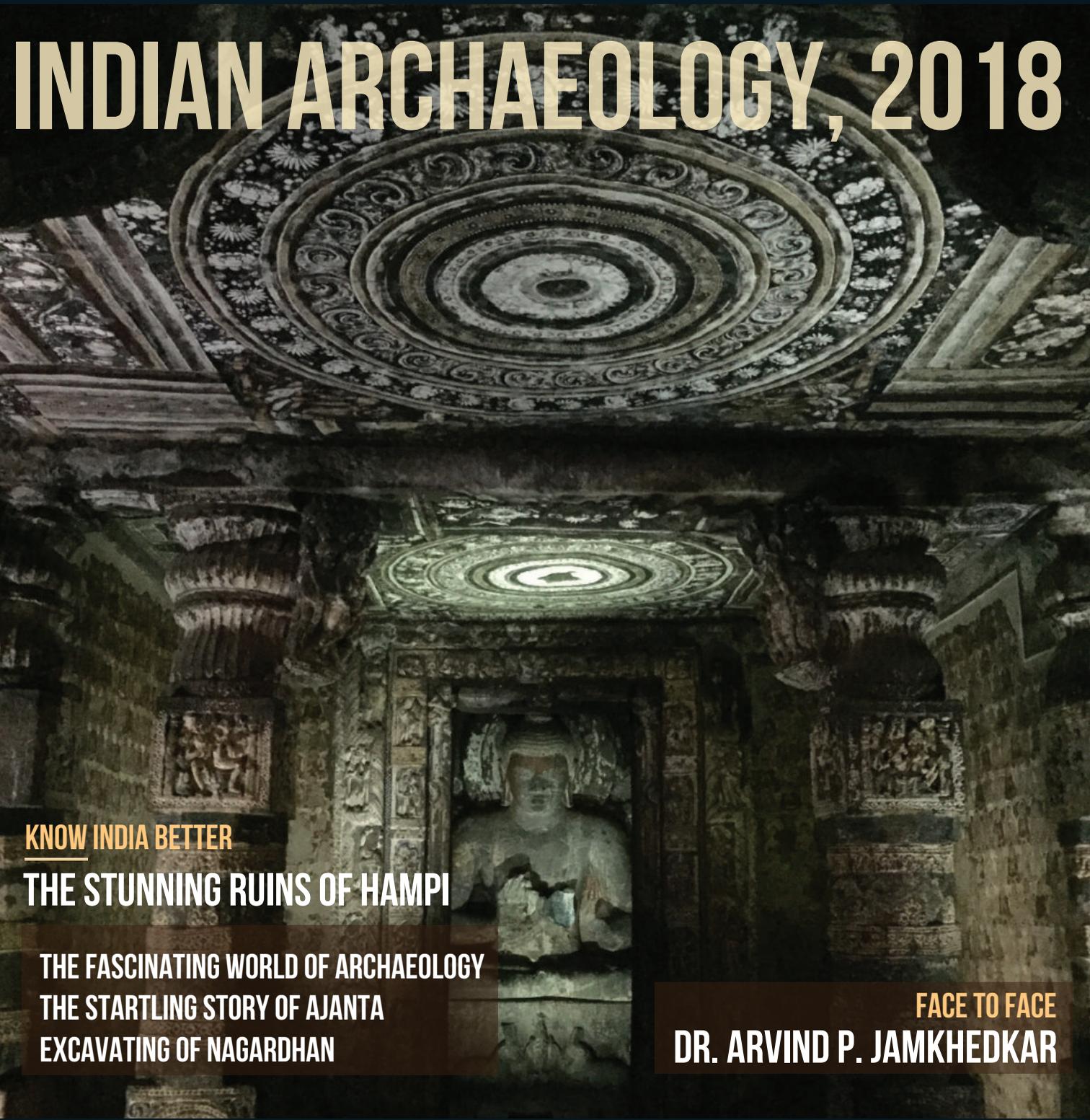


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INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGY, 2018



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THE STUNNING RUINS OF HAMPI

THE FASCINATING WORLD OF ARCHAEOLOGY

THE STARTLING STORY OF AJANTA

EXCAVATING OF NAGARDHAN

FACE TO FACE

DR. ARVIND P. JAMKHEDKAR



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The fascinating world of archaeology

The field of archaeology in India still exhibits a colonial hangover. While there are arguments in favour of it, it's now time that archaeology comes out of the 'official' and colonial straitjacket, and becomes more inclusive, says Dr. Kaushik Gangopadhyay.

One fine afternoon, I was visiting an archaeological site in Bihar. There is an old man in the village, Rambabu, who had been associated with the archaeological excavations at the site. He had a kind of a scrap-book with him, in which he had made drawings of the trenches and of the important antiquities. He took us around and showed the important spots, and described the different cultural layers at the site.

I recall that very fine afternoon and my encounter with this gentleman, as I write this review of archaeology in India. I realise that a review of archaeology in India cannot be easily written by one person in its complex totality. In the global scale we are now confronting so many 'archaeologies' that it makes us realise that a study of the past, from the perspective of the evolution of human culture all over the globe, should be undertaken at the very local and regional scale. Prof. K. Paddayya, Professor Emeritus, Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute (DCPRI), Pune, has indicated that only 15%-20% of the land surface of the Indian subcontinent has been surveyed. This means that more surveys to locate archaeological sites at different natural and administrative divisions of our country needs to be pursued. Considering the number of professional archaeologists involved in this task at the moment, it is almost impossible to achieve this goal.

However, everything is not so bleak and there are several silver linings to this problem. We have a huge amount of digital technology available to us to document our heritage. We have also user-friendly resources such as 'Google Earth' which can be used to document the archaeological remains. Our phones are able to track such objects through GPS, take good photographs, and also share them with social media groups. Mobile apps can be used to explain objects and displays at the museums. In short, human and artificial intelligence is able to 'map' our heritage and preserve and share and disseminate knowledge over a much wider platform than it was available 20 years earlier. However, here, I will focus on what we need to overcome and achieve, in terms of explorations and management of our cultural heritage.

It is said that we are living in the post-modern and post-colonial times. If archaeology was essentially a product of modernism, then how should we as archaeologists react to the intellectual movement of post-modernism, either in

art or literature, or should we silently bypass it? Secondly, we are still grappling to overcome our 'colonial' mindset that observes our cultural heritage and preservation of it from the perspectives of 'power'. It is best to write this review, therefore, by questioning certain myths about the colonial archaeology, which was deemed to be modern and scientific by the British scholars who laid down its code. If one aspect of decolonisation is to have a greater representative of our history, not only of one section of the society or certain classes of artefacts and archaeological sites, then it is time that we wake up to the multiple interpretation of pasts made by persons like Rambabu, who takes pride in showing archaeological site to the visitors. He has therefore discovered the meaning of 'heritage' in his own backyard.

