torrent.”

All ancient civilisations flourished only when fresh water was available to them. That is why the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, Indus and the Ganges produced some of the planet’s finest and earliest cultures. Rivers don’t merely supply us with clean water, they also carry away our used water, which is then scrubbed clean by nature so we can use it again and again into perpetuity.

We who live in the city tend to believe that the source of water is a tap. Nothing could be further from the truth. Over 75 per cent of all the water consumed by large cities in India originate either from distant glaciers, or from forests, which sponge the short, sharp monsoon, feed underground reservoirs called aquifers and then... supply it to us all year round.

At one time, concerns such as these used to be written off as ‘alarmist’ and ‘dystopian’. No longer. Climate change is already moving into higher gear. We still have time (just about) to ward off the worst impacts, but if glaciers vanish, wetlands are filled, corals, mangroves and mudflats reclaimed and forests are cut... 1.3 billion Indians will be left with little or no water.

So how should we live with rivers? How did our ancestors live with rivers?

## The onset of summer woes

Right now, summer has not even set in and already villages

across India are facing water shortages. The level of dam reservoirs is low, largely thanks to bad management, but also because climate change is causing water to evaporate not only from lakes, but also from soils that used to stay moist through the year, until galloping deforestation changed all that.

Climate change. Children know what that could mean to human life because concerned people have been fanning out across the nation to tell them that the vagaries of climate will inevitably lead to water and food shortages. The same message is being sent out to adults who are in the driving seat of national development, but for some reason, the warnings fall on deaf ears. I grew up in Shimla, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chandigarh. We took clean water for granted, yet respected it because that is what our parents and grandparents taught us to do. But it’s a different world today. I hear people complain about the heat but they do not recognise their own role in the assault on water through the degradation of forests and the pollution of rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

Take the case of the Ganga, one of the most revered, yet one of the most polluted rivers in the world. The over-silted Krishna, Godavari and Narmada rivers too are laced with nickle, cadmium and mercury. The Brahmaputra is no longer the *annadata* it was, but rather, a killing torrent. While Karnataka fights with Tamil Nadu over the Cauveri’s water, the river withers each summer and floods each monsoon because none of those fighting for the water think it worth their while to protect the catchment forests of the Western Ghats, where the mighty river originates.

Even inland lakes such as Chilika in Odisha and Sambhar in Rajasthan have not been spared. These are atrophying in our incapable hands. Assam is fast reaching an environmental point-of-no-return with elephant-occupied wetlands such as Deepor Beel slowly withering. In many rural areas, people (mostly women and children) must walk up hundreds of kilometres each year to obtain water, while increasingly, in

**When we cut thousands of trees to widen roads, the weather gets worse, there is more dust in the air and therefore in our lungs. More cars at the cost of public transport results in more lead, benzene and sulphur in the air and therefore in our bodies.**

urban areas, tankers are the order of the day.

While we talk of India turning into a super-power, I find myself amazed at the fact that planners seem unable to grasp the implication of our per capita water availability having fallen to over half of what it was when India gained its Independence. What is worse, even the precious little we have is being polluted by industry and municipalities. According to experts, the internal security of India in the next decade is more likely to be threatened by water riots and unrest than wars or terrorism. In places like Kutchh, water tables have fallen by hundreds of metres. Coastal aquifers are becoming saline. Streams and rivers are running dry because of deforestation. A vicious corollary of this tragedy is the death of our soils. Long fed on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, vast areas of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh cannot any longer support sustainable yields. To make matters worse, the glaciers that feed north India are melting at an alarming rate.

Glaciers and forests are little other than infrastructures without which our nation's economy will collapse. Put another way, protecting nature amounts to good long-term economics. This was a fact well known to our elders. But who is to teach such lessons to the planners and politicians who mismanage India today?

It should become the purpose of all development in India to restore health to our ravaged land, to restore quality to the water we drink and productivity to our soils. But I for one do not see this miracle unfold till the consequences of nature force us to take action. With our water and food security on the verge of collapse, we will ultimately be forced to look away from present industrial goals of development. We will be forced to improve generation and transmission capacities of existing power infrastructures, rather than build new projects. We will have to resurface roads, repair culverts and strengthen shoulders rather than build new highways. We will have to re-line canals, improve the condition of catchment areas of existing dams before building new ones.

Our cities are becoming less habitable. In recent times we appear to have lost perspective. Instead of studying the environment around us, we have begun experimenting with

our biosphere... with no idea as to the potential consequences.

### Can anything be done?

Yes! You can help by making small changes yourself and by refusing to remain a part of the 'silent majority', which the late Baba Amte darkly warned would become the 'silenced majority' if it did not soon wake up. Here are three small steps that might help restore our cities.

**Prevention is better than cure:** This should be the policy that governs city management. Prevent water waste (by repairing, maintaining and plugging leaks). Prevent garbage accumulation (by segregating wastes, banning plastic bags, heavily taxing waste generation). Prevent traffic jams (by improving public transport, widening footpaths, creating bicycle lanes and raising parking fees). Prevent ill-health (by reducing or eliminating the generation of toxins in our air, water and food).

The list could go on. Our grandmothers used to give us



**We have to protect our forests if we want access to water**

this sage advice and now scientists and management *gurus* confirm such wisdom in seminars and workshops around the world. In more ways than one we humans have assumed the mantle of the very gods we love to venerate. In our own image, we have altered everything and in

the process we have discovered to our bitter cost that the changes we have inflicted upon ourselves have ended up harming us. When we cut thousands of trees to widen roads, the weather gets worse, there is more dust in the air and therefore in our lungs. More cars at the cost of public transport results in more lead, benzene and sulphur in the air and therefore in our bodies.

That is not all. Because we allow commercial considerations to overwrite environmental and social priorities, land sharks fill our lakes to construct new buildings. Shopping malls selling wastefully packaged goods replace our friendly neighbourhood shopkeepers. Even our hospitals wind up harming us with their careless disposal of biomedical junk. Little wonder we are sicker than our parents used to be, more stressed (noise pollution and traffic), and less secure (women, children and the elderly being victims of enhanced crime).

**(Continued on page 22)**



# Industries and water use

*The industrial use of water, especially by multinational companies, has in recent times led to a lot of unrest in the local population. Dr. Arvind Kumar tells us how best this precious commodity can be used by all, and the way forward.*

**R**ECENT developments in water-stressed states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu culminating in the boycott of beverages of multinational companies like Coca-Cola Co. and PepsiCo Inc., have led to disturbing conditions. These companies are accused of siphoning off groundwater and selling products tainted with pesticides. The latest action means drinks from Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, which together have a 96 percent hold on India's \$4.9 billion soda market, will be kept off the shelves of more than one million shops.

Both the soft drink majors, Pepsi and Coca-Cola, had argued that the quantum of water they consume is minuscule when compared to the host of companies in the region, and they claim they are

being unjustifiably targeted, an argument that has been accepted even by the Madras High Court; nevertheless, many analysts opine that these companies have become scapegoats for a water crisis that's got mired in

politics and patriotism. However, these developments have also given rise to many issues like the need for a concrete water policy for the industrial sector, emphasis on treatment of the industrial wastewater for recycling for reuse etc.

## Growing demand

The industrial sector in India has emerged as the second highest consumer of water after agriculture, and the major sources of water for the industrial sector are groundwater and surface water. Groundwater has emerged as an important source to meet the water requirements of industries, especially in the wake of the fast pace of pollution of surface water resources. However, the choice of source of water depends on the availability of sufficient and regular supply of water, and the cost of water from the source.

In the wake of industrial development gathering

momentum, the demand for industrial water is mounting. Broad estimates show that the industrial sector consumes an average of six percent of freshwater per annum – while the annual growth in the chemical industry and construction has been around nine percent, it has been around six percent in textile and food since the 1990s and five percent in paper and paper products industry – this demand is likely to surge in view of the likely expansion of the industrial base in the country.

There are conflicting estimates of water consumption by the industrial sector in India. According to the Union Ministry of Water Resources, the industrial sector accounted for about six percent of the total freshwater abstraction at the beginning

of this century, and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) reports that the figure may be eight percent. Nonetheless, the World Bank estimates show that the current industrial water use in India is about 13 percent of the total freshwater

withdrawal in the country and the water demand for industrial use and energy production will grow at a rate of 4.2 percent per year, rising from 67 billion cubic metres in 1999 to 228 billion cubic metres by 2025. All these estimates indicate that the industrial water demand is bound to grow in the coming years.

## The menace of water pollution

Pollution of groundwater and surface water resources has been on the increase over the years. Industries not only consume water, but also pollute it. Broad estimates show that a bulk of the industrial wastes is dumped without treatment, especially in developing countries, thereby polluting the usable water supply. According to one expert opinion, on an average, each litre of wastewater discharged further pollutes about five to eight litres of water, which raises the



**There was intense opposition to MNCs like Pepsi and Coca-Cola in Tamil Nadu recently, on account of their alleged overuse of groundwater**

share of industrial water use to somewhere between 35–50 per cent of the total water used in India, and not the seven to eight per cent that is considered as the industrial water use.

Some analysts opine that there is extensive increase in water use and wastewater disposal in the absence of clear environmental policies as well as fragmented responsibility and control over water used for industrial purposes. The future demand entails exerting pressure on the available freshwater resources, both due to water consumption and water pollution. India already scores poorly in terms of industrial water productivity.

Lack of effective regulations and coordination between regulatory bodies' leads to mismanagement of industrial water problem, which is further compounded by the dearth of incentives provided to industry for efficient water use. Resultant impact becomes discernible in conflicts between industry and local communities over water allocation and water pollution. Water is a finite source and in the wake of shrinking glaciers, depletion of groundwater resources and pollution of ground and surface water resources, the increasing demand for water by different sectors of economy can't keep pace with its supply. In the wake of water scarcity, domestic, agricultural, and industrial water needs are pitted against each other, and the resultant conflicts between these sectors may become unmanageable if water related issues are not addressed now.

### Need for an industrial water policy

The subject of water in India is dealt with by a multiplicity of authorities/ministries having different mandates, which are not clearly defined and overlapping. The Ministry of Water Resource (MoWR) is the apex ministry responsible for water in India, but water pollution does not fall under its purview, nor does the industrial use of water. Undoubtedly, the Ministry of Industry (MoI) is concerned with the planning and development of water resources for industrial use; nevertheless, it has no mandate to control or regulate water use by industries.

The task of regulating the groundwater quality and quantity in the country is entrusted to the Central Groundwater Board (CGWB), which has mandate to do what it can with groundwater; however, it has so far only mapped the groundwater status. It has no mandate to charge for industrial groundwater use. While the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) regulate industrial water pollution and charge water cess based on the amount of wastewater discharged by the companies, they are not mandated to control sourcing of water from various sources. Resultantly, water conservation and pollution control measures have thus far not shown any significant success.

Admittedly, several industries have launched zero-discharge projects in their factories/plants; nonetheless, many others

still continue to discharge effluents without treatment. Some experts opine that it is imperative for industries to adopt self-monitoring and regulation mechanism to continue to grow in a sustainable manner. It also devolves on industry associations like FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry), CII (Confederation of Indian Industry) and ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) to facilitate dissemination of best practices in water and wastewater management. These aspects should constitute the main paradigms of a new industrial water policy in India.

### The way forward

Water is a finite resource and in order to meet mounting demands of water in agriculture, industry and domestic sectors, emphasis has to be stressed on rainwater harvesting, encouraging judicious use of water resources, keeping water resources free from pollution and recycling of wastewater for reuse. The Government of India in 2015 required companies to obtain permission to use groundwater. In April 2016, the government said India would aim to reduce industrial water usage by half over five years by using newer technology to reuse, recover and recycle water. Relief for India's tiring aquifers can't come fast enough. More than a quarter of groundwater systems are too salty, becoming depleted or are over-exploited, according to some experts. Besides, at least 75 percent of the country's rivers, lakes and other surface water bodies are contaminated by human and agricultural waste and industrial effluent.

The solution, amongst various other solutions, lies in chalking out a comprehensive Industrial Water Policy, which should address industrial water related issues in a holistic manner, and it should be followed by the establishment of a national nodal agency to coordinate water related issues with other departments/agencies in a mode of convergence. Lamenting that no noticeable changes to the protection of freshwater sources is yet featuring on the Indian government's agenda, Jenny Gronwall, programme manager for water governance at Sweden's Stockholm International Water Institute, has suggested that a reduce–reuse–recycle paradigm should be encouraged. ■

Dr. Arvind Kumar, a renowned water activist, specialises in ecosystem-based adaptation, water-energy-food nexus and community-based IWRM approaches. A PhD in Defense Studies, he has published over 350-plus research articles in reputed journals. He is Chairman, India Water Foundation, a nonprofit organisation (Special Consultative Status UN-ECOSOC), which is engaged in generating heightened public awareness at the national level in India and sub-regional level in the Asia-Pacific regarding water, its impact on human health, economic growth and environmental sustainability.



# India's water women

*Indian women have an intimate, and lifelong connection with water. The ubiquitous image of women with pots balanced on their heads, trudging long distances to fetch water, is a depressingly-familiar one. Dr. Vandana Shiva gives us an account of India's water women.*

*"She sends me to fetch water  
Very early in the morning  
Oh! Grandfather it is very difficult for me. My pot never  
fills up fully  
The water is so deep  
That my rope hardly reaches it  
The sun rises and also sets  
By the time, I return  
Unable to collect even one pot-full of water"*  
– A folk song of Rajasthan

**W**ATER has become the most scarce and commodified product of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This may sound bizarre, but true. In fact, what water is to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, oil was to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The stress on the multiple water resources is a result of a multitude of factors. On the one hand, the spread of water intensive Green Revolution agriculture, the rapidly rising population and changing lifestyles, have increased the need for fresh water. On the other hand, intense competitions among users – agriculture, industry and domestic sector, is pushing the ground water table deeper, diversion of river waters for intensive irrigation and urban industrial use, has left our rivers dry. What remains is polluted water, with dumping of industrial and urban wastes, making our lifelines like the Ganga and Yamuna, unfit for drinking.

## Just one bucket of water

To get a bucket of drinking water is a struggle for most women in the country. The virtually dry and dead water resources have led to acute water scarcity, affecting the socio-economic condition of the society. The drought conditions have pushed villagers to move to cities in search of jobs. Whereas, women and girls are trudging still further. The time lost in fetching water can very well translate into financial gains, leading to a better life for the family. If opportunity costs were taken into account, it would be clear that in most rural areas, households are paying far more for water supply than the often-normal rates charged in urban areas. Also, if this cost of fetching water, which is almost equivalent to

150 million women day each year is covered into a loss for the national exchequer, it translates into a whopping 10 billion rupees per year!

On an average, a rural woman walks more than 14,000 km a year just to fetch water. Their urban sisters are only slightly better off – they do not walk such distances, but stand in the long, snaking queues for hours on end to collect water from the roadside taps or the water lorries.

In every household, in the rural areas in Rajasthan, women and girl children bear the responsibility of collecting, transporting, storing, and managing water. In places where there is no water for farming, men migrate to urban areas in search of work leaving women behind to fend for the old and the children. Women spend most of their time collecting water, with little time for other productive work. This impacts on the education of the girl child, if the girl is herself not collecting water, she is looking after the home and her siblings when her mother is away.

In India, there are many villages either with scarce water supply or without any source of water. If there is no source of potable water within 2.5 km, then the village becomes a 'no source water' village or 'problem' village. In many rural areas, women still have to walk a distance of about 2.5 km to reach the source of water. She reaches home carrying heavy pots, not to rest, but to do other household chores of cooking, washing, cleaning, caring of children and looking after livestock. Again in the evening, she has to fetch water. Thus, a rural woman's life is sheer drudgery.

## Declining ground water

In the cases of villages of Plachimada in Kerala, Raja Talab in Uttar Pradesh and Kala dera in Rajasthan, ground water mining of millions of litres per day by Coca-Cola has created a water famine. Apart from the water scarcity caused by Coca-Cola in Plachimada, other districts in the state are also facing a water crisis.

For Maharashtra, water is an abiding concern. In many villages, women have to walk more than 3 km everyday to fetch two huge vessels of water illegally from a government reservoir. They have to make at least three trips every day.



The state government does not send tankers to the villages. At some places, women spend ₹ 5 for two cans of water. Women in Maharashtra have carried the water burden both as a result of scarcity and abundance. Drought displacement due to dams and irrigation have contributed to increasing the water burden of women. Women in the Nandurbar district of north Maharashtra share their woes: “Forget about getting safe drinking water from wells, we spend most of our time locating streams and springs”.

### Stories of extreme scarcity

We have violated our duty to protect our soil and water. Now the violence committed on nature is translating into an emergency for humans. And nowhere is this more evident than in Maharashtra's Marathwada. Last year, the Godavari River in Nashik went dry. There was no water in Ramkund — the sacred pond in Nashik devotees come to bathe in during the Kumbh. In the town of Latur in Marathwada, water scarcity was so severe that the district collector had imposed Section 144 of the CrPC (making assembly of more than 10 people unlawful) for two months to prevent law and order problems arising from the water crisis. The administration took over 150 wells and tubewells near the city because the dam that supplied water to Latur's population of 4.5 lakh and adjoining rural areas, dried up in March 2016. Will this year be different?

In Bundelkhand women have no work other than collecting drinking water. The scenario is worse in Patha in Chitrakut district where women have to travel a long distance to collect water for drinking. Half of their time is spent in collecting water, which affects their health and the well being of their children. The paucity of time due to water crisis aggravates the domestic problems.

### The biggest crisis ever

Water is the biggest crisis facing India in terms of spread and severity, affecting one in every three persons. Over 33 crore Indians were affected by the drought in 2016. Even in Chennai, Bangalore, Shimla and Delhi, water is being rationed and India's food security is under threat. With the lives and livelihood of millions at risk, urban India is screaming for water.