The history of archaeology and the story beyond history

When did archaeological research begin in India? It is true that before the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta in 1784, there is hardly any reference made to antiquarian research in India. Therefore, any history of archaeology in India generally begins by referring to the achievements of the 30 British gentlemen who gathered in Calcutta (now Kolkata), and decided to pursue an intellectual adventure by studying different aspects of the Asiatic countries. The motto of the society was to study 'Man and Nature, whatever is performed by one and produced by the other'. Nothing more can sum up the spirit of scientific enquiry more than this particular motto. Although the interest of the society lay not in antiquarianism as such, but Sir William Jones did point out that the study of antiquarian remains is important for the purpose of reconstruction of the past of India.

Over the next 100 years, a large mass of data was gathered pertaining to the archaeological wealth of the country, forcing the colonial government to set up the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the behest of Sir Alexander Cunningham. The cause of archaeology was furthered even more after Lord Curzon became the viceroy of British India (1900-1905), and he was responsible for giving a firm footing to archaeological conservation in the country.

During the decades following the departure of Lord Curzon from India and later Independence, archaeology was



Children participating in a workshop at the Indian Museum, Kolkata

(Pic courtesy: Dr. Sayan Bhattacharya)

seized by a new fervour, and the research was not only led by the colonial government largely through the ASI, but also through the involvement of the local rulers of the Indian states. Universities also joined the task of uncovering the past, and in training young archaeologists for the future. Then came freedom, and even though we must thank the pioneers, we suddenly feel there is much left to be done.

Indian archaeology; losing ignorance and violence

After more than half a century of our cherished freedom from the colonial period, it is perhaps a good time that we launch a series of introspections so that we may continue with our exciting journey of discovering our past. What have we gained through our intercourse with the colonial 'form' of knowledge that also includes archaeology? Would we have been better in understanding and preserving our past without the British intervention? Countries, which have not witnessed Western colonial rule such as Japan or even China, have been more than successful in preserving the past. Could the Indian experience have taken the same path, or would it have led to loss of archaeological object by the 'ignorant native'; a term coined for us by the British. Answers to these questions are not easy, and perhaps will never be answered. But let me point out some of the vagaries of the colonial period archaeology which we may strive to overcome through a process of 'decolonisation'.

The first and foremost is the educative role that archaeology may play. By education I do not mean only those imparted to the professional archaeologists at the department and university faculty level, but also at the

school and undergraduate college curriculum. The past, as Prof. Paddayya has quoted from David Lowenthal, has become a 'foreign country'. This kind of disconnect from the past is perhaps one of the most frightening aspects of today's society, whereby the past can be used maliciously by sectarian groups to achieve narrow political goals. In this connection, it is worthwhile to mention that the DCPRI, which started its career as a college under the Pune University, has flourished into a research institute of international reputation. I feel that it is time that school education, particularly those in non-urban settings, must also embrace archaeology, although not at the research level, but engage young minds to explore their neighbourhood for ruins and artefacts. A basic documentation of the past, fast disappearing under the mantle of modern developments, can go a long way in preserving our heritage.

In this context, it is heartening to inform the readers that such initiatives are being taken at both private and public level. The Sharma Heritage Institute, a private organisation in Chennai, conducts archaeological sessions for children, and this effort must be welcomed by those who feel that a concern for heritage must be nurtured at a young age. At the government level, the Indian Museum, Kolkata, has conducted several programmes in the recent past that involved children. My personal experience of working with school children as a Fellow in an autonomous institute of the Government of West Bengal has been extremely rewarding. We conducted workshops at secondary schools. We not only gave lectures through power-point presentations, but also demonstrated how people in the past made stone tools. The children were fascinated by these demonstrations. My intention in pointing out these instances is primarily an

attempt at decolonising archaeology, at least if we consider it to be one of our primary aims in the near future. Our colonial rulers conducted archaeological investigations through official modes, and trained Indian students in the discipline through measures that suited their programme of colonialism. There had been few efforts for disseminating archaeological knowledge among the 'common' people of India, and the subject was confined within elitist prejudices. Even Indian private bodies or societies were monitored by the Archaeological Survey of British India to guard our heritage from ignorance, of proper 'scientific' methods by the native scholars.

This review has now therefore raised new questions which are being asked worldwide. At the 7th World Archaeological Congress held at Kyoto, Japan, one particular session, organised by Uzma Z. Rizvi and Hirofumi Kato, discussed post-colonial experiences and contemporary archaeological practices. I found the session theme quite interesting in which it was said that that under the guise of science, colonial period archaeology made demands on bodies, landscapes, memories, histories and heritage. Thankfully, critical studies on colonialism and archaeology are being published, and a process of decolonisation through participation of the local communities in archaeology may witness major strides. It is here that I look back to the gentleman in Bihar, and his interpretations of the archaeological site may not be 'scientific' to the trained archaeologist in the field, but it provided the local community a sense of pride, and a sense of belonging.

Counting time and letting the bones speak

Scientific analysis of archaeological sites and objects are increasing in India. This, I believe, is an important development along with a growing concern amongst the common people about archaeology and heritage. Scientific analysis of human skeleton from the site of Rakhigarhi has made new revelations. Stable isotope study of dental materials from cattle from an archaeological site in Haryana has provided important clues for understanding the local environment and the origin of the Harappan civilisation. Dating of archaeological sites by the Atomic Mass Spectrometry can now be accomplished in India. This means that we do not have to depend on foreign laboratories to obtain our dates.



Dr. Kaushik Gangopadhyay is presently a faculty in the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta. He has done his PG studies from Deccan College, Pune and Utkal University, Odisha. He specialises in early historic archaeology from the coastal region of West Bengal and his other academic interest lies in archaeological science, archaeological theory and ethnoarchaeology. He has participated in several exploration and excavation programmes in India, and also abroad. He has published papers in national and international journals. He is a member of the World Archaeological Congress and was elected as the national representative in the eighth World Archaeological Congress.

There is also a growing scope of material science approach in archaeology. The premier Indian scientific institutes like the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, are not only recruiting archaeologists, but are also encouraging collaborative researches within India between archaeologists and scientists. What is important is to understand that many of these new scientific techniques will not only help us to challenge colonial period notion of Indian culture and civilisation, but also modify contemporary western intellectual perception of Indian prehistoric and historical trajectories.

Exploring our land

Post-Independence, a large number of archaeological sites have been explored and excavated from the Stone Age to the medieval period. Archaeologists have come to realise that they have much to contribute to an understanding of the recent past. A substantial number of Ph.D. thesis on regional archaeology have increased our understanding of the regional archaeology. Excavations by the ASI, the various state departments, and the university faculties, have clearly become more and more sophisticated. Even private organisations are joining in the wonderful journey. One can immediately recall the excavations at the Stone Age site of Attirampakkam, or the early historic site Pattanam, in Kerala. The first site has proved beyond doubt the very old time for Stone Age in India going back to 1.5 million years, whereas the site of Pattanam in Kerala is not only the first excavated site in that region, but it has added to our existing knowledge of the Indian Ocean trade network.

What should be the road ahead?

I may just add a few lines in my conclusion and state that this is not a review of what has been achieved, but rather a preview of what can be achieved in future if there are collaborations between archaeologists, scientists, and also local communities in India. As a post-colonial practice, we should be able to slowly emerge from the hegemonic colonial practice of working at our heritage through the official avenue of power, and should transcend the abusive use by a small group of people in the post-Independence period; and if knowledge is power, then it should be freed, shared, and experienced by all who look to the past for a better future.

The startling story of Ajanta

'If chaos is rich enough, order does come', asserts Walter M. Spink, Professor Emeritus of the History of Art at the University of Michigan, with reason. Having spent many years studying the Vakataka phase at the Ajanta Caves, Spink has not only fixed with near zero error the 'When' of the caves, but has also set benchmarks for the 'How' and 'Why' of an unfinished, and yet magnificent, tribute to an all too unsung king. Shubha Khandekar traces back this long, fascinating journey.

Two centuries ago, a young British cavalry officer on a tiger hunt gate-crashed into the mouth of a man-made cave high above the Waghora river flowing along a horse-shoe shaped scarp in the Sahyadri mountains.

He entered the cave, now known as Cave No. 10, and found a great vaulted and colonnaded hall, its walls showing faint signs of paintings. Climbing up the five-foot high debris on the floor, he scratched his name and the date of his entry on a painted pillar: John Smith, 2nd cavalry, 29 April, 1819. Little did he know that he had not only discovered a magnificent art gallery of what was arguably the Golden Era of India's past, but had also thrown open the floodgates of intense academic challenges and debates among archaeologists, epigraphists and art historians, that continue to this day. And Prof. Walter M. Spink has played a key role in this exercise, by painstakingly establishing the basic grammar of the complex, without which, the 30-cave complex, with paintings and sculptures of unsurpassed beauty, would even today, largely remain the enigma that it was, two hundred years ago.

Rich indeed was the chaos inherited by Spink: Caves in various stages of incompleteness, hundreds of Buddha images, painted as well as sculpted, stretches of fine wall paintings, along with still unpainted plaster, inscriptions devoid of dates and inscriptions hidden by wall plaster, revisions and modifications of floor plans, an odd fragment or two of a forgotten chisel, and almost no literary evidence, except passing mentions by Chinese travellers, that could put a definitive finger on this remarkable complex.

The ground-breaking 'Short Chronology'

The 30 rock-cut Buddhist caves at Ajanta, declared a World Heritage Monument by UNESCO in 1983, are divided into two distinct chronological phases separated by more than three centuries of relative inaction. The first of these, known as the Hinayana phase, lasted from the 1st century BCE to the 1st century CE, during which caves 9, 10, 12, 13, and 15A were created. It was the second phase, now recognised as the Vakataka phase, whose chronological bracket was first estimated in 1880 by James Fergusson and James Burgess at 150 years, extending well into the seventh century. This was the assumption with



Prof. Spink, who has decoded the Ajanta for us

which Spink began his research in the mid-1950s, and eventually brought the total development of the site under the Vakatakas down to a 17 or 18-year life span, sharp and crisp, between 462 and 480. This no-nonsense bracket has come to be known as the 'Short Chronology', which ruffled not a few feathers, and yet, freed Indian historiography, as far as Ajanta is concerned, from the colonial hangover.

One of the first things that grabbed Spink's attention was the palace scene painted on the front wall of Cave 1. For long it was believed that this painting depicts the visit of an ambassador from the court of the Sassanian monarch Chosroes II to that of the Chalukyan ruler Pulakeshin II, an event dated to about 625 CE. The question that soon emerged was: What is a painting of a Persian delegation to a Hindu king located far to the south doing in a Buddhist cave at Ajanta? The matter was settled when Dieter Schlingloff, an authority on the Ajanta paintings, identified it as a scene from a Jataka tale in which the Buddha is shown as a king called Mahasudarsana in a previous birth. This ruled out a seventh century dating for the painting.

Further, the elaborate façade of this cave, with its sculptural panels showing the royal prerogatives of the

hunt, battle, and erotic dalliance, the depictions of appropriate Jataka tales in the hall in which the future Buddha is invariably a king, the extravagant painted ornamentation of the regal crowns worn by Padmapani and Vajrapani, the dignified and beautifully decorated pillars – every inch reflects some aspect of royalty. Spink infers that this cave was donated by the Vakataka Emperor Harisena himself.

Epiphany at the Ghatotkacha cave

Another crack in the chronology surfaced when Spink visited the Ghatotkacha cave, located 18 km away from Ajanta, important because it has an inscription by Varahadeva, the prime minister in the Vakataka Emperor Harisena's court, while another even more important inscription by him is also found in Cave 16 at Ajanta. Spink noticed on the pillars and pilasters of the Ghatotkacha cave the simultaneous appearance of what were known as 'early' features from Ajanta's well-understood fifth century phase, along with 'late', highly advanced features, conventionally dated at Ajanta to the seventh century. He found the same pattern repeated at Ajanta, which further squeezed tight the conventional chronology and laid the foundation of his ground-breaking Short Chronology.

Inscriptional evidence at Ajanta shows that all the caves in the Vakataka phase were donated by individuals who were rich and powerful, and that most of them were alive when their work at the caves was abandoned abruptly. Onsite inscriptions, and the one at Ghatotkacha, clearly name Emperor Harisena, his prime minister Varahadeva, the feudatory King Upendragupta of the Rishika region, and the Ashmakas to the south of Ajanta as the key players of the Ajanta narrative. V.V. Mirashi had long ago deciphered the inscriptions of Varahadeva (Cave 16), Upendragupta (Cave 17), Mathura (Cave 4) and Buddhahadra, Dharmadatta and Bhadrabhandu (Cave 26) at Ajanta. Inscriptions indicate that, beginning in about 462, the entire Vakataka phase was created within the life span of these six patrons, along with an equal number of others whose names are lost. The profusion of Buddha images in an utterly haphazard, impromptu manner in most, but not all caves, gave Spink further insights into the developmental stages of the caves. These "intrusive" images surely reflected not merely a severe crisis, but also a fatal blow that brought all artistic activity in the caves to an abrupt and decisive end. Spink looked to other sources for what this catastrophe might have been.

Prof. Spink solves a gigantic puzzle

The answer came from the famed 'Visrutacharita' chapter of the Dashakumaracharita, composed by Dandin in the seventh century, which according to Mirashi could be an accurate, though somewhat veiled description of the nemesis of the great Vakataka dynasty. Developing his Ajanta narrative from this text, Spink pointed out that Visruta of the text must, on circumstantial evidence, be identified with Maharaja Subandhu of Mahishmati, the founder of the Kalachuri dynasty that eventually absorbed and took over the Vakatakas.