In the 1980s, I was asked by the then Planning Commission to look at why Maharashtra's requests for budgets to provide drinking water kept increasing, and yet the water crisis never gets solved. My research showed that the drought of 1972 was used by the World Bank to promote sugarcane cultivation, requiring intensive irrigation based on water mining through tubewells and borewells, just as the drought of 1965 was used to force the Green Revolution on India.

Marathwada lies in the rain shadow of the Western Ghats



**A familiar sight in India, where rural women walk an estimated 14,000 km a year to fetch water**

and receives an average of 600-700 mm of rainfall. Given the hard rock bed of the Deccan Trap, only 10 per cent of this water goes into the ground to recharge wells. Sugarcane requires 1,200 mm of water, which is 20 times more than the annual recharge. When 20 times more water is withdrawn from the ground than available, a water famine is inevitable, even when the rainfall is normal.

More than 300,000 farmers have committed suicide in India since 1995 — most of them in the Bt cotton areas. Marathwada and Vidarbha account for 75 per cent of farmer suicides in Maharashtra. Between January and December 2015, 3,228 farmers committed suicide in Maharashtra, including 1,536 in Vidarbha and 1,454 in Marathwada. In 2001-2002, before Bt cotton was commercially approved, the area under cotton in Marathwada was 0.89 lakh hectares. Within one year, between 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, the area under Bt cotton in Marathwada jumped 11 times from 0.89 to 10 lakh ha. In the following decade, the area under Bt cotton has increased to 18.386 lakh ha.

Bt cotton hybrids are not suited to regions like Vidarbha and Marathwada. They need more water and, therefore, fail more frequently when assured irrigation is not available — a fact that Monsanto, the company behind the spread of monocultures, does not tell farmers when selling the GMO seeds. Bt cotton is also killing beneficial soil organisms which degrade organic matter and turn it into humus. Soils are becoming sterile. Our studies show that more than 50 per cent beneficial soil organisms have been destroyed by Bt toxins in Bt cotton areas. Unlike the crops it displaces, such as *jowar*, it returns no organic matter to the soil.

The increase in Bt cotton came at the cost of *jowar* which holds the answer to drought in Maharashtra. *Jowar* requires

only 250 mm water and would have survived the drought, giving farmers food and livelihood security even with a deficient monsoon. Between 2004-05 and 2011-12, while Bt cotton in Beed (in Marathwada) increased from 1.01 to 3.290 lakh ha, the area under “*rabi jowar*” decreased from 2.567 to 1.704 lakh ha. Bt cotton has displaced the mixed and rotational cropping of *jowar*, *tur*, *mung*, *urad*, wheat, and *chana*. During the 1984 drought in northern Karnataka, an old farmer told us, “Bring me the old seeds of the native *jowar*, and I will drive away the drought”.

Not only do indigenous crops like *jowar* use less water, they increase the water-holding capacity of the soil by producing large quantities of organic matter which, when returned to the soil, increase soil’s fertility and water-holding capacity.

Native seeds and organic farming are the answer to drought and climate change, to farmers’ suicides and to the agrarian distress. They are also the answer to hunger and malnutrition. Care for our seeds, our soil and our water are the real test of our love for our land and our commitment to our future, not slogans. The same processes that are killing our soil, water and climate balance, are also killing our farmers. This is an emergency. Yet, the responses are not addressing the roots of the crises.

While women carry the water burden as water providers, they are excluded from decisions about how water will be used, how it will be distributed, how it will be managed, how it will be owned. These decisions are being increasingly made by international institutions like the World Bank and ADB (Asian Development Bank), and multinational corporations like Suez, Vivendi, Coca Cola etc.

Giant water projects, in most cases, benefit the powerful, and dispossess the weak. Even when such projects are publicly funded, their beneficiaries are mainly construction companies, industries, and commercial farmers. While privatisation is generally couched in rhetoric about the disappearing role of the state, what we actually see is increased state intervention in water policy, subverting community control over water resources. Policies imposed by the World Bank, and trade liberalisation rules crafted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), are creating a sweeping culture of corporate-states all over the world.

Increasingly, the term “Water Providers” is being used not for the women who work to provide water, but for the water giants who take water from communities and sell it back to them at high cost for profit. The water traders, water profiteers are positioning themselves as “water providers” while increasing women’s burden in water provisioning.

To mitigate the women water burden, a few measures can be adopted:

- Restore the conventional methods of water conservation like Baolis, Jhods, Ponds, Tankas.
- Introduce rainwater harvesting.
- Change the cropping pattern of agriculture. Instead of growing water intensive crop like paddy and sugarcane, introduce crops like millet, ragi, which consume less water.
- Proper water conservation measures should be used. People should be made aware and trained on the techniques of water conservation.
- Government schemes should be implemented properly.
- Involve Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and NGOs in the management of rural water supply.
- Women should have community control over water. So that they can manage water for the sustainability of the eco-system, their families and villages. They should be trained as water managers for the better utilisation of water.

### Conclusion

More than any other resource, water needs to remain a common good and requires community management. In fact, in most societies, the private ownership of water has been prohibited. However, the emergence of modern water extraction technologies has increased the role of the state in water management.

Throughout history and across the world, water rights have been shaped both by the limits of ecosystems and by the needs of the people. In fact, the root of the Urdu word ‘abadi’, or human settlement, is ‘ab’, or water, reflecting the formation of human settlements and civilisations along water sources. The doctrine of riparian rights – the natural rights of dwellers supported by a water system, especially a river system, to use water – also arose from this concept of ‘ab’. Water has traditionally been treated as a natural right – arising out of human nature, historic conditions, basic needs, or notions of justice. Water rights as natural rights do not originate with the state; they evolve out of a given ecological context of human existence.

This year, on World Environment Day, we need to make a clear choice for the future of the planet and our survival — whether we want to step deeper into ecological and social

emergencies as slaves of giant corporations, or we want to live as free and caring members of the earth family, *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*, following our *dharma*. ■



Dr. Vandana Shiva is a world-renowned scientist and environmentalist.

# Water, pure and simple

*Water is abundant in India. But we are intent on dousing it with chemicals, polluting it with pesticides and over filtering it, which removes its minerals, says **Kavita Mukhi**. Can we go back to the simple old ways of preserving our drinking water?*

If you have lived through Indian monsoons all your life then you can never imagine that water can ever be in short supply. Sadly, if not harvested in lakes and ponds and stored underground with the support of tree roots, then most of this invaluable resource drains off into the ocean. Yes, desalination is a reality, but why go through that process when water can be harvested in reservoirs of old and new knowledge to contain the downpour of fresh water. Global warming may occasion sudden floods, when water to drink may be scarce. A true case of water water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. Time to really rethink the way we live and the things that we “want” that produce environmental disasters including water pollution. A simple chemically dyed shirt can add to polluted rivers!

## My farm experience

Closer home, ten years ago, I was fortunate enough to be entrusted with a farm that had an open well. The first year that I experienced my little Garden of Eden, the initial learning was that within a week of the first rains in June, my 30-foot well would be overflowing. And within two weeks of the last rains in September, my well would be a quarter full. The need to recharge my well, my land, plant as many trees, and try to contain as much water as possible with each rain became clear. All the water used in the kitchen and bath are returned to the land. The toilet water is returned via a bio-gas unit. The ground water level will get a boost inspite of swimming pools in the area.

Yes, water flowing from other farms into mine with their chemical fertilisers and pesticide residues does adulterate my soil, but little one can do about it other than hope that the consciousness in the area rises for people to switch to organic. Thus far, because I am not a commercial farmer, I am not an example for my neighbours. At the moment I am an eccentric Mumbaiite not burning leaves and waste, not using chemicals, not sweeping the leaves twigs and waste, digging holes, using waste water, allowing nature to take its course.

But rain water harvesting is not the point of this essay. My experience, with the quickness with which my well overflowed and then reduced to seven feet of water which lasted until May of the next year, made me realise how



## Water is best stored in copper vessels

abundant nature is, it is only our failing in being able to live within HER laws and use her resources wisely. Goa is a great example of this abundance, the reservoirs created in this State ensure its green lushness year round.

Water is essential for human life, even if one lives on foods that are water-rich like fruits, the need for water cannot be questioned. Nature totally is in sync with providing smaller fruits in the winter like strawberries and grapes, and water-rich fruits in the summer like water melons and mangoes. The more spicy, salty and chilli foods one eats, the more water you will need to wash it down, allowing your cells to be safe. As in all other nutrition norms, my recommendations would be to “LISTEN TO YOUR BODY”. Those who eat more raw foods, will automatically need less water. So to say that eight glasses or so many litres of water are essential for human body is incorrect. In fact, if too much water is drunk, kidneys could get overwhelmed. Thirst is the best indication that the body gives you to hydrate yourself. Each one’s body is different and metabolises food and water differently.

Conditions are also different. One great way of realising that one needs rest, and is heading for any acute inflammation like a cold or fever, is the body’s increased need for water. And, indeed, it is the best way to deal with the onslaught of an infection and to nip it in the bud. At this point, the body will crave for water which will indeed hasten its recovery.



Drink room temperature water, drink coconut water, drink lemon water with organic sugar-rock salt (good old *nimbu pani*) which is also the best way to re-hydrate oneself after loss of water due to diarrhea or vomiting, especially when no other food is advisable until the body's ph balance changes from acid to alkaline. At this time when the body needs rest, only water can do the trick. Often people will try and eat bananas, rice, apples, pomegranate, all good foods when recovering from an upset tummy, but not until the body is given a full break from digestion so as to regain its digestive energy. No medication is necessary if this is done, but the lemon water-raw sugar-rock salt combination or coconut water need to be sipped to ensure that no dehydration occurs.

### Our holy 'tryst' with water

India has a "holy" tryst with water, the Ganges being considered mother and holy. It is in line with the importance of safe pure water for the human body internally, and for bathing purposes. It pains me to see an unhygienic nation when in fact, Indians were the epitome of cleanliness. The very fabric of our being torn to shreds by those that conquered. A nation that took two baths daily, now has to deal with food poisoning as a common ailment. I believe this has much to do with the fact that people in kitchens do not have proper toilet facilities or even the desire to wash well. I believe that stomach bugs are not caused by 'bugs', but by this hygiene issue when your food gets contaminated by hands that have no access to toilets or to clean water to wash up after.

Of course, water from the Ganges is meant to salvage the soul too....we really have so much of our tradition to revert to...to relearn....maybe first just to have faith in.

### The filtration story

Filtration of water has become crucial today unless you live in the Himalayas and have the chance of sipping straight from a stream. But with industry producing all kinds of water pollution, and ironically agriculture creating its own via chemicals used for farming, one has to be filtering water. The good old fashioned way with a charcoal filter is great, but this needs to be followed up with storage in a copper vessel which has been found to be the best to reduce bacteria count. If you are aware that the water in your area is particularly bad, then in addition to all this, good old boiling is a good solution. Indian knowledge once again to the rescue!

Many filtration systems take away minerals from the water which is not a good idea. And yet the mineral water that comes in bottles is not the answer either. Ok, once in a while if you are stuck in an outdoor situation and have to resort to it. Filtration is still a mystery and one does not know what is real and what is merely a business. Your gut generally gets used to your daily environment and a particular set of bacteria,

you don't need to worry too much unless you are travelling. I would say when outdoors, stick to cooked food unless you are washing the raw food yourself. Ironical too that water the cleanser can cause water borne diseases when its purity is tampered with or simply neglected.

So here are some pointers for living in our insane world:

- Crystals have the capacity to charge water, check its potential.
- Listen to your body, drink when thirsty.
- Store in copper, it is proven that a copper *matka* will improve water quality and your health.
- Choose wisely, each and every choice of ours has an effect on the environment – including the quantity and quality of our water supply.
- Don't eat at places where the staff does not have access to clean toilets and water to wash up.
- Don't drink water lying in open jugs or from suspect sources.
- Don't drink water from plastic bottles lying in the Sun or freezer. Similarly, foods stored in plastic and lying in the Sun should be avoided. Aspartame, the artificial sweetener found in diet colas are especially dangerous in any container, can or plastic or glass.
- Drink water at night, it is important for the organs.
- The purest water is that in fresh fruits, but eat the fruit not just the juice and not from tetra packs or plastic bottles. In reconstituted juices, the purest water is replaced.
- Last but not the least, water first thing in the morning is a must. In fact, it is the first law of nutrition. All medications including natural ones, herbs and foods, even super foods, to be taken only after the body has its first glass of water on waking. This is how the night fast is to be broken and how the body deals with bacteria, cultivates good ones which reign over the trouble causing ones.

There will be wars for water if we do not live with respect for nature. So as in everything be aware of water, be conscious of its purity, of its abundance, its absolute necessity, internally and externally. Then only will this resource be available to us in its original *avatar*. ■

Kavita Mukhi pioneered the marketing of organic food in India over three decades ago. As an eco-nutritionist, la leche leader, lymphologist and craniosacral therapist, she imparts an honest, practical way of staying healthy. Realising the difficulties of agriculture on her own natural farm, she initiated The Farmers' Market in Mumbai in 2010. In its Season VII now, the market has helped a large group of farmers to be self-sufficient, build water tanks, buy vehicles and travel to conferences. It has helped their next generation to remain in the field. Crucial if we want our children to inherit an earth with living soil, pure air, clean water and safe food.



# The water hierarchy

*Water availability follows a certain social and economic hierarchy in India. And you just wouldn't want to be at the bottom of this particular pyramid, says E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan. She counsels prudent use of water if we want it to last.*

**I**N these hot, blistering months in India, when the mercury often crosses 40 degrees, water is the only manna. Water is a precious commodity and a very necessary one, to stave off dehydration and heat strokes. Yet, do we all have access to clean drinking water as and when we want it? And herein lies the Indian conundrum.

In our beloved country, as in most things, water too goes through a socio-economic pecking order, especially in the

urban cities. The privileged wealthy take a glass or a bottle of chilled water as their right. For them, availability of water is never in doubt. They have to only decide how they want it: Chilled or room temperature. Still or sparkling. Evian or Bisleri/ Himalaya / Aquafina? This mélange of choices is the only inconvenience they have to face. Oh

yes, too much of choice can be an irritant too!

For the next in the economic strata, the choices are simpler. Water stored in plastic bottles (Pet or Lock n' Lock) or in glass bottles (either emptied juice or squash or liquor bottles, or the now popular tall, red and green bottles). The water, which is available 24 hours, is either RO (Reverse Osmosis-ed) or filtered through devices like the Aquaguard, or plain boiled.

It gets more simple as we climb down the pecking order. For this strata, municipal water is available at certain hours in the early morning from a single tap at home, and so water has to be quickly filled up in various plastic pots and drums –



**Women waiting with their pots are a familiar sight in our towns and cities**

for both drinking and washing. This routine at dawn is a regular feature in lower middle-class urban households. It's normally the responsibility of the lady of the house to fill water every day at that unearthly hour.

Our next strata lacks even this one tap at home. They can access water only through the municipal tap/hand pump. Typically in India, there will be one functional tap or pump for a few hundred families. Inevitably, water from the pump or

tap flows temperamentally, left to the vagaries of the Gods-that-be at the municipality, leading to long queues of colourful plastic pots and buckets in front of it. Once the water gushes, there is much jostling and cussing and fist fights. Desperate women (oh yes, this is again a woman's domain) will do anything to get that pot or two of water home.

And the last set of people are the forgotten people of India. Those who are migrants/labourers from other parts of the country and live in makeshift, absolutely rudimentary dwellings along our urban roads. They have no access to sanitation, water, or any modicum of living conditions fit for humans. Here, one will often come across young children pushing dirty plastic containers of water on temporary trolleys to their shanties. Forget quality of water, their only focus is to get that one container of water to their hut, so that some basic cooking and washing can take place. While the adults look for daily wages, the children are taxed with these tasks, their childhood already lost in a smog of tiring physical work and absence of

education, or anything uplifting.

In the rural areas, the traditional ponds and tanks have either dried up or have been filled and built over in a fit of short-sighted developmental goals. This has led to severe water crises, leading to the desperate migration to cities. Our rural areas should never have to face water woes, but they sadly do.

### The urban truth

I have eleven taps at home, I counted them, including the bathrooms. That's a lot of taps for a household and it puts us squarely in the privileged set. Now, this thought doesn't make me happy. I see water gushing out of these taps at all hours and I feel dread, because I know that I am not putting that amount of water back into the ground. So where will the future generation get and access water from? Yes, there is rainwater harvesting in my building, which is some consolation. But we need to do a lot more than this if we want to conserve water for the future.

Even more reprehensible are households with large bathtubs. If you really want to soak in a large expanse of water, visit the sea or go to the swimming pool. Bathtubs in private homes are so unnecessary and must be in my opinion severely restricted.

More important, we need to educate our children about how precious water is and how fast we are depleting it. Are we going to depend on expensive desalination plants to manufacture potable water for our use in the future? It's a horrifying thought.

### Eschew the bottle, seize the pot!

On top of my kitchen counter is a small *surahi* or clay pot, with a pretty hen beak spout, in which I store boiled water. It is my precious *surahi* which I once lugged all the way from a Goan fair. I have seen that when I store boiled

and reasonably cooled water into it, the water is a few degrees cooler after a few hours. I bought it as an alternative to plastic bottles, and also to give a choice of cool water to my son, in the hope that he will eschew the cold fridge water. It has worked to some extent. I see him reaching for the *surahi* often. It's also more convenient to pour out from a *surahi*!

My suggestion? When travelling, carry a bottle of water with you. Even if it's a plastic bottle, ensure it's reusable. It may seem easy and more convenient to reach out for a packaged bottle of water. And in India, it comes in various packages, doesn't it? In Chennai, I have seen water being sold in small 250 ml plastic pouches. Or little plastic containers of water where you poke a sharp, sturdy straw through the lid and sip. This is very wasteful, given the amount of plastic such receptacles generate. Carry water in your own container as much as possible.

Also, offer drinking water to your house help. A bottle or two of boiled water you give them every day will at least take care of their own needs. Remember, they get water for a very limited time every day or they may have to stand for hours in a municipal queue to get a few pots of water. That bottle or two of boiled water will help them at least in the hot, summer months.

Even as we enjoy our access to water, let's also access our humanity. Humanity breeds humanity. Let's be very careful how we use water. Use water sparingly and responsibly,



especially drinking water. Don't upturn that half-empty glass of water into the drain. At least pour it into your pet's water container or into your plants. Small steps do count. More than you think. ■

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

### Water facts

- 71% of the earth's surface is covered with water.
- 97% of that 71% is water in the salt water oceans, i.e., 68.87% of the earth's water is saline.
- 4% of that 71% is water contained in glaciers, polar ice caps and underground i.e., 1.70% of the earth's water is in frozen form.
- The remainder, a mere 0.6% of 71% , i.e., 0.42% of the earth's water is in surface water bodies such as lakes and rivers.
- Up to 77% of the human body comprises water.
- On an average one human body needs between one to seven liters of water per day.
- The average urban home of 4.6 people uses 640 liters of water per day.
- A dripping tap can waste as much as 60 liters per day or 1800 liters per month.
- A leaking toilet can waste up to 100,000 liters of water per year.
- A toilet is the biggest user of indoor water. On average, it uses 11 liters of water when flushed.



# The elixir

*Why exactly should we drink water, apart from of course, slaking our thirst? Dr. Pradeep M.K. Nair gives us the medical reasons why water is indeed the elixir of life.*

**W**E are living in a modern era where we are used to advanced technologies, advanced health care models and sophisticated lifestyles. Irrespective of these advances, we are in the midst of deadly diseases which are threatening and detrimental to our life. In the run for modernisation we have forgotten many traditional practices which helped us in keeping fit and healthy.

One such practice is drinking water which has a greater role to play in keeping us healthy. Water comprises 75% of body weight in infants, to 55% in elderly, and is essential for cellular homeostasis and life. Without water, humans can survive only for a few days. Water is undoubtedly the most important nutrient for the body. Humans usually drink water for diverse reasons. However, it is water deficiency which triggers the physiological thirst. The maintenance of fluid balance in the body is very important to achieve homeostasis, a state of perfect water and mineral balance.

## Why do we drink water?

When water is lost from the body through urine, sweat, faeces etc., there is an increase in the ionic concentration in the body which induces thirst and forces us to drink water.

When we don't drink adequate amount of water, the following activities get affected:

**Physical activity:** Decreased water intake affects the physical performance of the body. It can lead to hyperthermia (excess body heat), reduced stroke volume and cardiac output, lower blood pressure, and reduced blood flow to muscle. It can also induce dryness of skin as well as oxidative stress.

**Cognitive function:** Cognition means the ability to think, reason and intellectually function. Poor water consumption can affect the mood and cognition. Research suggests that poor hydration can alter a number of important aspects of cognitive function such as concentration, alertness and short-term memory in children.

**Mental status:** Poor water intake is a risk factor for delirium and delirium presenting as dementia in the elderly and in the very ill. Usually elderly people do not drink enough water, owing to reduced thirst. However, this can result in mental confusion, poor memory etc.

**Digestive functions:** Poor water intake is termed as basic cause for constipation, which is a common disorder across



**Water is most essential for our health**

the globe. Constipation can lead to various complications like piles, fistulas etc. Other than this, all the digestive functions are influenced by the water intake.

**Kidney functions:** The role of kidneys is crucial in regulating water balance and blood pressure as well as removing waste from the body. In addition to regulating fluid balance, the kidneys require water for the filtration of waste from the blood stream and excretion via urine. Inadequate water drinking can result in many complications like kidney stones, urinary tract infections, hypertension, chronic or acute kidney failure etc.

**Heart function:** Water intake and the functions of the heart are closely related. Blood volume is normally tightly regulated by matching water intake and water output, any alteration in this can reduce the blood volume, which leads to increased heart rate, a fall in blood pressure and syncope (sudden fainting) etc.

**Skin functions:** The skin contains approximately 30% water, which contributes to plumpness, elasticity, and resiliency. Poor intake of water can lead to skin dryness, acne (pimples) and scaly as well as itchy skin.

## How much water should we drink?

This is a million-dollar question. There cannot be a daily recommended allowance for water intake like other nutrients.

Nevertheless, it is always on a need basis induced by thirst. But in our busy schedule, we hardly sense the thirst signals from the body; hence it is wise to have one glass (200 ml approx.) of water every half an hour or three litres of water for the whole day. We often confuse our water drinking with other beverage consumption. This includes water replacement for a range of caloric and diet beverages, including sugar-sweetened beverages, juice, milk, and diet beverages. It is always essential to remember that water drinking is a standalone affair which differs from other beverage intake.

### Health benefits of drinking water

Drinking water confers an array of health benefits and protection to humans. Water intake prevents many life threatening diseases like cancer, metabolic syndromes, improved immunity, bone health etc. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a person should drink every hour, a glass of water stored in a mud pot. This helps in reducing hunger and also prevents acidosis during dieting. Proper water intake helps in detoxifying the body. The best water is one which is boiled

and cooled and stored in mud vessels to be consumed on an empty stomach.

Drinking water can be an answer for many health related issues – from simple pimples to dangerous cancers. There was a concept called ‘*Usha Paanam*’ in Indian tradition, which is almost forgotten or ignored. The health benefits of this practice are immense. It is advised that the first refreshing beverage immediately after one gets up from bed in the morning is water (two glasses, slow drinking). It prepares the body to fight against the illness by giving a trouble free defecation, instant rehydration after an eight-hour long sleep, it also



refreshes the internal cells. Such practices should be reinstated in to our daily regimen as ‘water is indeed the elixir of life’. ■

Dr. Pradeep M.K. Nair is a qualified naturopath working as Research Officer at National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN), Pune. NIN is an autonomous body working under Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India. To know more about NIN please visit their website: [www.punenin.org](http://www.punenin.org).

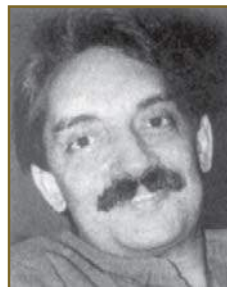
## Flowing from the forest

(Continued from page 11)

**The city belongs to the children:** Who owns the city? Think about it and then consider whether we are treating our cities fairly. Our cities belong to our children. What do you think they will remember us best for? New car parks and shopping malls, or a heritage comprising forested outskirts, tree-lined avenues filled with the calls of barbets, sparkling lakes jumping with fish and a functioning public transport system that kept their air clean? Citizens should call on the principals and teachers of schools and seek their advice on how the city should be run. In fact they should be on the most powerful municipal committees. After all it is these dedicated people in whose charge we have left our children, and there is no one who knows better than them what our children really need.

**Swim with nature's tide, not against it:** We don't really know how the system works, but it does. Everything fits, like a massive jigsaw designed for life. Trees breathe in carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen. The air is breathable, water drinkable and soils productive. The miracle of life so evident around us has justifiably fascinated humans ever since they evolved the capacity to think and abstract.

Work to restore a city's hydrology (that means restoring its green cover too). Harvest the rain water that is gifted to us by the monsoon. We must also ensure that no more large trees are felled to widen roads, or construct new buildings.



In the world's greatest cities architects now take pride in building around trees, incorporating their canopies into their blueprints. This not only saves trees, but enhances real estate values. ■

Bittu Sahgal is the Editor of *Sanctuary Asia* magazine.

### All creatures big and small need water!

The media was abuzz in recent days about a video showing a 12-foot-long, King Cobra drinking water from a water bottle. The video first uploaded by a YouTube channel called Uttara Kannada News, shows a man in khaki feeding water to the snake. One of the reasons given was that the severe drought prevailing across Karnataka had resulted in the cobra straying into a village looking for water. One of the men seen in the video giving water to the snake is apparently C.N. Naykka, the Deputy Range Forest Officer of Karwar forest. The Forest Officer reportedly said that this is the mating season and cobras wandering around the area are a common occurrence.



**KNOW INDIA BETTER**

**There is a little district, nestled in the misty mountains of Uttarakhand in northern India, where beautiful vistas stretch out as far as the eye can see. Champawat is less visited, but history and myths abound, and temples nestle cheek-by-jowl with a gurudwara, forts and scenic villages. Come, visit it with us, as we wind our way through this breathtaking region.**

# **Champawat**

*The lesser known gem of Uttarakhand*

**Text & photos: Anvi Mehta**





The confluence of rivers Sarayu and Kali; the opposite side is Nepal

**A** district in the Kumaon part of Uttarakhand, Champawat, is in the southern most region of the state, and shares a border with Pithoragarh and Nainital. It also shares a border with Nepal, with the River Kali dividing them. There is every day movement of people between both sides for work and business.

Almost seventy-five per cent of the district is in the mountain ranges, making it a little inaccessible for tourists. But, it is also one of the less explored places, the raw *pahadi* culture can be observed in its villages. From the district, the Panchachuli ranges of the Himalayas are visible, they form a protective wall for the hilly terrain.

### History of Champawat

The Champawat district was constituted in the late 1990s, but it was one of the major centres in the medieval times. Ruled by the Chand dynasty, the district was a major commercial centre, and a connect between India and Nepal. When the British invaded India, the Chands were defeated by the Nepal rulers, who had taken over a large portion of Kumaon.

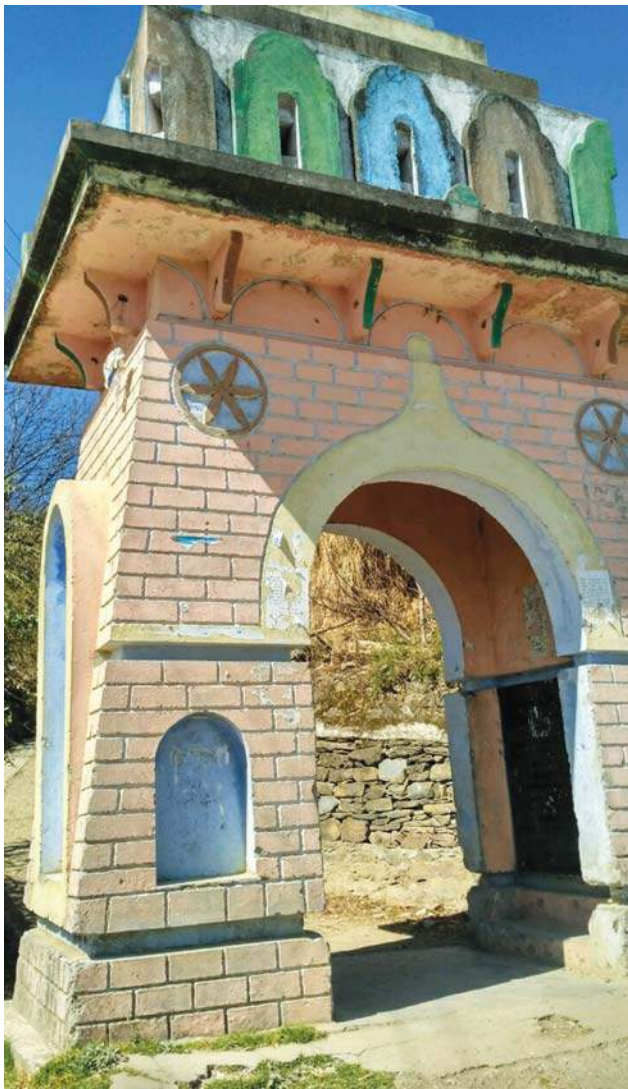
The Chand rulers took help from the British to push away

the Gorkhas, it was difficult for them to win a war against the furious Nepali rulers. Since then, a British influence has been observed in the hills. Champawat also has a hill station which was mainly inhabited by the British.

Champawat is a part of Kumaon, hence it follows the culture of the *pahadis*. Apart from the district centre where all the administrative heads have their work place, Lohaghat is another major centre. Though none of the towns are very developed, they are undergoing urbanisation.

Due to its proximity to Nepal, the Kumaoni dialect and culture is similar to that of the Nepalese. Farming and dairy are the primary sources of income, and people still follow the old practices of organic farming. One can often find women working in the fields, collecting fuel wood and fodder from forests. The men are either drivers or labourers.

But a peculiar thing of the existing population is that most of them are immigrants from neighbouring districts or Nepal. They have been living here for 12-14 generations now, but their original roots belong to some other place. Major groups found here are Brahmins and Thakurs; they live together in clusters.



The main entrance of the fort – Banasura Killa



The ruins of Banasura Killa

### The culture of Champawat

Hinduism is the most followed religion here. Hence, the Hindu festivals are celebrated with grandeur in these regions. Champawat is famous for the number of temples, especially the Lord Shiva temples situated deep inside the forests. Purnagiri, Baleshwar temple and Gwal Devta are the major temples in the district. Holi, Navratri and Diwali are the major festivals, celebration of which takes place for weeks together. Villagers gather in their respective temples, sing songs, offer prayers and perform rituals to please the deities. They believe that anything which displeases the Gods could harm them and the future generations to come. Often, animal sacrifices, mainly goats, are done to get work done.

### A tourist destination

Champawat is known for two reasons – temples and tigers. The very first tiger that Jim Corbett killed was in the

The very first tiger that Jim Corbett killed was in the district of Champawat. Man eaters were a regular feature in the area until the forests started to reduce, and illegal poaching decreased the population of these tigers.

district of Champawat. Man eaters were a regular feature in the area until the forests started to reduce, and illegal poaching decreased the population of these tigers. Though Champawat is known for its temples, it also has a few off beat places that one can visit. As there is not very heavy snowfall and summers are also relatively pleasant, the district can be visited any time of the year. It is still not developed as a tourist destination; hence, it is bliss for travellers who do not like crowded places. However, it is tough to find a decent hotel or a resort, but one can always get a village home stay, which is a better experience in a lot of ways.

During our visits to the district, we made a list of a few off beat places where one can live with nature, in pollution-free and non-commercial surroundings. These places are quiet and calm, everything that one needs if one wants a break from the chaos of city life.





**At the Banasura Killa**

### **The Banasura Killa**

We start the list with the fort which is 20 kilometres from Champawat district centre and seven kilometres from Lohaghat. The fort was built in the medieval era, in the name of Banasura, the demon with a thousand arms.

The mountains have a tale for every place, this one has its own myth. In the Hindu scriptures there is a mention of a demon named Banasura. He ruled the Champawat region and was an ardent follower of Lord Shiva. To please the God, he followed strict penance. As a result, he was offered a boon. He asked for a thousand strong arms to defeat all his enemies and he received it immediately.

Though Banasura used it for defeating his enemies, soon, he started torturing his subjects. Power comes with great responsibility, but Banasura could not handle his responsibilities well. It is then that Lord Krishna, Vishnu's incarnation, took it on himself to kill the demon. It is said the demon was killed at the very place where the fort now stands.

This tale was intriguing enough for us to go on a three kilometre trek. The trek was easy. There are certain points from which the origin of Lohaghati River is visible, and the mountains and valleys look gorgeously beautiful. On top of the peak, the fort ruins take you back to the time when it was constructed. The large stone boulders form a boundary wall,



**A view of lush, green villages from the fort**





**The *killa* offers beautiful views of the Himalayan peaks**

inside which are broken structures of the fort. It must have been a masterpiece in its full glory. With the view from the fort, it is by far the best place to visit in the district.

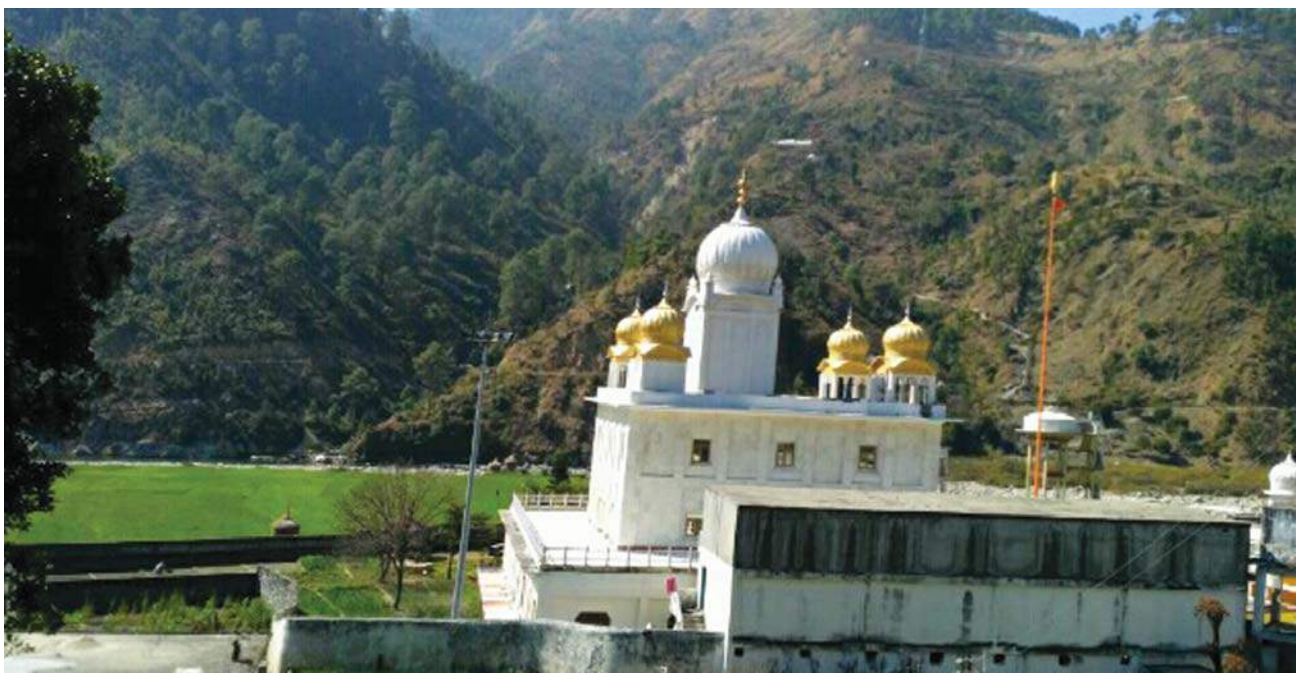
From the top, one can see the mountains and the Himalayan peaks on one side and the lush green villages on the other side. The best time to visit the fort is early in the morning. On a clear day, the Himalayas look serene and huge. Unfortunately, we reached a little late, so could not see the snow clad mountains, but the view was pretty amazing even then.