The Intrusive Buddhas of Cave 9

An inscription from Bagh, ancient Anupa region which was part of the Vakataka dominions, shows that Subandhu's rule was well established around 486. Calculating backwards from here, Spink nailed the end of patronage at Ajanta around 480, due to the abrupt death of Emperor Harishena, and with that captured the Short Chronology into the 18 year bracket between 462 and 480 CE, with an error margin of no more than a year or two.



A Hinayana period inscription which names the donor and the donation of the wall on which it is inscribed. This was covered by wall plaster of a later date.

Offsetting this trifling approximation of the total range, is the unshakeable sequence of internal events at Ajanta, which Spink reconstructed inch by inch, by ruthlessly harnessing such humble onsite details as; chisel marks, progressive stages in the evolution door frame design, pillar bases, the number and direction of facets on pillars, the height of the cave ceiling, window decorations, the number of ribs on pillar capitals, the outward splaying of the cave walls and ceilings at the rear end, soot and grime from the smoke of the oil lamps used in worship, hooks to hang garlands from, and hundreds of intrusive Buddha images carved and/or painted everywhere, all fitting snugly, like tiny bits of a gigantic jigsaw puzzle, in a chronological order, into the Short Chronology.

(continued on page 29...)

Excavating at Nagardhan

What happens at an archaeological excavation site? How does an excavation proceed? Abhiruchi Oke gives us a glimpse into that world with the excavation site she assisted at Nagardhan village.



The excavation site at Nagardhan

(Photo courtesy:
Dr. Virag Sontakke & Dr. Shantanu Vaidya)

An archaeologist is someone whose career lies in ruins!!
-Anonymous.

I got to know about the fascinating world of archaeology when I was in the eighth standard, and it left a lasting impression on me. I ended up pursuing it for my higher studies and as a career choice; fortunately, my parents lent full support. My graduation was in history, but I simultaneously did a certificate course in archaeology at the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies (Mumbai University). Later on, I pursued a Master's degree at the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute (DCPRI), Pune.

Excavation is always the most interesting aspect of archaeology, and naturally it attracted me the most. Luckily I got to participate in the excavations held at Chandore (Maharashtra), Rakhigarhi (Haryana), and Nagardhan (Maharashtra). I would like to share my experiences from the excavation at Nagardhan, a village near Ramtek, Nagpur.

The Nagardhan experience

Previous studies have identified the present village of Nagardhan possibly as Nandivardhana, the capital of the Vākātakas, an important but poorly understood dynasty that

ruled in the fifth century. Our history lessons in school do not do full justice to this dynasty. I witnessed a glimpse of the glory of the Vākātakas through the excavations held at Nagardhan, which was a joint venture by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (Nagpur), the government of Maharashtra, and my alma mater, DCPRI. Dr. Virag Sontakke, Dr. Shrikant Ganvir and Dr. Shantanu Vaidya were the excavation directors. I can't feel more privileged to have been a part of this massive excavation; it was a dream come true. I am thankful to the directors for appointing me as one of the trench supervisors.

Just as I had studied and gathered, the excavation was a team effort which not just unearthed antiquities, but also trained beginners, students, and even the trench supervisors. The entire experience of excavation unfurled itself to me like a movie or a novel. We were all expected to be very methodical, which made us learn scientific aspects, and cultivated a multidisciplinary approach, and imparted training in leadership and management. Initially it was all intimidating, but we ended up having the best camping experience. As in other disciplines, practical and applied archaeology is different from the theoretical one. Learning at the site is more creative and can teach important life lessons such as patience, discipline, sense of responsibility and team work, which are skills crucial not just for professional growth, but also for personality development.

Excavations at Nagardhan also introduced us to lifestyle in a village. We, the students from metro cities, took a while to adjust to village life, but the time spent there was memorable, and made us aware of the fact that each place has its own culture and mind-set. Every morning before sunrise, we would gather at our site. Being the trench supervisor, I too made it a point to be present, inspect and prepare a mental chart before the workers showed up. We worked in shifts, which were arranged keeping the intense afternoon heat in mind. Help from local people ensured that excavation work proceeded smoothly. Vocabulary from the local dialect enriched my knowledge of Marathi, my mother tongue.

The people of Nagardhan were very generous to us; they offered us their delicious local dishes, and also made us a part of their festive celebrations. It was in a good measure the positive response from local labourers that made it possible for us to carry out this mammoth task, which also forged a special bond between us. Contrary to popular imagination, excavation is not just digging and taking buried objects out, it is rather a systematic approach to uncovering material objects and contextualising them. It is a series of techniques which include prior research,



This site yielded important leads about the Vākāṭaka dynasty

(Photo courtesy: Dr.Virag Sontakke & Dr.Shantanu Vaidya)

basic knowhow of mathematics, geometry, geography, and masonry work. Beside these, tackling daily finds (the number could cross a hundred on a lucky day), their documentation, photography and digitisation, are essential parts of the process. Acquaintances turned into friends as our hectic days with colleagues and freshers ended with feasting together and playing card games and Uno, before we crashed into our shared chambers, in anticipation of new finds at the next dawn. I will always cherish the bonds and relationships made there.

The actual excavation

The site is divided into nine localities, which yielded archaeological evidence of various periods, indicating that the site was under occupation for a long time span. Prehistoric stone tools, early iron age objects, Mauryan and Pre-Sātavāhana, Sātavāhana, Vākāṭaka and early medieval period artefacts established the chronological sequence for the Nagardhan site. Material unearthed included stone objects, coins, sealings, terracotta objects, structures, etc. The most important discovery at the site was a sealing of Queen Prabhāvatīgupta found in the middle of massive structures, which

suggest that she might have resided here. Another highlight of the excavation was huge pots, possibly funerary, placed in an inverted position.

Stone images of Vishnu, Ganapati, Narasimha and Lajja-Gauri were found at the site. Carnelian, agate and quartz beads in different shapes were also recovered from the excavation. Sandstone tiles with various motifs were also present. Terracotta objects such as bangles, pendants, beads, gamesmen and wheels were found in excessive quantity. Two religious terracotta objects of Gaupati and Naigameshi (goddess of child-birth) were important discoveries which help us to understand the religious beliefs of the Vākāṭakas. Faunal remains included tortoise, porcupine, wild buffalo, birds etc., while burnt remains of food grains were also recovered. The excavation yielded confirmatory evidence of the status of Nagardhan as the capital of the Vākāṭaka dynasty, thus opening the doors of further research on this powerful dynasty of ancient India. My involvement and participation in revealing a small bit of the history of the Vākāṭakas through excavation will be a highly memorable experience in my life.



Abhiruchi Oke is currently Project Supervisor at EKA Archiving Services Pvt. Ltd. She did her M.A. in Archaeology from Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune, and later acquired a P.G. Diploma in Museology and Conservation from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.