### **The Reetha Sahib**

One of the pious places for Sikhs, Reetha Sahib is

approximately 60 km from Champawat. It has a gurudwara at the meeting point of two rivers originating in the Himalayan ranges. All year round Sikhs visit this place of pilgrimage.

The Reetha Sahib is named after the soapnut tree, which bears a bitter nut commonly called Reetha. As per the local folk lore, Guru Nanakji had visited the place with Bhai Mardana to meet the Nath Yogis. Guru Nanakji was seated under a Reetha tree; he was speaking with the Yogis to show them a path of living a good life. Bhai Mardana felt hungry but had nothing to eat except for the soap nut fruits, which were bitter. This is when Guru Nanak plucked the soap nuts from his side of the tree and gave to Bhai Mardana to eat. It is said that he



**The gurudwara in its sylvan surroundings**

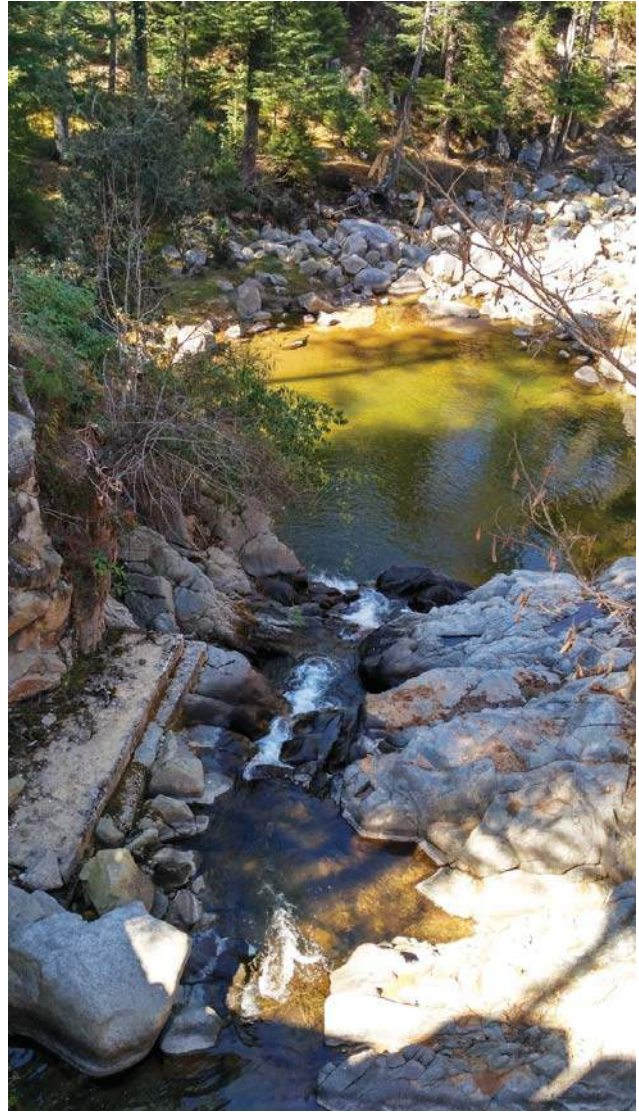




The *reetha* tree which bears sweet fruits

miraculously turned the bitter tasting soap nuts to sweet tasting fruits that could satiate anyone's hunger. Though the original tree under which Guru Nanakji sat, does not exist anymore, his followers have planted new ones from the seeds of the older trees. The gurudwara still hands out sweet tasting Reetha as *prasad* to the pilgrims. The gurudwara is situated at the river bank, so one can spend some time near the waters as well. While monsoon is the best time to visit as the rivers flow and the weather is very pleasant, one can be here at any other time as well.

The gurudwara has a *langar* which serves hot Kumaoni-style *chullah* cooked food and tasty tea all day long. They also let you help in the kitchen and do *sewa* if one is interested. It is highly recommended to stay for a day at Reetha Sahib. One has to attend to the evening *bhajan* and watch the sun rise by the river. And to experience the Sikh culture, a fair is set up during May and June, when Sikhs from all over visit the



Waterfalls and streams en route Reetha Sahib, a perfect spot for a break

gurudwara. There are celebrations throughout, *langars* start from Lohaghat itself, the community serving free food and refreshments to passersby. The Reetha Sahib is a very serene experience in itself. En route the place are a few small waterfalls and lakes, where one can take a pit stop and enjoy the nature. But, you will need your own vehicle or you will have to rent a car to reach Reetha Sahib, as the frequency of buses is very less, and is also unreliable.

### Pancheshwar

Again at the Nepal border, lies a small town called Pancheshwar. It is at the confluence of Kali River and Saryu River. Located 40 km from Champawat, reaching the place is quite a task as the roads are very narrow and no buses run from there. The place has a temple of Chammu Jaat, the God who protects animals. Offerings of milk and bael leaves are made, and the temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva.





**Pancheshwar, a remote village, which has a temple to Chammu Jaat, the god who protects animals**

The raw and untouched beauty of the surroundings makes it a picturesque place to visit. The best part of the place is the confluence of the two rivers; while one side is in India, the opposite side belongs to Nepal. Just crossing the river can take you to a foreign land! The place is abuzz with pilgrims during Navratra and Mahashivaratri when there are religious fairs organised here. The place also has a hermit living in a small hut of his own, if one gets a little chatty with him, he will make you tea laced with some *bhang*!

One cannot stay for long at Pancheshwar as there is no place to stay. If you are comfortable living in a tent, then camping by the river banks and spending the evening singing songs around a bonfire is a must. Otherwise, reach there early

morning, enjoy the natural beauty and leave by afternoon. Also, there is no restaurant in the whole place, either pack your food or convince a villager to cook a meal for you.



**The temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at Pancheshwar**



**A view from the temple at Pancheshwar**





**The Abott Mountain Church**

### The haunted Abott Mountain

A place developed by a British gentleman John Abott, hence the name, Abott Mountain is one of the highest peaks in the district and is a pleasant place to be in. It has a good view of the valleys and the Himalayan peaks of Trishul, Nanda Devi, Nanda Ghunti and Nanda Koi. It also has the second highest cricket pitch after Chail in Himachal Pradesh.

When John Abott discovered this place, a small Christian community was developed here. There were a couple of cottages, a hospital and a church built. The families lived here in harmony with the locals and everything was fine, for a while.

It is said that a doctor settled here a few years later and worked in the hospital. While some say he could foresee the future and predict a patient's death, he shifted terminally ill patients to a special ward known as the Mukti Kothri, where they did die as prophesied. Some believe that he started going crazy with weird ideas of life after death, and that he performed bizarre experiments to create a living dead. He wanted to create his own Frankenstein. Soon, there were rumours of mysterious

A place developed by a British gentleman John Abott, hence the name, Abott Mountain is one of the highest peaks in the district and is a pleasant place to be in. It has a good view of the valleys and the Himalayan peaks of Trishul, Nanda Devi, Nanda Ghunti and Nanda Koi.

incidents and supernatural presence. The locals say the spirit of the patients who died an untimely death haunt the place. There is a church here, which is also closed currently, and prayer meetings are held once or twice a year. Listed as one of

the most haunted places in India, the Abott Mountain is a must go for people interested in researching supernatural activities. Though there are cottages being developed there, as of today, there is no proper place to stay.

### The Ek Hathiya Naula

Champawat, as mentioned earlier, was once ruled by the Nepalese. It is during those times that art and culture was at its peak. The Gorkhas wanted their structures to be constructed in the most unique ways, so they trained artisans to create masterpieces.

But, there was a rider to this. The artisans were punished once they completed a structure. One of their hands was cut off by the Nepali rulers so that they would not be able to replicate the art piece. Beating these odds, an unnamed artist constructed a *naula* (a small well like structure being the source of water in the mountains). He constructed it with





**The Ek Hathiya Naula; it's a heritage monument, but is neglected**

the help of his daughter. The daughter carried the stones for her father. While the father used his chisel to carve the stone, the daughter hammered the stones as per instructions. Together, they made a beautiful piece of heritage which is located in the interiors of the forests, three kilometres from Champawat. The *naula* is known as Ek Hathiya as it was

made by the artist using only one hand.

The *naula* is no less than any of the heritage sites in our country famous for its sculptures and stone carvings. Yet, it is not a very touristy destination and only a few locals know about it. It is a two to three hour long trek where one can also enjoy the forest. The best season to go to the *naula* is during the



**The intricate carving on stones in the interiors of the *naula*; a remarkable feat by the one-armed artist**





**A bridge across Saryu River**

winter and the summer months, monsoon trek gets difficult because of the forest.

While most of *the naula* is intact, mischievous local goons have damaged some of the carvings. This place is heritage, yet it is not conserved well. Increase in tourism might just force the government to keep the heritage intact.

### The 100-year-old water mill

Now that we have electronically running wheat grinders, the world has almost forgotten about the water mills that once were used to grind grains to make flour. Champawat district is home to one such water mill which was established by a family a 100 years back.

The water mill is located in the Dhamisaun village, 10 km from the district centre. The Joshi family had installed the water mill for the villagers. It was to reduce the burden of women who used to travel far to get their flour ground. Though at that time water mills were found in abundance, now due to scarcity of water and availability of better technology, this is the last one in the district.

Even now, villagers go to the mill and grind their grains without paying anything. Krishnanand Joshi, 55, is the fourth generation taking care of the mill. He uses his own money to get the mill cleaned and maintain the machine.

He claims that once someone eats *rotis* made from the flour ground here, they will not find any other flour tasty.

Though this is not the usual tourist thing to do, but visiting places like this helps in experiencing the place for what it is. Also, the village of Dhamisaun is the rural India that one should definitely know about. It is situated amidst mountains and has no proper road system. Hence, the water mill still works as a drudgery reducer for women in this locality.

The water mill is located in the Dhamisaun village, 10 km from the district centre. The Joshi family had installed the water mill for the villagers. It was to reduce the burden of women who used to travel far to get their flour ground.

### The cluster of temples

The *pahadi* people are very *religious*. They believe in Lord Shiva and Goddess Durga the most, they have temples dedicated to them but have local names for these gods. One can find a temple situated in the forests at the top of a peak in almost every part of the district. While covering all of them is not possible, but Purnagiri and Phataksheela are two recommended temples.

The Purnagiri temple is famous and visited by pilgrims from all over the country. It is located 70 km from the district centre and is close to the river Chalthi, which is another place of scenic beauty. To reach Purnagiri, one has to trek for about two to three hours. From the peak are visible a few mountain ranges of Nepal. The Phataksheela on the other hand, is a





**A last, lingering view of the mountains of Champawat**

small temple, 30 km from Champawat district centre. It is said that a part of the *linga* from Purnagiri fell at this place, hence making it equally important to the locals.

Other temples to visit are the Gwala Devta temple in the district centre, and Baleshwar temple which was constructed by the Chand rulers.

The temples in the *pahads* are much different from the

ones in the plains. They have a fantastic view of the Himalayas, they are located in dense forests, and they are always ringing loud with the hundreds of bells tied by pilgrims. The best time to visit the temples is during festivities like Shivratri, Holi and Navratri. A few temples also serve *bharg* as *prasad*, a treat for all the weed lovers out there!

These are a few off beat places to visit in Champawat. The district has 600 plus villages and a village stay is one of the

best decisions you would make if you decide to visit the place. ■

### How to reach

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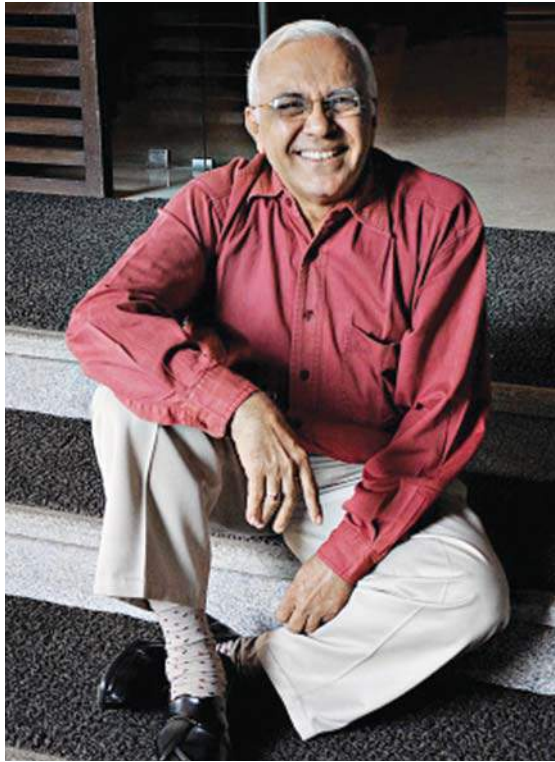
After completing her engineering, Anvi Mehta interned for a newspaper and has been freelancing since then. Currently working in Uttarakhand as a Fellow, she travels to document different cultures and arts.

## Our Last Six Issues

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# *“They pay for a rice plate and look for a 5-star meal!”*



**Vinod Ganatra**, a renowned independent children’s film maker, based in Mumbai and a recipient of The Liv Ullmann Peace Prize, Chicago, has been active in film and television production from 1982. Apart from editing and directing about 400 documentaries and newsreels, he has produced 25 TV programmes for children and youth. His three children’s films for CFSI (Children’s Film Society of India) have won 23 international awards. A recipient of Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award conferred by the Association of Film and Video Editors, he is widely travelled, and has also served as Jury at 63 national and international film festivals world over. His proud creation is his NGO, the Children’s Audio-Visual Educational Foundation (CAVEF),

the result of his working with children for over two decades. CAVEF organises workshops and screenings of films for children and young adults. He has also launched his own production company, ‘Movie man’. He talks to **A. Radhakrishnan** about his career’s ups and downs, and why he will continue to make children’s films.

**Describe yourself, your philosophy and how your roots influenced your art?**

I hail from a middle class Kutchhi family. I love telling my story in a simple way, something I have essentially learnt from children. I had always been fascinated about looking through the camera, and wanted to become a Cameraman–Director. The philosophy that has influenced my creative work is simplicity. It is very important in life, but it is children, rather than adults who understand this.

**Why did you choose children’s films and not commercial ones?**

There is no funding available in our film industry; so one can’t

make commercial children’s film. There is only one small window open to get funding and that is the CFSI. I never got reasonable finance for my films and I had to fight for it though they earned a good name through me.

As an Editor–Documentary film maker, I had meager resources to make my own children’s films, but trying to get funding from CFSI failed initially, as I was not even considered to be a Director.

However, in 1988, I got an opportunity to make my first TV programme for children *Baingan Raja*, which was telecast 17 times on Doordarshan and proved very popular with children.

**What do you look for in a project? How hard is it to keep going?**

I look for freedom and good budget to make simple, thought provoking films for children. It is very difficult to convince your funding authority as they have their fancy ideas. They pay for a rice plate and look for a 5-star meal! It is hard to keep going as most unfortunately in India, there is no respect and support system, and hence, no consideration or encouragement for children's film makers.

**Is most of directing actually casting? How do you choose the young actors?**

While working on a script, I have characters in my mind from their look, way of speaking and behaviour in local surroundings. I think about my script visually, and then I get them in place after selecting my locations.

**What according to you are the personal attributes that make for a good filmmaker, and what do you do to foster them?**

Sincerity and loyalty to the story are key principles, I always work hard to maintain and avoid compromising on these.

**What qualities makes a film great for you?**

Authenticity, simplicity and technical qualities are the basic norms of a great film. Today we see very good quality of cinema, but very few adhere to these prerequisites.

**Can you describe briefly the creative process, from conceptualisation to the final product?**

Normally, after working on a storyline, I get on to the script keeping the budget in mind. Then comes finalisation of the main star cast as per the story demand, followed by the selection of the technical team. At the same time, locations are selected along with costumes, and other requirements are looked into.

Then the entire crew gets busy with shooting and post-production work like editing, background music, etc., and the film gets technically perfected to reach the audience in theatres.

**It is said that there are only six stories. And we have seen it all. What do you do to keep it fresh?**

I don't believe in that postulation. There are thousands of story books written over thousands of years. I am lucky to work with children and they only bring freshness to the stories in my films.

**What failures of your own have you been able to learn from?**

I am a sentimental person. I don't hurt anybody and always adjust; perhaps my big failure. I go all out to help my artistes and technicians. I have lost shooting days in remote areas



**Vinod Ganatra has received several national and international awards**

like Ladakh or Kutchh Desert just to adjust to somebody who came with some personal problem at the last minute, which resulted however in a financial loss to me.

**What is the state of children's films in the country? What do you expect from the government?**

The funding I received on both occasions was inadequate as they have no heart to support good cinema, and they just follow antiquated rules. For them it is merely a quota to be fulfilled. They don't encourage film makers to make good children's films.

Children's films in India is in a very bad shape, thanks to improper financial support from the government and the film industry. The Indian mindset tends to look down at children's films. I have seen parents standing in line to buy tickets with their children in arms in Berlin, Cannes, New York etc., which I never see in India. The government should support serious children's film makers and encourage them to make good children's films. They should also release Indian children's films in theatres so that children can have the experience of watching films in a special environment.

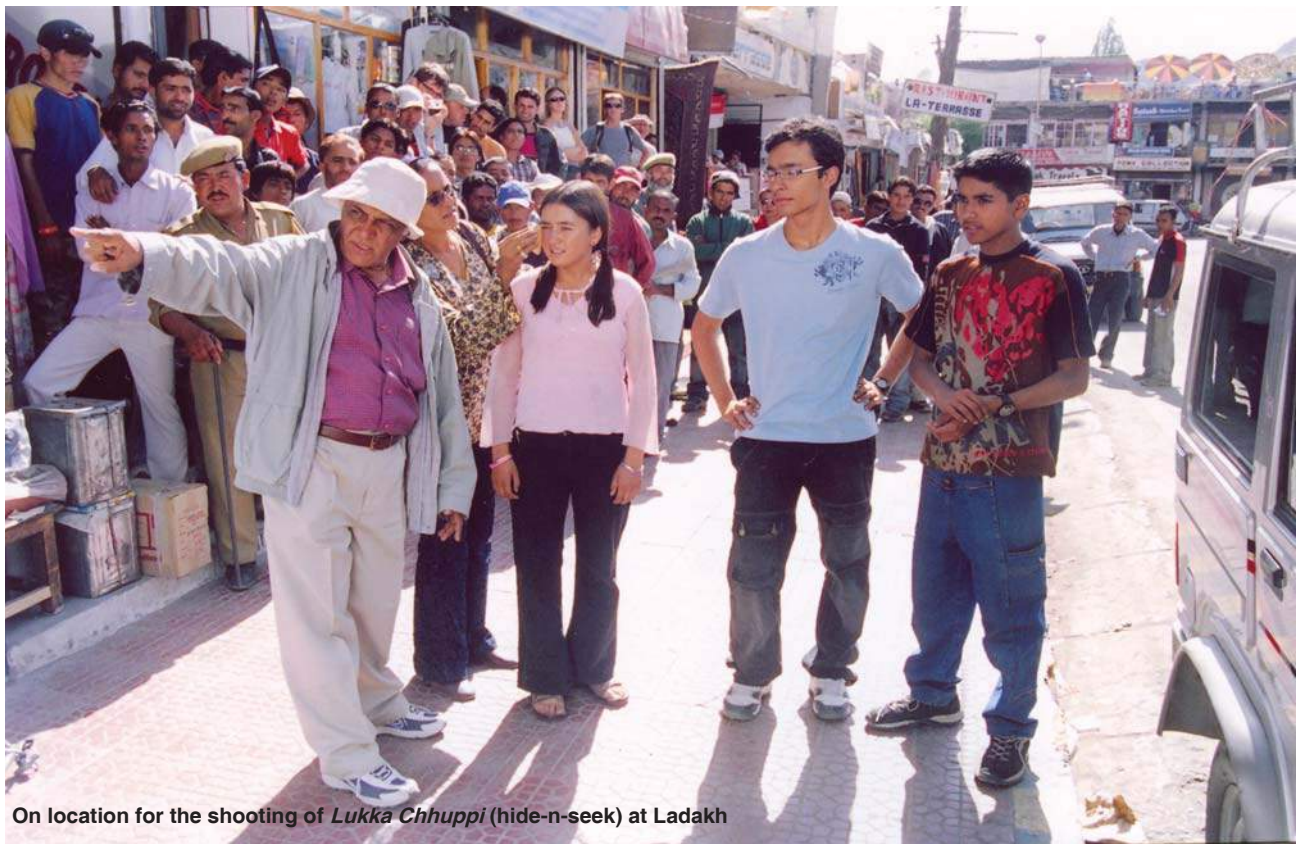
**How do you get to know your audience?**

I have been lucky to interact with audiences from different cultures during the Q & A session after screening of my films at different film festivals world over. This helps you to understand what the audience desires. Actually, it is very difficult to know what the audience wants and perhaps they themselves don't know about it. If I, as a story teller, tell my story and the audience likes it, then I derive the greatest satisfaction.

**What role have film festivals played in your life?**

Film festivals have played a paramount role in my life as a film maker. How audiences from different cultures react to my films, has helped me to understand their thinking. Film festivals are





On location for the shooting of *Lukka Chhuppi* (hide-n-seek) at Ladakh

very important because they not only give you an opportunity to see films from different countries, but you interact with filmmakers from other cultures, and gain knowledge.

#### Who is your favourite children's director?

I love Iranian cinema and film makers like Abbas Kerustami, Makhmalbuff, Majid Majidi, Gulame Raza Ramzani, Pouran Darakshande and many others. I also love films by Italian, German, French, Chinese and Canadian film makers. We too have very good filmmakers, but unfortunately they have shifted to commercial cinema gradually. There are so many remarkable films too from Bhutan, Croatia, Philippines, etc.

#### Should films preach? Shouldn't the purpose of a movie 'for' children be to teach them how to behave better?

No... I believe that a film maker is a story teller so he should tell his story through his characters. One should leave to the audience 'what to take and what not to take'.

#### Is it true that any movie 'for' kids or teens that doesn't also entertain adults will probably 'bomb' at the box office?

It is a myth prevailing in India, but it is not true because children's films are family films. When you label it 'for kids or teens', then there is a risk, but otherwise they are accepted by adults too.

Films like *Makkadi*, *Tare Zameen Par*, *Stanley ka Dabba*, *Blue Umbrella*, *Elizabeth Ekadasi* are best examples of successful children films which were not labled 'for kids'.

#### Briefly describe your films.

I made two films pertaining to the Indo-Pak border at Kutchh

desert. My debut children's film is *Heda-Hoda (Blind Camel)* in Hindi, which is about an Indian child who crosses the border in search of his camels.

My second film, *Harun Arun* in Gujarati is about a Pakistani child who crosses the open border with his grandfather.

My third film was *Lukka Chhuppi* (hide-n-seek) in Hindi, which is recorded as the first children's feature film, fully shot at the highest altitude in Ladakh in the Himalayas.

#### How do you feel about getting awards?

It feels euphoric to have won so many national and international awards, but I also feel sad that thanks to politics, I am today not even recognised by the CFSI and I have to struggle for funding for my next project.

#### What areas would you like to explore in the future?

I want to explore a story spread in two countries, with children of course. I am also working on a biopic on an unsung freedom fighter.

#### Your advice to young film makers who want to make children's films?

As a fellow film maker, I would only like to say, 'Please don't label your films or yourself as a children's film maker', because you will be treated as an untouchable! ■



A. Radhakrishnan, Pune is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short storywriter, and counsellor who, when not on social media, likes to make people laugh.



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# The Melghat tribulations

*The infamous Melghat malnutrition deaths of the 1990s are still fresh in our minds and sadly, the situation has not really improved much, two decades hence. A recent confluence of the Melghat tribals with academicians and writers, addressed some of their problems and fears, says **Shatakshi Gawade**.*

**A**S a light breeze rustled through the numerous teak trees around the assembly hall, the Korku tribals sat in a contemplative silence. Eminent author Milind Bokil had just made a sharp observation: “Tribals live a life of fear. They are not scared of the dark, wild animals, or any other aspect of nature. But it is the police, the forest official, and the *zamindar* (landlord) who can still instil fear in their hearts.”

And it is this fear, according to Bokil, that has stopped the Korku tribals in Melghat from taking charge of their development.

## Inglorious record

It has been over 20 years since Melghat, in Maharashtra’s Amravati district, shot to infamy on the back of malnutrition deaths of children. The first time malnutrition was reported, 5,000 children had died between 1992 and 1997. Ever since then, special committees have been formed to resolve the problem, and politicians and bureaucrats religiously visit Melghat.

But malnutrition deaths in the region are still reported after the monsoon every year by all the major news organisations. The situation has not changed. According to Lalita Bethekar, a tribal resident of Melghat and worker in NGO Khoj, the situation is actually worsening day-by-day. To back her claim is the data from September 2016: 6,000 mothers and children have died due to malnutrition in the past six years.

In an attempt to bring more



**Dr. Nilratan Shende shares his research with a group of tribals in Semadoh, Melghat**

attention to the region and to look for new solutions to development problems, Khoj facilitated a unique meeting between writers and members of the community on March 4 and 5, 2017. Author Milind Bokil and researchers Dr. Nilratan Shende, Dr. Kashinath Barhate, and Dr. Shantaram Chavan shared their research and suggestions for the development of the region. About 30 Korku tribals of different ages were also present at the meeting. The two-day affair took place in a simple forest resort in Semadoh, a village in the Chikhaldhara block of Melghat.

Right at the beginning of the meeting, Punyaji Kaka, the most senior Korku tribal in the group, shared a simple fact: The tribals would be able to understand what was written if it was

in Hindi! The common misconception, which has also bled into the education system in Melghat, is that Korku tribals understand Marathi. The truth is that after their mother-tongue Korku, they are most comfortable with Hindi. And prefer Marathi the least, despite being geographically located in the Marathi-speaking state. Other tribals were quick to agree.

The Korku tribals in Melghat have been a subject of countless articles, research, news pieces, documentaries and even a feature film. But they still do not have access to all this work which can influence their actions.

Mahadev, a resident of Melghat, confirmed this fact. “Though a lot has been written about our region, it does not reach us. So there is no discussion.





**Korku tribals at the meeting in Semadoh, Melghat**

And I know what is written makes a difference,” he says. Vinod Kale, another resident, was quick to share that a journalist’s visit to Melghat always puts officials on their toes.

The presentations and discussions on both the days captured the complete attention of the Korku tribals. At every point, they shared their opinion.

### **The main roadblocks**

Dr. Shende shared his Ph.D research with the group, going into the nitty-gritty of the most discussed problem in Melghat: Food security and hunger. Through his work he also highlighted coping mechanisms the tribals resort to. He had attempted to understand the structures of exploitation in Melghat as well. “Because unless we understand these structures, we will not be able to have development,” he said.

He found that the tribals in Melghat are exploited in all sectors of production. He believes that when the tribals make economic strategies to counter this exploitation, they will be able to progress.

Once again, Mahadev spoke for the group: Economic exploitation by external agencies is a reality. But within the village, the tribals have a strong, democratic structure in the form of a

village *panchayat* which deliberates on some economic matters like labour rates, and even mango distribution.

Through his research Dr. Shende also found that the people here are not mute spectators. They work hard to overcome food insecurity by migrating, taking loans in the form of money or food, and have multiple sources of income. They have access to some forest resources, like *mahua* flowers, which they rely on in times of food scarcity. Necessity, here, becomes the mother of innovation.

In the discussion that followed Dr. Shende’s remarks, the Korku tribals shared that a lot of traditional food sources were not available any more. The higher rates for cash crops had diverted farming away from nutritional food grains. As for migration, the tribals still prefer staying and working in the village over leaving.

But in a smaller meeting in Makhla village, the tribals are not so clear about migration. The government has offered them compensation for leaving their homes which lie inside the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The older villagers have no intention of leaving, and speak strongly against the proposal. But the youngsters seem undecided. After all, as one Korku tribal said earlier, being



**Korku tribal Namdev walks out of the meeting in a contemplative mood**

closer to a road means assured access to development and opportunities.

Ultimately, Dr. Shende repeated the same observation that Bokil made: Even today, the tribals are scared. Bokil, for his part, chose to use strong examples from history of tribals in India to show the Korku tribals that the village can be self sufficient.

“The tribals have an innate strength that has kept them alive. It is this strength that must be used to fight external assaults,” he said. While talking about the successful tribal revolution in Lekha Mendha and among the Warli tribals, Bokil stressed on the need of a formal organisation of the tribals in Melghat. He also impressed on the group the necessity of deciding the price of their produce. His rousing stories were followed by Dr. Barhate’s talk about his work on the Korku language. He also shared his observations about Korku tribal culture’s richness and diversity.

His words about the enchanting culture were followed by Dr. Chavan’s angry observations. “The people here have been accused of destroying the forest. But this is completely wrong! The tribals are protectors in every sense! We need to put this across very strongly.”

**(Continued on page 43)**

# Can Trump triumph?

*What does US President Donald Trump really mean by 'America First'? Can he focus on the US in exclusion to the global scene? asks Prof. Avinash Kolhe. And, will the other emerging super powers allow America to be?*

**F**INALLY, Donald Trump has assumed charge as the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United State of American (USA). This made scholars all over the world burn midnight oil to understand how he would go about resetting the world order and what would become of US's role in world politics. These issues have become important as Trump campaigned for 'America First' and wanted to withdraw from many conflicts plaguing the world.

No President of the US before Trump had ever declared that his focus would be exclusively on 'America First'. For decades, the role of US in global politics has been enormous and almost in all parts of the world. In fact even today, the US is the only pole around which world politics revolves. This is precisely why global leaders and scholars alike, are deeply worried about the US under Donald Trump, the most unusual person to have moved into the White House.

Of course it is easier said than done as the US is deeply entrenched in many issues and conflicts the world over that are threatening to spin out of control. This is the situation the world has been used to for over six decades, especially after the end of World War II. It would be necessary and instructive to recall how the US has come to play such a role.

## A background

Till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the US was a negligible player in world affairs. The 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries belonged to England, France and Germany. Even in World War I (1914-18) and World War II (1939-45), the



**Donald Trump (left); and Vladimir Putin**

US was a late and unwilling entrant.

At the same time, it must be admitted that by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the US was getting involved in world affairs. When the World War I was raging, the US President Woodrow Wilson announced his now famous '14 Points', which took an unequivocal position against colonialism. In due course, this made the US the undeclared leader of the free world.

The World War I ended in 1918, but before that another important event took place in Russia – the Communist Revolution led by Lenin. The victory of the Allied forces in the World War I with US help and the Russian Revolution were two events which were to shape world politics for years to come.

Then came the World War II where US did not join immediately. It came in only when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941. The Allied forces with the US help in the Western sector and the Red Army in the Eastern sector, ensured defeat of the Third Reich led by

Hitler. As World War II neared its end, in August 1945, the US used two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to force Japan's surrender. As was proved later, using these bombs was completely unnecessary. But the US wanted to use this golden opportunity to test the efficacy of this new weapon and terrorise the world. No wonder, the USSR went nuclear four years later in 1949. Thus began the Cold War between the two competing ideologies: Capitalism (USA) v/s Communism (USSR). This ended only in 1991 when the USSR disintegrated.

For the entire period of the Cold War, the one and only objective of US foreign policy was to encircle the USSR and stop the popularity of Communism. This is why back then the US had become the leader of the free world. With the end of Cold War in 1991, the US remained the only super power for some years, till it had to once again reckon with two new, emergent super powers: Russia and China.



Vladimir Putin managed to pull Russia out of the mess and China under Deng slowly and steadily almost caught up with the US. This is the reality of 2017 which Trump is talking about. His analysis is that the US went global with its foreign policy for no reason, and spent its resources to defend the free world. In the process, the US leaders neglected their domestic constituency. This is why Trump's 'America First' caught the imagination of the American voters.

### Can the US exit the world stage?

This however does not mean the US can easily leave the world stage. Even now, the US must take active part in world affairs at least to protect its interests. It must demonise the expansionist Russia under Putin so as to rally its NATO allies against Russia. This is perhaps why US scholars regularly write the obituary of the Russian economy, while the IMF (International Monetary Fund) reports are busy describing the Russian economy to be in robust health.

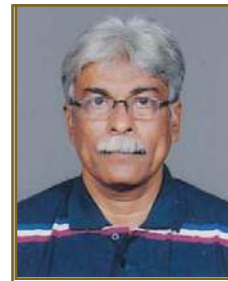
In addition to Russia, the US now has to reckon with China, which has its own expansion plans in West and Central Asia, as well as in South China Sea. The ancient geopolitical wisdom suggests that one way for a superpower to maintain its supremacy is to ally with lesser powers of that region, and retard the rise of a powerful challenger. This is what the predecessors of Trump had been doing for quite some time now. Is Trump threatening to upset (or reset) this design?

Remember Eisenhower, the US president who while demitting office had said something of lasting importance, that there exists a powerful 'military-industry complex' that shapes the US policy. This same powerful complex is likely to create trouble for Trump and his team. There are powerful groups operating in the Congress, in the Pentagon and in the media too, which have deep interests in a status-quo of sorts. These interests are enormously powerful to stall any move, any policy detrimental to their interests.

Remember, former President George Bush Jr. could not get Congressional support for the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal which he signed in 2008, and which is hanging fire even today. Though the US President is generally regarded as the most powerful person on Earth, he too cannot do what he wants to unless he ensures support of powerful lobbies.

These lobbies have interests all over the world. There are huge construction contracts to be won, there are guns and bombs to be sold. For this to happen, wars must take place, destruction must happen so that the US companies can get contracts to reconstruct them.

If this is the 'given', how far Trump would succeed remains to be seen. ■



**Prof. Avinash Kolhe** retired as Asst. Professor in Political Science at D G Ruparel College, Mumbai.

## The Melghat tribulations

(Continued from page 41)

A cursory glance at the assembled group showed their complete agreement.

He continued, saying that it is the tribals who should tell the government what they need, instead of letting the government alone decide. "An example is the tin sheets the government sent for roofs. Now in this weather, a grass roof is perfect. The tin sheets are lying around unused!"

The discussion, however, turned back to fear.