The mute witnesses

The stone steles that abound in India, are a mute, but rich archaeological source for our history. Harshada Wirkud talks about the importance of these stone steles, and the stories they reveal.

Magnificent temples, mausoleums, palaces, and forts strewn across the country, tell us stories of India's past that are otherwise accessible only through inscriptions, the exclusive purview of the literate. The corpus of free-standing memorial and record stones viz., the hero stones, sati-stones, gai-vaasru stones and the ass-curse steles (upright stone slabs, with or without inscriptions), on the other hand, stand as mute witnesses to a forgotten past, and have their own stories to tell.

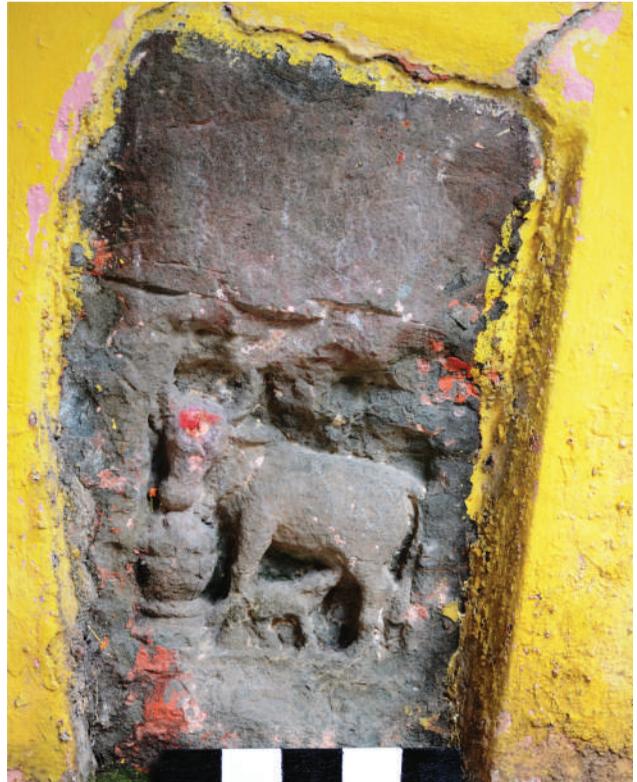
These steles, issued largely from the fifth century CE onwards till about the 13th century, and in some cases till about the 18th century, are an important archaeological source of history of the medieval period. They bear testimonials from the past, which are sometimes puzzling, but often simple and straightforward.

What the hero stones reveal

Hero stones are so called because they were erected as commemoratives to honour the memory of a fallen hero, to the local populace as well as future generations who must remember the valour of the hero forever. These stones are found all over India, but are especially abundant in the southern region. They are locally known as viragals, natukals, paliyas, kirti or chhaya sthambhas or simply sthambhas, devalis, etc. Many ancient scriptures such as the Rigveda, and epics such as the Mahabharat state that the best kind of death a warrior could wish for is on the battlefield, a 'veer-maran' (heroic death) is his dharma. A warrior who dies heroically will be equated with Indra, and will attain the ultimate 'loka' i.e. svarga. (Sontheimer, 1982)

We have many variations of hero stones, but they are mainly divided on the basis of the presence or the absence of inscriptions. In Maharashtra, hero stones are mostly uninscribed; at the same time, those from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are mostly inscribed. These are then further divided on the basis of scene(s) of a war/battle/raid or skirmish, depicting how the hero died a heroic death. The scenes depict heroes who died during a cattle raid, battling with wild animals such as elephants or tigers, or fighting with swords, or in a wrestling duel. A hero stone from Borivali, Mumbai, depicts a naval battle. Some hero stones also depict a scene of religious suicide.

Hero stones are generally three-panelled, though sometimes they may also be four or five panelled. The lowermost panel depicts the fight scene. The next panel above depicts the death of the hero and his ascension to the heavens, while being flanked on either side by celestial



The Baradevi gai-vaasru stone

maidens. The next and uppermost panel depicts the hero worshipping a Shivlinga, which represents his reaching Kailasa, reflecting perhaps the popular faith of the times. Sometimes, instead of a Shivlinga, a goddess or an ascetic may also be shown. At the top of the stele a crescent and a circle representing the moon and the sun, respectively, are shown, which denote perpetuity. However, sometimes this panel is not present or is broken, or is simply left incomplete. A *kalasha* in the form of either a temple spire or ceremonial pot is shown to represent sanctity. Some hero stones are quite elaborately and intricately carved, and may contain figures with lots of attendants, *chauri* or parasol bearers which may represent royalty, or a very important person who has died valiantly on the battle field.

The cult of hero stones has spread all over India, over a long period of time. Some scholars maintain that hero stones began to be erected from the third century BCE, and the practice continued till around early 18th century. However, a large concentration of hero stones was erected between the 5th and 12th centuries. We find a wide variety in the corpus of hero stones, artistically depicting royal as well as folk/tribal elements.



The Khatav herostones

The sati stones

These stones were erected in the memory of a woman who immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The word 'sati' means a woman who is pure/ chaste. The practice and the name may be traced back to the mythological story of Shiva's wife Sati, who immolates herself when her father insults her husband. Sati stones were erected for widows of fallen heroes/ warriors. The steles often have three panels. In the lowermost panel the woman is shown with her husband's corpse. The middle panel shows her riding a horse or standing with her hands raised, as if bestowing blessings or sitting on a funeral pyre with her husband's corpse placed on her lap. The last panel shows her reaching heaven. As in the hero stones, the top of the sati stone shows the sun and the moon and a kalasha. There's a hand shown with bangles on the wrist, raised at a right angle in blessing, which divides the lower and middle panel. This is the most common marker to identify the stele as a sati-stone. It was so much in vogue that many of the steles do not have separate panels as described above but just one scene or a seated or standing couple with the bangled hand or simply an upraised palm. These steles are mostly devoid of inscriptions.

We also have composite hero-sati stones, wherein the hand at a right angle is depicted along with the usual panels of hero-stones. Sometimes the sati is shown holding her husband's body, or is shown accompanying him to heaven.

The gai-vaasru steles

These steles are quite interesting and a great example of the symbolism that pervades Indian iconography. They are mostly considered grant stones as well as boundary markers, according to some scholars. The steles mostly show just two panels with one inset depicting a cow suckling a calf, and the topmost panel depicting the usual sun-moon-kalasha trio, or just the sun and the moon; sometimes broken, or simply left incomplete. Many a times, a manger or pot-like structure is shown in front of the cow near her mouth. According to Dr. V. V Mirashi the cow represents the grant given by the king, and the calf is his donee. It is also possible that the cow may represent the king, and the calf, the kingdom. The manger may represent the grant amount or the tax or some such revenue deemed necessary for the welfare of the kingdom, since the stele is sometimes depicted along with the ass-curse steles, described below.