While some, like Ramesh, agreed that the Korku tribals live in fear, others, like PHC (Primary Health Centre) helper Shivdas, believe that they are not afraid anymore. What has made Shivdas fearless? Information. "If we get adequate information, there is no need

to fear anyone and anything," he stated matter-of-factly.

Though Ramesh feels fear, he knows the way out of it. A writer of sorts himself, Ramesh believes that such dialogues with learned people will end a tribal's fear. "Not just this, if a part of education is in Korku, we will be more confident. And yes, even I feel a formal organisation is necessary to end the fear of forest officials, police and the rest."

With that, the consensus for making a collective for development slowly gained traction. Armed with the researcher's encouragement and new information, a majority of the Korku tribals agreed they needed to come together to lead their development. All they need is guidance from informed people.

Ramesh went a step ahead and said, "Literature brings revolution. Ever since I started writing two years ago, I

have a dream for us. I wish for a weekly or monthly newsletter that will reach each person of Melghat."

With a date set for the next meeting Namdev, a Korku tribal, confidently addressed Bandu Sane, the director of Khoj. While gesturing to Lalita he said, "Bandu Bhau, you can rest now. Lalita can lead us."

Like the breeze rustling through the trees, Namdev had given voice to the winds of change blowing through the tribals. Quiet, resilient, and eager to move ahead. ■

Along with two journalist friends, Shatakshi Gawade is on a journey across India to tell



stories about environment, rights and culture. Before beginning this project (named Ekatra Bol), she worked for about two years at The Asian Age in New Delhi.

# Starting young

*A college initiative in Delhi, which has come up with innovative interventions to help the poor and underprivileged, shows how far small steps can go, says **Chhavi Arora**. Indeed, India's youth has its heart and intellect, in the right place.*

*"One person, one minute, an action each day. The possibility of change is limitless."*

**F**IRMLY believing in this adage, the young and enthusiastic college students from Enactus Delhi College of Arts and Commerce (DCAC) have taken the onus to help resolve society's predicaments using self-sustaining business models. Realising this potential of entrepreneurial action, the Enactus DCAC team has been running multiple projects with the vision of self reliance, poverty eradication, women empowerment, skill development and overall growth of the underprivileged.

## **Project Adhikaar and e-rickshaws**

With their Project Adhikaar, they aim to solve the problem of last mile connectivity while using an eco-friendly mode of transport – e-rickshaw. Their first pilot batch in Mayur Vihar consisted of all women drivers. This acted as a revolutionary step in the commutation sector, which has traditionally been male dominated, and they also received the benedictions of our honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Stand Up India event. With the subsequent batches, they replicated the model with different underprivileged communities like *safai karmacharis*, drug addicts, physically disabled people and more. Thus, instilling in them a new zeal towards life, and also empowering them financially with an income of upto INR 30,000. Further, to ensure the



**Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Stand Up India event, where he flagged Project Adhikaar**

**With their Project Adhikaar, they aim to solve the problem of last mile connectivity while using an eco-friendly mode of transport – e-rickshaw. Their first pilot batch in Mayur Vihar consisted of all women drivers. This acted as a revolutionary step in the commutation sector, which has traditionally been male dominated, and they also received the benedictions of our honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during the Stand Up India event.**

sustainability of the project, they aim to establish a driving school and set up solar charging stations.

## **Project Kaushal**

In their next initiative, Project Kaushal, the team realised that the employability of the growing young demography is an important factor in the economic development of the country, and the crisis of skill development has to be turned into an opportunity for growth. The magnitude of the problem has been analysed by numerous experts; for a country that adds 12 million people to its workforce every year, less than four per cent have ever received any formal training. Efforts have been made under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna by bringing government and private partners together, but the impact doesn't



reach the target audience as they hardly get to know about these initiatives. To solve this problem, Enactus DCAC came up with an innovative model of setting a Skill Incubation Centre, run by an entrepreneur, in villages and backward areas. The role of entrepreneurs will be to conduct various tests and awareness initiatives and send the people to relevant skills centres as per their interest and qualification. Thus acting as a regulator of the entire initiative. These people will then get trained and will be placed at various jobs.

### Project Adarsh Gram and change in the villages

With their third project, Project Adarsh Gram, they are keen to become a successful catalyst for change in the villages in far corners of Delhi-NCR. Enactus DCAC under the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojna and in collaboration with Member of Parliament Dr. Udit Raj has adopted a village, Khampur in GT Karnal Road, New Delhi. After conducting various need assessment surveys, they have derived multiple models for transforming the village into a model village. These include distribution of clean water through installing a purifier, establishing a skill incubation centre for



Many underprivileged communities have benefitted from Enactus DCAC projects

training and employment of rural youth, digitalisation of the village by training everyone to use e-wallets like Paytm and Bhim App etc., and setting up of cultural and activity resource centres to bring the people of the village together. The issue of waste management and sanitation was also tackled with innovative and low cost models like segregating and creating manure out of the waste, setting up of bio toilets

or eco-san toilets, which in turn also recharge groundwater, and the village is all set to become a tourist spot with its very own website under construction. This will also help in providing an income and boosting the morale of the people residing there.

In these socially backward areas where the underprivileged lead an undignified existence, surviving on the crumbs and leftovers, entrepreneurship can become a force of social transformation by making them economically independent and enabling them to lead respectful lives. Partnering with NGOs, corporates and government, the Enactus DCAC team has shown how society at large can benefit from the use of entrepreneurial action as a mode of development and self reliance. ■



A workshop by Enactus DCAC



Chhavi Arora is a student from Delhi College of Arts and Commerce. She, as part of Enactus DCAC, firmly believes in the power of social and collective work for bringing about change and development.

# The unsung

*The Indian epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana have several characters who have been marginalised in favour of the more central ones. A Bharatanatyam dance tribute focuses on two such characters and brilliantly brings out their role in the epics, says Shoma A. Chatterji.*

**M**ORE than a 100 years ago, Tagore had written several poems raising questions around the unethical representations of some characters in the great epics the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. These were in the form of long poems. The more famous ones are *Kabyer Upekshita (Ignored by the Great Epic)* that questioned why Veda Vyas ignored and marginalised Lakshmana's wife Urmila who was left behind in Ayodhya when Rama and Sita were banished and Lakshmana accompanied them. Another poignant poem is *Karna-Kunti Sambahad* which describes a fictitious dialogue between Karna and Kunti in which Karna persistently accuses his mother of having abandoned him to a life without a mother in favour of the Pandavas. *Patra Parichaya* comprises around eight to ten dancers who train in these epic characters. In March 2015, Usha R.K. presented *Krishna Premi* through a two-day thematic presentation at the Malleswaram Seva Sadan in Bangalore. The idea was to bring out the different shades of love for Krishna through the eyes of Satyabhama, Rukmini, Kuchela, Draupadi, Radha and Meera.

Today, in a completely changed environment where cinema has practically overwhelmed all forms of performing art, *Patra Parichaya* appears like a bright ray of hope at the end of a darkening tunnel that instills a fear of whether the next generation will ever know about the injustices meted out to some of these epic characters while



Anupa Lahiry performed *Ahalya*, a complex character

iconising the others. "The idea is to not only tell their stories but also to do a character sketch through dance. For instance, how does Karna stand while talking, or what facial expressions does

Draupadi bear while confronting Krishna after the Kauravas try to disrobe her?" says art consultant Usha R.K., who has conceptualised and directed the recent performance of two excellent dancers of Bharatanatyam in Kolkata recently.

**The characters were Soorpanakha performed by Dakshina Vaidyanathan and Ahalya performed by Anupa Lahiry. Dakshina is the disciple of Gurus Saroja Vaidyanathan and Rama Vaidyanathan, and is a third-generation Bharat Natyam dancer.**

## A statue of stone and a cut nose

The characters were Soorpanakha performed by Dakshina Vaidyanathan and Ahalya performed by Anupa Lahiry. Dakshina is the disciple of Gurus Saroja Vaidyanathan and Rama Vaidyanathan, and is a third-generation Bharat Natyam dancer. Anupa Lahiry is the disciple of Guru Chitra Visweswaran. The two have been working through these two characters under the guidance and supervision of Usha for months together, and performing on different platforms across the country.



Enacting characters through dance was not easy. Take the character of Ahalya, the wife of sage Gautama Maharishi who was believed to have been seduced by Indra, king of the gods. She was cursed by her husband for infidelity, and finally liberated from the curse by Ram. New Delhi-based dancer Arupa Lahiry, performed this character. She explained, “Ahalya was a very strong-minded woman who knew what she was doing. The dance tells of her beauty, strong will and her emotions when she was being turned into a stone as per the curse.” Usha was inspired to conceive this piece on Ahalya from a Tagore poem.

Most of us are not aware that Ahalya was blessed, a *brahma gyani*— who knew exactly what shape her life was going to take; she knew that this handsome man was not her husband Rishi Gautama but was Lord Indra himself. She hesitated and pondered and thought for a long while whether she should allow him the liberty of taking her and finally, surrendered, also knowing fully what will happen to her when her husband came back after his bath in the river. Cohabiting with Indra therefore was her choice, not a compulsion or a twist of fate. The interpretation is that Ahalya froze and became stone-like when her husband came back and simply closed and shut herself to the world around her. She looked within and waited for the *mukti* only Rama would give her.

Dakshina’s performance was not a simple retelling of the *Ramayana*; her version of Soorpanakha depicts the many shades of the woman — the breach of trust by her brother, Ravana, who had her husband Dushtabuddhi killed because Ravana felt the former was stronger than he was, the emptiness she feels after her husband’s death, and the strong desire for revenge. “However, according to me, she had no physical interest in Ram whatsoever, as is usually interpreted

from the epic,” says Vaidyanathan. The transformation of Meenakshi (a girl with eyes like a fish) who played along with her dear brother Ravana as a child and grew up to have a very happy life with her husband to Soorpanakha, the woman with sharp nails was essayed by Dakshina with a beautiful blend of *nritta* and *nritya* in Bharatnatyam classic style. The enactment points out that Soorpanakha’s provocation of Rama to attack and hurt her was her manipulation to know whether Rama had the power and the strength to defeat Ravana or not.

**The enactment points out that Soorpanakha’s provocation of Rama to attack and hurt her was her manipulation to know whether Rama had the power and the strength to defeat Ravana or not.**

These two performances stood out as voices of ethical enquiry into the treatment and portrayal of some women characters in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Two among the many are Soorpanakha and Ahalya. The performances by the two young dancers, Dakshina and Arupa demonstrate how deeply these two young women have imbibed the characters in their changed perspectives in order to encapsulate these changes through their dance performance that is as mesmerising as it is an illustration of grace, femininity, expertise and commitment.

“Over the years since our inception, we have brought forth many characters that the epics either projected negatively or marginalised or oppressed. All this



**Dakshina Vaidyanathan excelled at depicting the various nuances of Soorpanakha**

has been realised through different classical dance forms including Kathak and Kuchipudi,” Usha, the brain behind the concept said, “This is a brilliant platform for these youngsters to get recognised. Youngsters these days rarely delve into the details as they tend to make a fleeting glance of it. But here, the junior performers had to do their share of research from the *puranas* to understand the essence of the character and portray all the details with utmost efficiency. It is nothing but re-living of the ancient format,” she added. ■

**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.**



# The in-betweens

The play 'Shikhandi' which was performed at Mumbai's NCPA Theatre recently, sliced open the gender question to expose a cross-section of beliefs and stereotypes.

**Nikhil Katara** reviews this play written and directed by Faezeh Jalali.

*There lies Bhishma between Sky and Earth,  
his soul rejected from clouds and dirt,  
hanging in-between,  
a deathly dream,  
it was not night nor was it day,  
on the ninth day of battle exactly mid-way,  
killed by a man nor woman he,  
his death set her soul free,  
Shikhandi-Amba-Man-Woman rejoiced,  
On her chariot so elegantly poised*

(Excerpt from 'Shikhandi', written and directed by Faezeh Jalali)

TIME is intricate in Hindu mythology. The universe passes through many cycles, a basic cycle is called a '*kalpa*' which is a day in the life of 'Brahma'. This day is equivalent to about 4320 billion earthly years, Brahma's night is as long as his day. Within each *kalpa* are 14 *manvantaras* (secondary cycles), which contain 71 *mahayugas*. Every *mahayuga* in turn consists of four 'Yugas', namely Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. It is said that the time we live in is the Kaliyuga, which began in the year 3102 BCE. This same year was also believed to be the year of the Mahabharata. In the entire landscape of time and its complex cycles, the Mahabharata occurs for eighteen days, and within those 18 days 'Itihasa' (History) is made. But where does 'Itihasa' truly initiate? Did the war of Mahabharata last only 18 days? Or had it begun earlier? Was it a war fought by men or women? Faezeh Jalali attempts to answer these questions through her tongue-in-cheek comedy *Shikhandi*.

The story of *Shikhandi* doesn't start at birth, but begins in a previous life as 'Amba'. Amba was rejected by the



A still from the play *Shikhandi*

celibate 'Bhishma', played by Nikhil Murali, after she proposed to marry him. The humiliated Amba does severe penance to bring down lord Shiva and asks for a boon to kill Bhishma. Shiva accepts Amba's request but reserves it for her future incarnation. 'Amba' is born as 'Shikhandi' to Drupada, but meets a Yaksha in the forest and transforms into a man. The Kurukshetra battle field is where Shikhandi meets Bhishma again. But since Bhishma was sworn to never fight a woman in his life, his defeat is inevitable. He was killed by no man or woman, but by Shikhandi who can be identified with neither or both. The death of Bhishma would come when he would decide it, but his defeat on the field was death itself.

## Tackling the gender question

The play by writer-director Faezeh

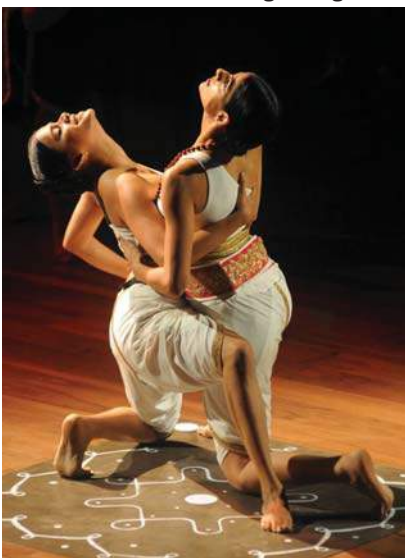
Jalali brings forth the gender question and its multifaceted nature. Hegemonic masculinity and its contorted principles are stark and bare in the form of characters like Bhishma. Where does it all start? Is the entire war of Kurukshetra just genders at play? Does Bhishma die because of Shikhandi or is he murdered by his own false ideas of masculinity? Bhishma's death brings the death of patriarchy with the hands of all the compound patterns of gender into one, Shikhandi.

The set of the play also reveals the many-sided patterns of gender. The floor is laid with intricate designs of 'kolam'. A *kolam* is known by various names around India. It is called *rangoli* in Maharashtra, *hase* in Kannada, and *muggulu* in Andhra Pradesh. A *kolam* is essentially made up of dots, lines and other shapes. These dots and lines are



linked to each other making symmetrical designs. But as the numbers of dots increase, the patterns that emerge out of them are different and diverse. No two *kolams* are alike, and though some might think that these patterns are chaos, they are not. Each *kolam* has its own beauty and its own identity.

The play's patterns in gender are as complex as the *kolams*. One such character which brings forth the gender question is Draupadi, played by Shrishti Shrivastav. She is no gentle damsel, but is full of rebellion, expletives and brute power. All that we embody as maleness takes shape in Draupadi. Her inability to perform the role of her gender is highly evident and its confusion raises poignant questions in Shikhandi's mind. Drupada, again played by Nikhil Murali, heightens this confusion by drilling down stereotypes as answers to Shikhandi's confusion. Another character which poses the gender question is the Yaksha 'Sthuna'. He exchanges his masculinity with Shikhandi for the need to become female. The Yaksha's audacity lies in the fact that he would challenge all power structures in the need to achieve the pattern of gender he was not born with. In a way, the Yaksha makes his own *kolam* to achieve a design of gender.



**The play reveals many patterns of gender**

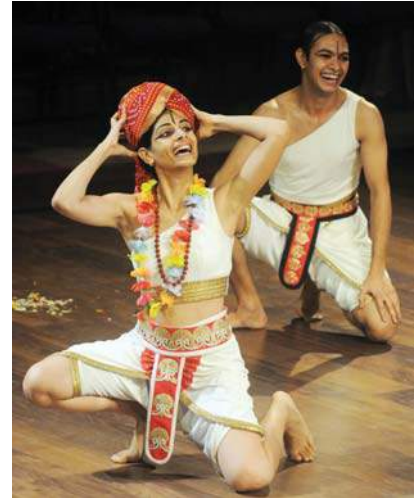
Sthuna, played by Vikrant Dhote, will challenge even the Yaksha King (Karan Desai) to become female. The gender transformation is reminiscent of Eddie Redmayne's performance in *The Danish Girl* where Einar Magnus Andreas Wegener undergoes the first sex reassignment surgery to transform into Lili Elbe.

The biggest questions are raised by the protagonist 'Shikhandi', played by Mahnaz Damania. Her confusion in the simplistically gender divided world makes the struggle visible. Her past of Amba and her future of Shikhandi push and pull her present furiously. The power of Drupada doesn't help either. He indoctrinates her with the idea that she is a man, which makes another distinct *kolam* of man-woman. The entire community calls her strange words 'Goy', 'Birl', 'Bog', 'Girb', and the predictable 'Hijra', 'Chakka', and 'Sixer', because no one can understand her *kolam*.

### The other highlights

The other interesting roles played are by the narrators of this tale, Tushar Pandey and Meher-Acharia-Dar. They raise many questions about identity and have witty retaliations to contemporary political issues. Their own genders are questionable because does a narrator really have one?

The play is well supported by the experience of Arghya Lahiri's light design, which brought the realm alive. The NCPA Experimental Theatre stood devoid of stage, and the divide between performer and audience was vanquished, another binary was broken for the in-betweens. There is live music reminiscent of BR Chopra's 'Mahabharata' which provides the necessary tempo to keep the pace but the fundamental unit of this performance are the actors, who encompass the space with their bodies. The energy of the performance is high and it stays



**Shikhandi is a fresh revisiting of Mahabharata**

up there for the entire length of ninety minutes.

*Shikhandi* has a palette of its own. The myriad *kolams* that merge in time are not true only for one generation, one 'yuga', one 'manvantara' or one 'kalpa', but are true for time as such. The patterns bring forth permutations and combinations of humanity, which cannot simply be divided into male and female, right and wrong, good and bad, white and black. There are in-betweens and there are greys. The simplistic divisions of gender roles have been a part of our lives since the onset. But this fresh revisiting of the 'Mahabharata' takes us to a time past and showcases an 'itihasa' where gender was as fluid as the Ganges. ■

**Nikhil Katara initiated his journey as a writer with his own production titled *The Unveiling*, a science fiction drama in the year 2011. To strengthen critical learning he initiated an MA programme in 'Philosophy' at the Mumbai university with optionals in Kant, Greek Hellenistic Philosophy, Feminism, Logic and Existentialism. His play *Yatagarasu* opened at Prithvi Theatre**



**in 2016. He is a consultant facilitator at J's paradigm (a novel performance arts institute) and writes book reviews for the Free Press Journal.**

# Keep Calm and Dance

*Technology may have altered what kids today experience by way of childhood, but their insecurities and fears remain much the same. Himali Kothari reviews the play 'Keep Calm and Dance' which deals with timeless issues faced by kids since generations.*

**S** EVEN students are seated on chairs clustered on the stage. Dressed in *khaki* pants, shirts, pink for the girls and yellow for the boys, and striped ties, they have their school bags slung on their chairs and books in their hands. Their eyes are fixed on a vague spot above the audience, presumably where a black board would be.

The teacher strides across the length of the stage. "All gerunds are verbal nouns but all verbal nouns are not gerunds," he drones. The students continue to stare at the 'blackboard'. As the teacher expounds on gerunds and verbs in a tone that is as straight as the flat line on a heart monitor, the students' eyes glaze over and droop.

## Age-old experiences

The audience titters. In a mixed audience of the very young, the young and the not-so-young, the scene invokes in each one the memory of a boring class and an uninspiring teacher. We often reminisce about our school days, the teachers we loved and those we dreaded, the classmates who topped the class and those who lagged behind. There were teachers' pets and the mischief-makers, aspiring sport stars and thespian talents, the quiet ones and the popular ones. For many of us, our school days were the best days of our lives. For some, passage of time has lent them a sepia tone, sharpened the happy moments and blurred the sad ones. And then there are those for whom every dawn brought with it the dread for school. *Keep Calm and Dance*



*Keep Calm and Dance* raises some universal issues

draws our attention to those kids.

The story revolves around the lives of seven classmates and how their insecurities borne out of peer pressure and societal expectations afflict the most impressionable years of their lives. Each 'kid' has his own distinct problem. There is Shiv whose suppressed anger causes him to lash out at those closest to him including his mother and best friend Zara. The fashionista Mini obsesses to achieve a size zero figure at the cost of her health. At the other end of the spectrum is Madhuri, nicknamed Hippo by her classmates. She is ridiculed for her size at school and at home nagged by her mother to lose weight. Monty loves to dance but it is not a passion which his father approves of. And there is Roshan who struggles with Math and wishes for someone to explain it to him in a way that would make sense to him. The teachers at school are stuck in their ways, going about the lessons

in the same fashion that they have been for years. At home, the parents' demands for excellence further burdens their drooping shoulders. Add to that the pressure to match the standards accepted by their peers. It seems like nothing could go right for this bunch.

Hope comes to them in the form of a new library teacher, Ms. Chats. She sees their insecurities but also notices the talents that are unique to each one of them. She tells them the story of Yatagarasu, a three-legged mythical Japanese bird whose three legs stand for courage, wisdom and compassion. The story hits home and connects with each of the kids. As the story progresses, the characters uncover their strengths and weaknesses and learn to battle their insecurities. They also recognise the worth of their friends and come to rely on each other for help. As the play heads towards the end, one cannot but help root for these underdogs. Will



they overpower their demons? Will they discover that self buried strength deep within? Will they soar like the Yatagarasu?

### Music and movement

What stands out through the duration of the play is the innovative use of movement to tell the story. Set to foot-tapping music, a range of dance styles like Hip-hop, Contemporary, Funk, Jazz and Bharatanatyam have been effectively used to create an engaging narrative. Actor-director Yuki Elias has drawn from her experience of performing in prestigious venues across the globe to keep the audience engaged in the movement-driven narrative of *Keep Calm and Dance*. Previously she has directed a sci-fi absurd drama, *Charge*, and also created and performed *The Elephant in the Room*, a solo act about Ganapati looking for his old boy head.

Writer Nikhil Katara's first play, *The Unveiling* which opened at the 2011 Kala Ghoda Arts Festival was a sci-fi drama. With *Keep Calm...* the writer takes a stab at real-life scenarios and weaves a relatable storyline. Besides writing for the stage, Nikhil also reviews books for the *Free Press Journal* and facilitates a drama class for young adults at Bombay-based J's Paradigm. Currently, he is working on his first novel. The play is produced by J Productions, which has been making its presence felt in the performance arena in recent years. Its director and founder Jhelum Gosalia is the founder of a performing arts academy, J's Paradigm,

which strives to create an experience of performing arts for its students. The academy prepares its students for both the Trinity and LAMDA examinations.

Through dance and comedy, *Keep Calm and Dance* raises some pertinent points about growing-up and the associated pains. It makes

us reflect on our school days and identify the Shiv or Zara or Madhuri or Monty among our classmates. And perhaps identify one within us. What make the theme universal is that the nature of the issues that it addresses have remained the same whether one was in a classroom yesterday or thirty years ago. In fact, they go beyond classrooms and schools, and extend into the workspace and social context. What starts with the word 'Hippo' or 'Fatso' turns into bodyshaming and obsessing over a perceived perfect size manifests into life-threatening food disorders. Bullies from school who remain unchecked find different mediums to continue their bullying ways. Learning disabilities breed low self-esteem which often persists in adult life. Many of the issues we face in school continue to stay with us long after, and infiltrate various realms of our adult lives.

The play does not delve into some more topical challenges like internet bullying, caste and social exclusion, gender and



The play is set to foot-tapping music and a range of dance styles

sexual discrimination, etc. But, the timelessness and universality of the issues it raises make the lessons applicable. All mediums of performing arts provide a mirror to the times we live in. The dynamic nature of theatre and the instant chemistry between the creators and the audience elevates its status in context of the social impact it can carry. Effective theatre should not be limited to entertain its audience. It must reside in the heads and hearts of its audience, forcing them to challenge set perceptions and provoke change in their environment. *Keep Calm...* chooses to deliver its message through song and dance, and therein lies its impact. ■

**Himali Kothari dabbled in various professions before she turned to her childhood hobby of writing. Since then, she has written on travel, business and finance, food, design, architecture and general interest topics. She also conducts creative writing**



**workshops for old and young adults at Xavier's Institute of Communication, Mumbai. What she loves most about writing is the opportunity to express herself without any interruptions.**



Nikhil Katara (left), writer, and Yuki Elias, director

# Tracking the budget

*A strict monitoring and tracking of budgets through the year is essential. Budgets shouldn't just be highly-publicised annual events.*



**M**OST of the public discussion on budgets is concentrated around the presentation of the Union Budget, and to a lesser extent the budgets of various states. But should we not look more closely at how these budgets are actually spent? Consider the following facts, all based on official data:

\*There are very high hopes from a national scheme to protect traditional wisdom in agriculture. This scheme is called the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana. During the last financial year 2016-17 ₹ 297 crore was allocated for this scheme. However, this was later revised to just ₹ 120 crore, less than half of the original allocation.

\*In the budget for 2016-17, an allocation of ₹ 1,700 crore was made for the National Food Security Mission. When the revised estimates were prepared, this was cut down to ₹1,280 crore.

\*The original allocation of ₹ 5,400 crore for the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana was cut to ₹ 3,550 crore in the revised estimates.

\* The *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* scheme is a high priority scheme of the government for protecting and educating the girl child. In the budget for 2016-17 ₹100 crore was allocated for this scheme, but it is surprising to know that later this was cut to just ₹ 43 crore or less than half of the original estimate.

\*The scheme for the creation of a national platform of unorganised workers and providing identification numbers to them had at that time attracted a lot of attention, and in fact a sum of ₹ 144 crore was allocated for this in the 2016-17 budget. But budget was also revised and reduced to less than ₹ one crore!

\*Another important scheme of social security called the 'Swavalamban' scheme was allotted a sum of ₹ 209 crore in Union budget for 2016-17, but in the revised estimates this was reduced to nil!

\*The Atal Pension Yojana has been another highly publicised

social security scheme. In the 2016-17 budget, a sum of ₹ 200 crore had been allocated for this scheme, but while preparing the revised estimates, this was cut to just ₹40 crore.

\* In the budget for 2016-17, a sum of ₹50 crore had been allocated for creating awareness and publicity of two other social security schemes – the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Beema Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana.

However, this allocation was reduced to just ₹ 5 crore in the revised estimates. These are just a few examples of how significantly the revised estimates can differ from the original estimates in the context of several important schemes.

In the examples that we have given above we have concentrated on those schemes which have more relevance for rural people and for weaker sections and have been taken from the original and revised estimates for the Union Budget for the previous financial year i.e., financial year 2016-17.

However, a similar trend can be seen in some state budgets also. For example, recently there was a big debate about why there had been very high levels of unutilised budget in Maharashtra in important areas concerning rural people and weaker sections in the context of the state budget for the financial year 2016-17.

It was pointed out that the overall budget utilisation level was around just 46 percent or so while in the case of some important departments the utilisation levels were as low as 15 percent. While it is possible that the entire year was not fully covered in these pre-budget estimates, but still these statistics are quite shocking.

Therefore, there is a clear need for more careful tracking of budgets and expenditures throughout the year. There should be particular care to ensure that the allocations made for weaker sections and social sectors are utilised properly and adequately. To make this possible there should be greater transparency in matters concerning budget and expenditure particularly in the context of social sector and welfare of weaker sections. ■



# The cauldron of despair?

*India is a seething cauldron, where recipes of many politics merge and separate. As do recipes of economics. Who will stir this very interesting mix?*



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

It's a recipe undoubtedly made in India. The ingredients include:

1) Gods, one extra-large size and more than one medium to small, plenty of romanticised history, mix with paste of mythology. 2) A nation preferably large, resource rich, well populated. 3) Small social sector, and preferably frozen spending, particularly on poverty alleviation, public education and public health care. 4) Deeply hierarchical society, squeezed dry if needed, pound to remove any traces of sticky egalitarianism. 5) Put a band around liberty, soak in nationalism. Preparation of ingredients takes the longest time, possibly 25-30 years. The process is pretty straightforward thereafter; keep on steady flame of growth, keep adding liberalised rules and regulations, stir in vigorously and increase flame, keep removing public sector undertakings as they rise, watch till the classes separate, the bottom sticks to the base or close above it, and the top rises rapidly to near overflow. Adjust flame and manage the content, scrape the bottom occasionally to prevent some of it from burning too much. As the mixture becomes volatile, stir in spiced history, mythology, nationalism. All the time, take precautions that contents are not uncontrollable. Use technology if and as needed.

The passage of the Finance Bill/ Budget 2017 is the formal end of a change and is a landmark in itself. It discards any pretense of liberal, democratic debate in favour of control. The Bill has 189 clauses, but 55 of them have nothing to do with taxation. Neither are those 55 clauses consequential to the other clauses of the Finance Bill concerned with taxation. These questionable clauses have been sneaked into the Finance Bill because the Bill can be passed without approval from Rajya Sabha, where the ruling party does not have a majority. One of the clauses smuggled in reduces the rights of the income tax assessee to defend himself against arbitrary actions of tax officials with retrospective effect from 1962.

The income tax authority merely has to have a reason to believe that there has been an evasion; the reason does

not have to be disclosed to the assessee. Basically, tax hounds can be set against anyone for political control. The tribunals that judge the case will also consist of appointees of the government. Next is the design to mop up political funds for greater political control, a donor may now purchase bonds and only the issuing bank(s) will know the name of the donor/purchaser. Without being identified, the donor can donate the bonds to one or more political parties. The limit of such donations from corporations has also been uncapped. Pay or face the hounds?

How does national purification project that began as demonetisation end up in legitimising more corporate control of political parties? Its record in mopping up black money is meagre, only ₹2,300 crores through its second tax compliance window post-demonetisation. It's dislocation of huge informal economy, workers, and petty producers are officially unrecorded. We are told that it has not cast even a tiny shadow on the GDP, stock market, and corporate profits. The social consensus in 2014 after all was in favour of a strong, centralised power structure that cleans up the swamp to deliver development alias growth. This growth is desired by everyone because it will create jobs to eradicate poverty. After all, hadn't the almost double digit growth of the past decade reduced poverty from about one third of the population to one fourth? At least, that's what the Planning Commission said before it was disbanded.

Many economists felt the only thing that was slowing growth was too much democracy of the kind that involved endless debates, protected tribal forest land, environment, asymmetric information flows, incomes and consumption subsidies for poor people, high interest rates and taxes. These must be removed. The separation of reality and mythologies of various kinds now stand completely annulled, we find ourselves in the high noon of Indian capitalism. Where one percent of the population owns almost 60% of the wealth, and the largest pool of absolutely poor in the world exist – but vegetarianism and Gods win elections. ■



## FOCUS

## Beat the heat with desi drinks!



Summer days are here! It's time to have some fun in the sun. Playing in the sun also means that you are going to sweat a lot. The human body loses fluids while sweating. That is why one feels so thirsty. And to quench your thirst, India has many traditional summer drinks to offer. Even though the markets are flooded with soft drinks and *sherbets*, nothing beats the heat like these top desi drinks that are not only refreshing and tasty but also nutritious.

### Coconut water

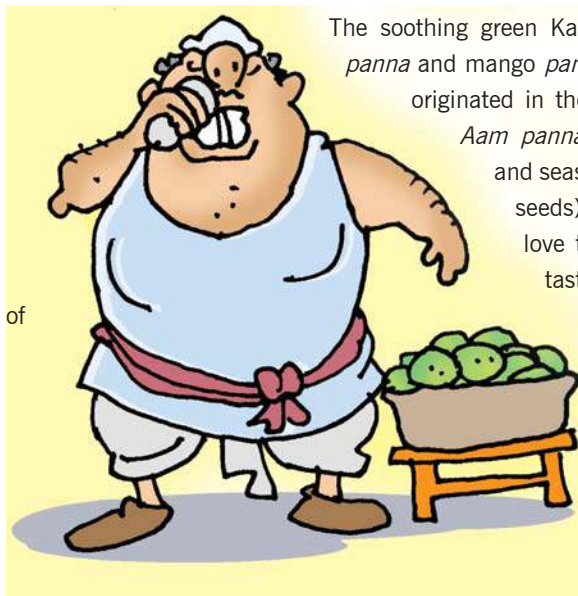
Coconut vendors in Madiwala locality of Bangalore celebrated India's World Cup victory by distributing coconut water to passers-by for free! The sweet tasting, clear liquid found inside a coconut is a good choice when you are exhausted because it hydrates your body by replacing lost minerals and salts. It is essentially fat free and contains natural salts, sugars and vitamins including potassium, magnesium and calcium. It has multiple health benefits — it cleanses the digestive tract, cures malnourishment, boosts the immune system and kills intestinal worms. It can be used as an intravenous solution as it mixes easily with blood and its electrolyte profile is somewhat similar to that of human blood plasma. During World War II, doctors would directly inject coconut water into the veins of patients who suffered severe loss of blood. It is not surprising then that coconut water is called 'the fluid of life'!



### Kairi Panna

The soothing green Kairi panna is also known as *aam panna* and *mango panna*. This drink is believed to have originated in the western region of Maharashtra.

*Aam panna* is prepared with raw mangoes and seasoned with black salt, jeera (cumin seeds), sugar and mint leaves. People love this drink for its sweet and tangy taste. Kairi panna is a good source of vitamin C, B1 and B2. It helps to prevent heat stroke and indigestion. Kairi panna flavoured with Wasabi (Japanese horseradish known for its strong spicy flavour) is a popular item on menu in some hotels in India.



### Thandai

The name itself is so cooling! Thandai is a tasty, energy-boosting drink. It helps to replenish fluids that are lost from the body due to sweating. Milk, almonds (*badam*), poppy seeds (*khus-khus*) and saffron are some of the ingredients in this drink which is quite popular in Rajasthan. The *badam* in the drink ensures you get a good dose of vitamin E! Thandai is traditionally prepared during Holi and Mahashivratri. During these festivals people also prepare *thandai* with *bhang*.





## SPOTLIGHT

Mother's Day is celebrated on May 14.

### God vs Mother

THE battle was going badly for them so the sergeant ordered his troops to withdraw. One soldier however was left behind in the trench.

When the sergeant was informed he snapped: "Never mind one man as long as the squadron is safe." The lieutenant said: "Never mind the squadron as long as we can save our platoon." The captain was ready to ditch the platoon to save the rest of the company. The colonel was keen on saving the rest of the regiment, the brigadier on saving the rest of the brigade while the general was only interested in saving his army.

The leader of the country thundered: "The army does not matter as long as we can save the world." And God said: "Never mind the world as long as the Universe is safe."