The ass-curse steles

These unique steles, though an important part of the corpus of memorial stones, were largely ignored, unless inscribed, as they were considered obscene. It is only in the last few years, except for a lone attempt in 1990 by R.C. Dhere, that any serious academic study has been attempted to understand them. Ass-curse steles are invariably land grant or law edicts issued in the 10th-11th centuries onwards in Maharashtra. They were first issued by rulers of the Shilahara dynasty, and the practice was continued by the Yadavas, the Vijayanagar Sangamas, as well as the Bahamani and Adil Shahi regimes.



The sati stone at Chandore

The ass-curse stones bear a land grant inscription and a sculptural panel (perhaps for the benefit of the illiterate) depicting the ass-curse, the latter being directed at anybody who flouts the royal decree. The ass curse serves as a warning against defiance or dishonouring of the grant detailed in the inscription. The curse is almost always in Marathi and states *maaye gadhave zhavije* which translates to 'A donkey will be made to sexually violate your mother.'

The steles are generally structured as three vertical panels. The top-most panel depicts the sun and moon as well as the *kalasha*, an ascetic or a Shivalinga or some other deity. The panel below it is inscribed with the details of the grant or the law/ edict, along with the boon lines as well as curse lines. The last panel at the bottom graphically depicts the curse described in the inscription by showing a donkey in sexual congress with a woman.

The persistence of the neatly defined typology of these steles is probably second only to that of religious iconography. Variations in the form of the steles appear over time. However, these steles probably became such a common phenomenon that in their later avatars they are devoid of any inscription but depict only the graphic panel, thus acquiring the function of signages. Sometimes we also find the depiction of *gai-vaasru* in an inset along with the ass-curse. Perhaps it seeks to suggest that a king may be

benevolent at one time, and malevolent at another. These steles, with the graphic portrayal of the ass curse, became the popular mode of public discourse across the country and hence the entire corpus merits greater scholarly attention for the valuable insights it may provide into the socio-economic life of mediaeval times.

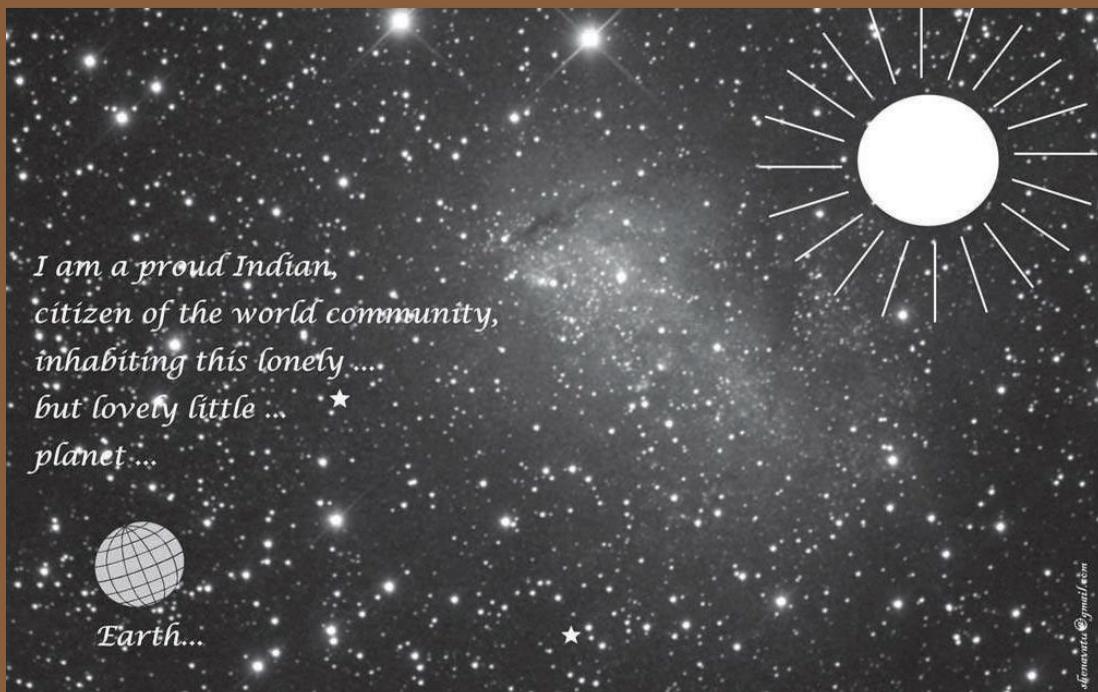


The Gorai bhatti farm



Harshada Wirkud is an archaeologist and a research scholar pursuing her PhD on 'Gadhegals from Maharashtra' from DCPGRI, Pune. She has been working on ass-curse steles since 2012, and has also been part of various explorations, excavations and projects. She has presented papers at national and international conferences/seminars, and has published many articles on the subject.

WHO AM I?



The footprints of the caveman

Rock art, which comprises all manner of cave art and paintings, and carvings on stones, is a very precious source to understand the prehistoric chapter of human evolution. Satish Lalit chronicles rock art, and what it means to us today.

Writings' or written material is the main source for researchers of history. But the history of writing itself is very recent. Prehistoric man did not have writing skills. But he left us some of his footprints in various forms, such as paintings or graffiti on the walls of caves, carvings on the stones, etc. This form of 'writing' is known as 'rock art', found in almost all parts of the world. To find these sites is a tedious job, but the most difficult part is to decipher them.

The 'Three Age' system

In human history, technology of tools devised and used by man defined the age in which man was living. Hence, Stone Age was followed by the Bronze Age, and later, the Iron Age. Rock Art, also known as 'rock carvings', 'rock engravings', 'rock inscriptions', 'rock drawings' and 'rock paintings', flourished mostly in the Stone Age when man was a hunter gatherer, or was living in caves. Stone Age is again broadly divided into three parts, namely, the Old Stone Age, the Middle Stone Age, and the New Stone Age, each indicating progressive technological and economic advancement of human existence.

The Stone Age begins with the first production of stone implements, and ends with the first use of bronze.

Types of rock art

Rock art is prehistoric man's markings placed on stone. This global phenomenon, found in culturally diverse

regions of the world, has been produced in many contexts throughout human history. The majority of rock art has been produced as part of a ritual.

Rock art in Maharashtra

In the last few years, a large number of petroglyph sites have been found in the Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri districts. A huge granite boulder with beautiful rock carvings, including big, humped bulls, boar and other animals was found at Virdi village in Sindhudurg district, near Maharashtra-Goa border. Unfortunately, due to apathy and ignorance, this heritage site was vandalised and destroyed while constructing a dam some 10 years ago.

Petrolyphs in Sindhudurg

More than 125 forms were found scattered at Usgalimal, also called Panasaimol, near Sanguem, by the Kushavati river. This site was a prehistoric riverside nomadic fishing camp, discovered in 1993.

The Virdi boulder

At Virdi, there was a huge basalt boulder on which some animals including a pig, a giraffe like animal locally called Zebu, and a couple of humped bulls were carved. Unfortunately, this huge stone was destroyed five years ago while constructing a dam. The third site is at Hiwale near Kasal in Sindhudurg. Here we can see human figures, birds, fish and circles.

<p>Rock art is mainly divided into three forms: Petroglyphs, Pictographs and Petroforms.</p>			<p>Prehistoric India</p> <p>Stone Age :</p> <p>Palaeolithic Era: 2 million BC - 10000 BC</p> <p>Mesolithic Era: 10000 B.C - 8000 B.C.</p> <p>Neolithic Era: 8000 B.C - 4000 B.C</p> <p>Bronze Age (Chalcolithic) :</p> <p>4000-1500 BC</p> <p>Iron Age :</p> <p>1500-200 BC</p>
<p>Petroglyphs are carved into the rock surface. (Petroglyphs are pictogram and logogram images created by removing part of a rock surface by incising, picking, carving and abrading.) The huge forms on the ground are called Earth figures, earthforms, intaglios and geoglyphs.</p>	<p>Pictographs are painted on the surface, mainly on the walls of caves. It consists of design, picture or drawing painted on a surface (usually rock/stone) and used to represent a thing, action, or event. These pictures were made by pigments available in the nature, like minerals limonite and hematite, red ochre, yellow ochre, and umber, charcoal, lime white etc.</p>	<p>One more, smaller category of rock art is associated with Megaliths called Petroforms, involving the arrangement of stones to create a type of monument (e.g., stonehenge, stone circle).</p> <p>Archaeologists have found pits and grooves in rocks, these are known as cups, cupules or rings. This is also a form of rock art.</p>	



Mother Goddess at Kudopi

Kudopi's 'Hill of the Dolls'

Over 30 petroglyphs were spotted by me on a huge lateritic plateau on top of a hill, locally known as “Bawlyanche temb” in Marathi, which means ‘A hill of dolls’. This site is located near Kudopi, a small village in Malvan tehsil of Sindhudurg district. A river flows below the hill. The drawings consist of two human figurines, circles, a pair of fish with the water body artistically carved, and a mother and child showing the prevalence of fertility cult, a common occurrence worldwide. Other drawings, though artistic, are difficult to decipher as they are abstract in nature.

Rock art sites in Ratnagiri

In another coastal district of Ratnagiri, researchers have found around 850 rock carvings at 71 places in 43 villages. This is a huge conglomerate found in Maharashtra till now. These sites are scattered in Lanja, Rajapur, and Ratnagiri talukas. The villages include Bhade, Harche, Hanawali, Lawgan, Dewache Gothane, Goval, Upale, Panale, Shede, Devihadol, Malapwadi, Jaigad, Chave, Karbude, Niwali, Golap, Kapadgaon, Kolambe, Ganeshgule, and many others. Animals, humans and geometrical figures are carved on laterite surface at these sites.

Rock shelters in Chandrapur

Rock art sites in Vidarbha have been known to archaeologists for the past 15 years. Painted rock shelters

have been recorded at Parasgarh-Nagbhir Hills, and Waghai Hill in the Chimur taluka of Chandrapur district near villages of Navtala, Dongargaon Budruk, Pandubara and Nagargota. A group of four rock shelters were found at Pandubara, two of which bear paintings of animals in red. The animal figure is filled in red, depicting prominent ears in front, and a raised tail. Two beautiful deer figures are depicted aesthetically, and a few of the paintings are superimposed. A large panel might have been used as a canvas for creating these figures as some traces of paintings can still be seen.

The other shelter has paintings of six figures in red outline on its ceiling. Another shelter, located below this one has been converted into a shrine by the villagers, and people from the nearby villages flock to this shelter for worship during festivals. This shelter is known as the Pandava shrine, and the group of four shelters at this site has been named accordingly.

The fourth shelter at this site is known as the Barasingha shelter, as two beautiful figures of barasingha, with prominent antlers facing each other, have been painted in red at this shelter.

Sitechi Nhani or Sita's bath enclosure

A huge rock shelter is located on the hill known as ‘Sitechi Nhani’ (Sita's bath enclosure). This place is covered by huge sandstone blocks and deep grooves can be easily seen above it. The rock paintings here are found on the exterior and cliff sides of the rock shelter. A row of paintings has been found on the panel. On this panel a prominent boar figure, along with a few human figures are depicted.

Local villagers have cut a chamber into the rock here, and have placed an idol of Sita in it, which they worship. Three shelters have been found below the bath enclosure, which are highly vandalised with modern graffiti.

The Kalachakra (Hirva Jhari)

The site is located towards the west of Jhari village at the foothills of Waghai Hills in Chimur taluka of Chandrapur district. The site is so named as a circle, one metre in diameter, with cupules in a linear pattern and encircled by small stone blocks, has been found. This site seems to be a potential Stone Age site as microliths have been found here.

Rock art studies require an integrated effort that brings together archaeological theory, fieldwork, analytical techniques and interpretation. If interpreted correctly, these footprints of our ancestors may tell interesting stories of that time we cannot even imagine now.



Satish Lalit is a media professional for the last 34 years. He has served in reputed newspapers in Maharashtra (*Sakal, Kesari and Maharashtra Times*) as a sub-editor for eight years. Presently, he is working as senior level officer in Information & PR department of Govt. of Maharashtra, and is posted as Dy. Director of Kolhapur region. He has also served as Chief Public Relations Officer to Chief Minister of Maharashtra for five years. He is an amateur archaeologist, a trekker, and a photographer.

The Deccan discovery

A serendipitous archaeological discovery near Nashik at the time of India's Independence, ushered in a new phase in Indian history. It also filled in some of the huge gaps in our understanding of history between the end of the Indus Valley Civilisation, and the Budha era, says Varada Khaladkar.



The storage jars found at this Deccan site

The year was 1947, and the season was monsoon. India was gearing up for the historic moment of Independence, a new beginning in her history. Around the same time, a nondescript village in western Maharashtra, too, was ushering Indian history into a new phase, albeit unknowingly.

A flood of discoveries

The rains came down very hard that year, and the River Pravara flooded over its banks and the riverside villages. Jorwe, near Nashik, was one of them. To escape the wrath of the waters, the villagers moved their homes up the slope, away from the floodlines. As they started ploughing the land nearby, clay pots began to be churned out regularly from the earth. Not the usual red or black coarse pots that villagers used, but fine red pots painted beautifully in black. Nobody had seen anything like it before. The findings became famous locally, and the news reached S.A. Sali, a clerk in the taluka development board at Sangamner. He not only got it published in a local newspaper, but also took the finds to Prof. H.D. Sankalia, the doyen of post-Independence Indian archaeology.

He was intrigued enough by the discoveries. Around the same time, he was planning to excavate Nashik. Jorwe was added to the project, and a small-scale excava-

tion was carried out alongside in 1950. The outcome of the project was sensational for Indian history. Till that time, nothing was known about how and when the prehistoric hunter-gatherers evolved into sedentary village farmers. History began with Gautam Buddha, placed tentatively in the sixth century BCE. Harappan civilisation was known to have flourished 5,000 years ago, but most of its then known sites had become part of the new Pakistan, and there was a huge knowledge gap between its end and the Buddha era. Jorwe gave the first glimpse into this enigmatic period.

Excavation yielded remains of a small village of farmers who knew only copper and stone technology (hence called chalcolithic), much before the first known dynasty of early Deccan, i.e., Satavahanas. Jorwe not only pushed back the Deccan history by 2,000 years, but also opened the floodgates of discoveries across India, with every region subsequently coming up with its own findings of chalcolithic and neolithic settlements. The discoveries haven't yet stopped. And every time a discovery is reported, Jorwe is remembered. So, here is the story of the Jorwe residents and their times. The story of the first farmers of the Deccan.

The Deccan Chalcolithic Age!

The first footsteps of prehistoric people from Deccan have been documented from seven lakh years ago. However, it was only around 2450 BCE that the first farming settlements started emerging in North Maharashtra. They initially appear to be part-hunting, part-farming villages, having learnt the farming techniques from neighbouring farming communities located in modern Gujarat. Such settlements gradually became sedentary farming villages in a few centuries, and occupied almost the whole of the western Deccan, and prospered till 900 BCE or slightly later. Till today, around 200 such villages have been recorded from all over the western Deccan, in the river valleys of Tapi, Godavari, Bhima and Krishna, as well as away from them. However, no such evidence is yet found from the coastal Konkan area. Thanks to the research by Sankalia, M.K. Dhavalikar, Z.D. Ansari, S.B. Deo, S.A. Sali, V.S. Shinde and many others who carried out excavations at more than 20 sites, we now have a detailed information about the way of life of these communities. Evidence from Inamgaon, Daimabad, Prakash, Kaothe and Walki have made substantial contribution to this corpus.

(...continued on page 28)

KNOW INDIA BETTER



The stunning ruins of Hampi

The world heritage site of Hampi is a rich historical and cultural township, which has the most intriguing examples of temples, palaces, citadels and pillars left by the Vijayanagara and other dynasties. One can spend many days here exploring each of these monuments, and come away even more intrigued, impressed and stunned.

Text & Photos: Usha Hariprasad



One of the gateways of Hampi

As a tourist I first visited Hampi, a few years back. I saw the Vittala Temple, checked out its musical pillars that were supposed to replicate notes of musical scale, visited the tourist attraction Virupaksha Temple, then the Hemakuta group of temples and the Royal Centre, consisting of the Lotus Mahal, Mahanavami Dibba, Hazara Rama Temple, etc. ‘This is Hampi in a nutshell’ touted our Hampi guide. Seeing the bazaar layout, the temples, I did realise that like the ancient civilisations, Hampi too had a royal citadel where the noble and powerful lived- kings, queens, commanders, military men, etc., and an urban centre, where the commoners resided. This was my take when I first saw this World Heritage Site.

The story of Pampa

Years later, when I researched about the Vijayanagara dynasty, I realised the importance of this site and the numerous stories that abound in each of its structures. Take the case of Virupaksha Temple. It is one of the ancient temples of this region and perhaps can be dated to 9th/10th century. It is dedicated to the deity Virupaksha – the God with oblique eyes, and he is accompanied by consorts Pampa and Bhuvaneshwari. Incidentally, if you do not know who Pampa is, here is a brief story. Pampa is

regarded as Goddess Tungabhadra. She was the daughter of Brahma who wished Shiva to be her life partner. After several years of penance at Hemakuta Hill, Shiva appeared before her in the form of Virupaksha and married her. It is said that gold was showered on the nearby Hemakuta Hill by the gods. That is why the name Hemakuta - heap of gold. Every year, in remembrance of their bond, a celestial marriage between Virupaksha and Pampa happens during the temple’s Brahmostva festival.

Hemakuta Hill temples

At the Hemakuta Hill adjacent to Virupaksha Temple, there are a cluster of temples. At first sight you will only see granite towers, a couple of *shivlingas* and *mantapas*. But here is the interesting part. One of the structures with three *shivlingas* was installed by a ruler of Kampili. And he was no ordinary ruler. Harihara and Bukka --- the founders of Vijayanagara dynasty, used to work under him, and this king, who rebelled against the Muslim sultans would have been their initial source of inspiration. Another temple to look out for is the Ramalingeshwara Temple that was said to be the retreat of Vidyanarya – guru, advisor, and supporter of Harihara and Bukka. Apart from this, there are two huge monoliths of Ganesha that are worth checking out.

The idols are named after grains; one is the mustard seed or Sasivekalu Ganesha, which is 2.4m high, and the other is Kadlekalu or gram lentil Ganesha, which is 4.5 m high. Here is a brief story of how Vijayanagara, or the 'City of Victory' came into being.

The rise of Vijayanagara

During the turn of the 14th century, the South was facing the onslaught of Muslim Sultans from Delhi. North Deccan was ruled by Yadavas of Devagiri, Kakatiya dynasty ruled from Warangal, Hoysalas from Dwarasamudra, and Pandyas from Madurai till down south. Invasions by Allaudin, Mallikafar and Mohammed bin Tughlaq, the loot and plunder policy of the Sultans had weakened these powerful dynasties of the South. There was not a single major power in the South to resist these onslaughts. However some principalities did offer resistance. One of them was a minor kingdom called Kampili. The ruler courageously resisted the armies. However, they were defeated by forces of Mohammed bin Tughlaq. The ruler Kampilideva died fighting, and the royal women committed suicide. People were taken prisoners and among them were Harihara and Bukka-treasury officers of the king. It is said that they were converted to Muslims and sent back to Kampili as new governors.

However, an encounter with sage Vidyaranya – a saint of the Sringeri Mutt gave them a new direction. He urged them to establish a new kingdom that could protect the culture and heritage of South India. The brothers gave up Islam and Harihara laid the foundations of Vijayanagara dynasty on the banks of Tungabhadra, and he was crowned king in 1336 AD. However, not all agree to this version of story. There is an Andhra version that claims that these brothers were from Warangal, who later went to Kampili.

There is a Kannada version also that says that they were from Karnataka and were working under Hoysala King Ballal-III. To resist the Muslim onslaughts, the Hoysala King built a new city – Vijaya Virupaksha on the banks of Tungabhadra and made Harihara and Bukka its protectors. After the death of the king, his son – Vijaya Virupaksha – was a weak ruler. So these brothers apparently took control.

The Krishna Temple

The Krishna Temple adjacent to Hemakuta Hill has no idol. At first glance and without a proper guide, you will neglect it as another ruin. But it is a proof of Krishnadevaraya's heroics, who ruled in the time period 1509-1529.



The Virupaksha Temple is dated to the 9th or 10th century



The Lotus Temple, known for its design and geometry