"The Universe doesn't matter," said the mother of the soldier left behind in the trench, "as long as I get my son safely home."

— A story told by Alfred Polgar

### Mother's day quiz



1. Rabindranath Tagore

Name the mothers of these famous people.



4. Abdul Kalam



2. Abraham Lincoln



3. Sachin Tendulkar



5. Jawaharlal Nehru

Answer:

1. Sarada Devi 2. Nancy Hanks 3. Rajni  
4. Ashiamma 5. Swaroop Rani

## Animal mothers

**Most animal mothers nurture their young ones until they are ready to start life on their own.**

No matter whether she is building a nest or foraging for food, the mother orangutan will carry her infant in her arms all the time until it is a year old.

Dolphin mothers nurse their young ones for up to ten years. They even help less experienced mothers to look after their young. Elephant mothers care for their calves even after they have grown up. Mothers and daughters have a close relationship throughout their lives.

For the first ten months, a tigress does not leave her cubs alone except when she goes to drink water or to hunt food. The cubs remain with her until they are able to fend for themselves. Most snakes stay close to their eggs to protect them but the Indian Python mother also incubates them. She coils her 9-metre long body around the eggs, which may number a hundred or so. She then keeps on twitching her body muscles to warm her eggs.

A mother hen begins nurturing her chicks even before they are hatched. She clucks softly to her unborn chicks, who chirp back from their shells. Once the chicks hatch, the mother uses her wings to shield the babies. She is so

protective of her newly hatched chicks that she will not leave them even if a fire were to break out!

The Great Indian Hornbill lays her eggs in the hollow of a tree and then seals it, breaking out of the nest only after her eggs hatch. This is to ensure that the eggs are safe from snakes and marauding monkeys. The mother crocodile carries her babies in her mouth to protect them from predators like storks, monkeys and monitor lizards. The affection of a cow for her calf is so strong that if a mother is separated from her offspring, she will hurdle fences and travel miles to find it.



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## **VICE-ADMIRAL S.B. SOMAN**

An honourable and brave Admiral (1913-1995)

**V**ICE-Admiral S. B. Soman was born in Belgaum on 30 March 1913, and was commissioned as sub-lieutenant in August 1934. During his training in UK, he had taken an international pilot's license in his spare time. In World War II, he served as First Lieutenant, and later as Commanding Officer on HMIS Cornwallis in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. He took part in the attack on Port Berbera and capture of the Italian submarine Galileo off Aden.

In October 1949, he was appointed captain of the ship, INS Jumna. He was appointed Flag Officer commanding the Indian Fleet on 19 April 1961, and led the Fleet from INS Mysore in the Goa operations, and capture of Anjadip fortress. In a bold action, he fired 200 rounds on Portuguese ship Albuquerque, which ran aground. It was floated, towed to Mumbai and scrapped. The reported presence of a British submarine did not deter him. Lt. Bhupinder Singh ran up to the fort in Diu and hoisted the National Flag. On 5 June 1962, he took over as the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS).

Pakistan launched Operation Desert Hawk in 1965 to claim territory in Kutch where the boundary had not been demarcated. The suggestion of Air Marshal Asghar Khan of Pakistan not to participate in the Kutch battle was accepted by the Chief of Air Staff of India after approval by the Government. India was unfavourably placed for a war in that sector. The battle was left only to the Army.

The aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and other ships were under heavy maintenance in preparation of the annual exercise in the Bay of Bengal. Vikrant had disembarked her air squadrons and was on way to Mumbai for docking. She was ordered to sail back and embark the air squadrons when Pakistan intruded into Kutch. By the time she was ready, cease fire had been agreed to through the efforts of the Prime Minister (PM) of UK. Vikrant was then sent for docking. Due to the delay in docking, Vikrant was not available for subsequent operations.

The Indian Fleet sailed for the Bay of Bengal in June

1965. Pakistan had sent a large number of infiltrators into Kashmir, and the Pakistan Navy had carried out a number of exercises in the Arabian Sea in July-August. Yet, there was no alert by the Indian Intelligence Agencies. A major war erupted between India and Pakistan when Pakistan launched an attack in Akhnur sector on 1 September 1965. Keen to discharge his responsibility, Soman issued a signal on 6 September to all naval units to be ready to neutralise any misadventure by Pakistan Navy. He was asked to cancel the signal as no war had been declared. It caused him great embarrassment. A letter was received from the

Ministry of Defence directing that the Navy was not to take any offensive action at sea and not to operate north of the latitude of Porbandar.

Soman met the Defence Minister and the PM to seek a revision of the orders, but to no avail. The PM told him plainly that he had no options. When Soman asked for permission to call on the Supreme Commander, he was told "No, you do not have to see him." L.K. Jha, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister has clarified that "The feeling was strong that if we could contain the Pakistan force perhaps it would be wiser not to involve the navy." The surprising point

is that such a decision was taken without consultations with the navy chief. We can understand the demoralisation faced by the navy when Pakistan navy bombarded Dwarka and could not be punished due to the restraint on operating beyond Porbander.

Not happy with dependence only on UK for equipment, he established contacts with Russia for procurement of ships, and encouraged indigenous ship building by Mazagon Docks and Calcutta Garden Reach Workshop. He took retirement on 3 March 1966 to enable Admiral A.K. Chatterji to succeed him. In 1966, he was conferred with the honorary rank of Admiral. He passed away on 8 February 1995. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)





# KISHORI AMONKAR

Brilliant Hindustani vocalist (1932-2017)

**F**OR the legendary Kishori Amonkar, the journey was never easy. As daughter and disciple of the great vocalist Mogubai Kurdikar, expectations from listeners were always high. Her female seniors included Kesarbai Kerkar, Hirabai Badodekar and Gangubai Hangal, whereas her contemporaries were Prabha Atre, Girija Devi and Malini Rajurkar. A few years after Amonkar gained huge appreciation in the late 1960s, Parween Sultana and Veena Sahasrabudhe made a mark.

Yet, Kishori Amonkar came to be known as the very epitome of, and perfect role model for Hindustani classical female vocalism. Her death on 3 April 2017 at age 84 marks the end of an era, and a huge loss to India's musical scenario.

What set Amonkar apart was that she had her own vision. Though rooted in the Atrauli-Jaipur *gharana* founded by Ustad Alladiya Khan, she slowly desired to imbibe the tenets of other schools. So besides her mother Kurdikar's Jaipur-Atrauli purism, she took guidance from Anwar Hussain Khan of the Agra *gharana*, Anjanibai Malpekar of the Bhendi Bazaar school, Sharadchandra Arolkar of the Gwalior tradition and Goan stalwart Balkrishnabuwa Parwatkar.

"There are no *gharanas*, there's only music. Every *raga* is a living entity, and every note has its own fragrance and colour," she would say. Some of her renditions, both recorded and performed live, remain eternal favourites. Bhoopali, Bageshree, Yaman, Jaunpuri and variants of Todi were often requested. She also regularly presented Jaipur-Atrauli specialities like Bahaduri Todi, Kukubh Bilawal, Lalit Pancham and Loor Sarang.

She was proficient with *thumri*, Marathi *abhangs* and Kannada *bhajans* dedicated to Sri Raghavendra, and often catered to audience requests like *Babul Mora*, *Avagha Rang Ek Zhala* and *Mhaaro Pranaam*. Her only film attempts were *Geet Gaya Patharon Ne* and *Drishhti*.

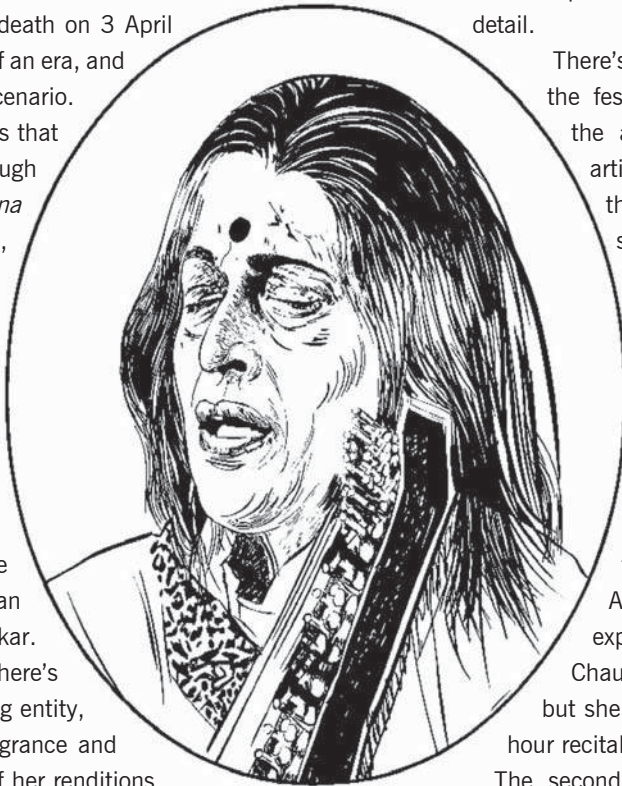
There was some criticism, of course, mainly from purists who felt she took a while before settling, often clearing her

throat initially, or from those who weren't accustomed to sudden changes in *gharana* rules. She was also known for her moods and temperament, sometimes stopping in between a recital because she wasn't happy with the behaviour of somebody in the audience. This writer had the privilege of interviewing Amonkar twice, and meeting her at events on a few occasions. The first interview was before she received the Samrat Sangeet Academy Legend award at the Shanta Durga Temple, Goa, in 1997. Her first instinct was to find out about my awareness of Hindustani classical music, and thus asked a few technical questions. However, she soon got into detail.

There's an interesting story about the festival. Amonkar was to receive the award first and was the only artist scheduled after that. After the function, she suddenly said she was unwell, and not in a position to sing. The crowd was naturally disappointed and the organisers were in a fix. So they asked a young local singer present there to give a performance. On the final day, master flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia was to close the festival a little after midnight. Amonkar suddenly came in and expressed her readiness to sing. Chaurasia continued playing till 4am, but she waited, and then gave a three-hour recital.

The second time was before the release of her Sony Music album *Sampradaya* in 2001. She was in a good mood, and happily explained her approach to music and her desire for perfection. "To express music faithfully, you have to be very intense. Unless you are intense from within, you may not get the right feeling. So your effort will fall short of perfection. Unless you sing a note correctly, you cannot reveal its nature," she said. The world called her *Gaan Saraswati*. I would add she was *aan*, *baan*, *shaan*, *daan*, *taan Saraswati*. ■

**Narendra Kusnur has been a music critic and columnist for over two decades. He has also been involved with the music industry as a label manager with EMI Music India, and as a corporate trainer with Reliance TimeOut books and music stores.**



## E. AHAMED

Politician and humanist (1937-2017)

**E**DAPPAKATH Ahamed was born on 29 April 1937, in a wealthy merchant family in Kannur, and after completing his graduation at the Brennen College in Thalassery, went on to complete his Law Degree at the Government Law College in Thiruvananthapuram. After practising in the district court in Thalassery and the Kerala High Court in Kochi for a few years, he also worked as a reporter for a regional daily named *Chandrika*, where he functioned later as an Executive Director till his death. Later, he plunged into mainstream politics as a member of the Indian Union Muslim League and this set the stage for an active political career that lasted several decades till his death on 1 February 2017, after he took ill during the Presidential address to the Joint Session of Parliament.

Ahamed was a sitting member of the Lok Sabha representing the Malappuram constituency in Kerala. The late leader was first elected to the Kerala Legislative Assembly in 1967, and thereafter also won elections to the assembly held in 1977, 1980, 1982 and 1987. He had a very productive stint as the Founder Chairman of the Kerala State Rural Development Board during which a great deal of fillip was given to rural growth and the development of agriculture. Ahamed was also the Executive Chairman of the Kerala Small Scale Industries Development Corporation and Municipal Chairman, Corporation Council in Kannur. His performance as the Industries Minister of Kerala between 1982-1987 was also characterised by an all-round development of the industrial sector and several new greenfield projects were kick started.

Ahamed was elected to the Lower House as many as seven times in 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. So immense was his popularity in his native Kerala that he was successively elected to Parliament and was an MP for 25 years. Ahamed was Minister of State for External Affairs in the Dr. Manmohan Singh Cabinet between 2004 and 2009, and also assumed charge of the Railways portfolio between April 2009 and January 2011; he was also given additional charge as Minister for HRD (Human Resource Development) between July 2011 and October 2012.



In his several stints as a parliamentarian, Ahamed was a member of several parliamentary committees pertaining to External Affairs, Railways, Civil Aviation, Tourism, Public Undertakings, Science & Technology, Environment & Forests etc. He was also nominated as Chairman of the Government Assurance Committee and Co-Chairman of the High Level Monitoring Mechanism between India and Qatar.

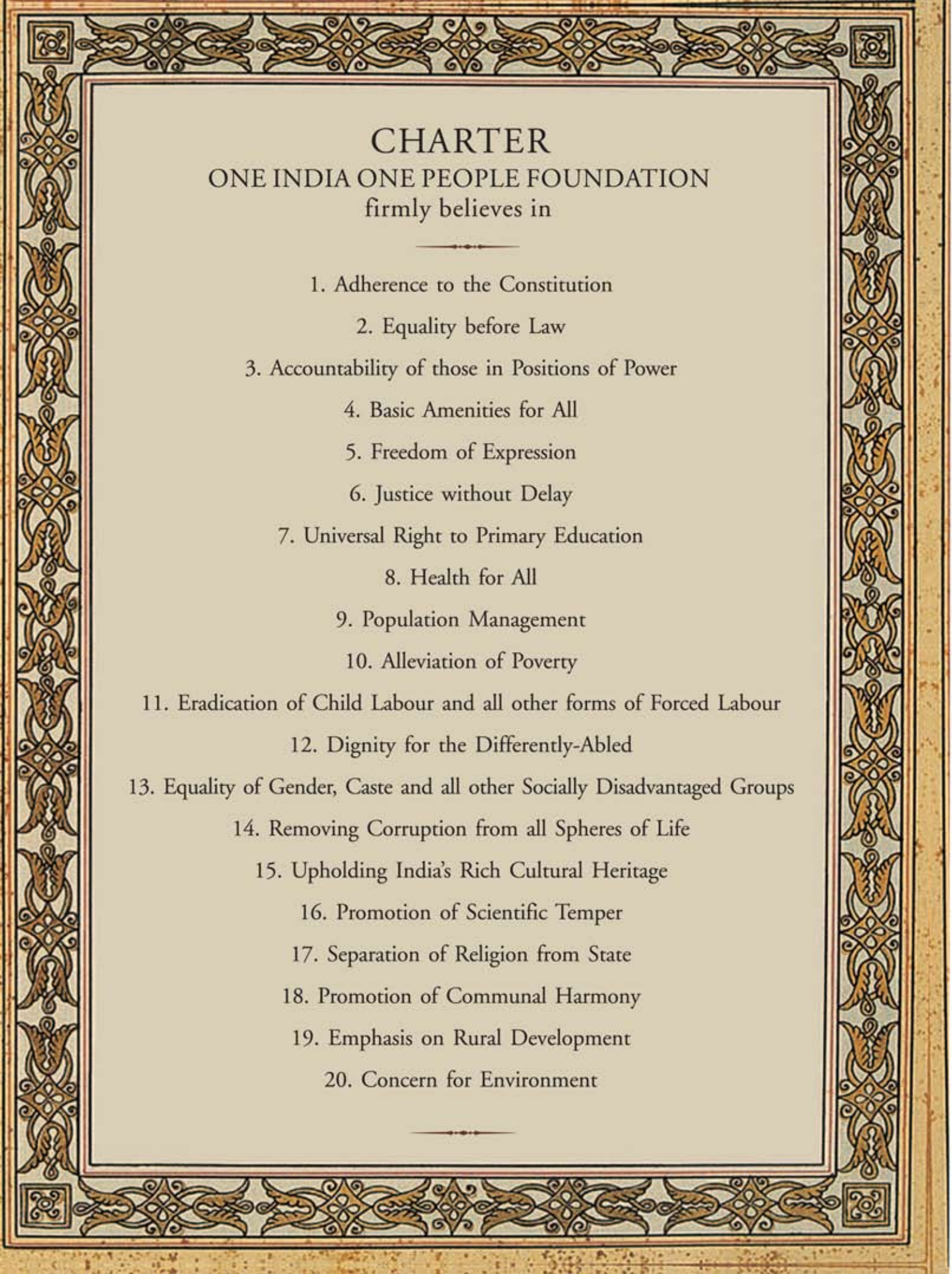
Ahamed travelled extensively abroad and was a close confidant of Prime Ministers Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. During the tenure of Indira Gandhi, Ahamed was sent in 1984 as her emissary to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries. He also performed Haj as many as seven times, out of which on five occasions he was sent as a member of the Government of India's Haj Goodwill delegation. He played a significant role in improving relations with several foreign countries, and represented the country in the United Nations and the UN Security Council as many as ten times between 1991 and 2014.

He also authored four books in English and Malayalam. Condoning his passing, President Pranab Mukherjee, a long time political associate of Ahamed eulogised him as a tireless campaigner for the welfare of the underprivileged, and observed that his services to the nation will be long remembered. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his tribute touched on his role in deepening the country's ties with the West Asian countries and lauded his diligence in serving the nation. Ahamed was elected as the President of the Indian Union Muslim League in 2008 and served in the post till his demise. He had a vision of his own in matters of religion and global issues, and endeavoured to get a national identity for the Muslim community, essaying a crucial role as a liberal leader. A soft spoken and cultured politician, whose friendship with the country's top politicians cut across party lines, Ahamed will be remembered for his long service to society and to the nation. ■

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

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





CHARTER  
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION  
firmly believes in

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



# WHO AM I?

*Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

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

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE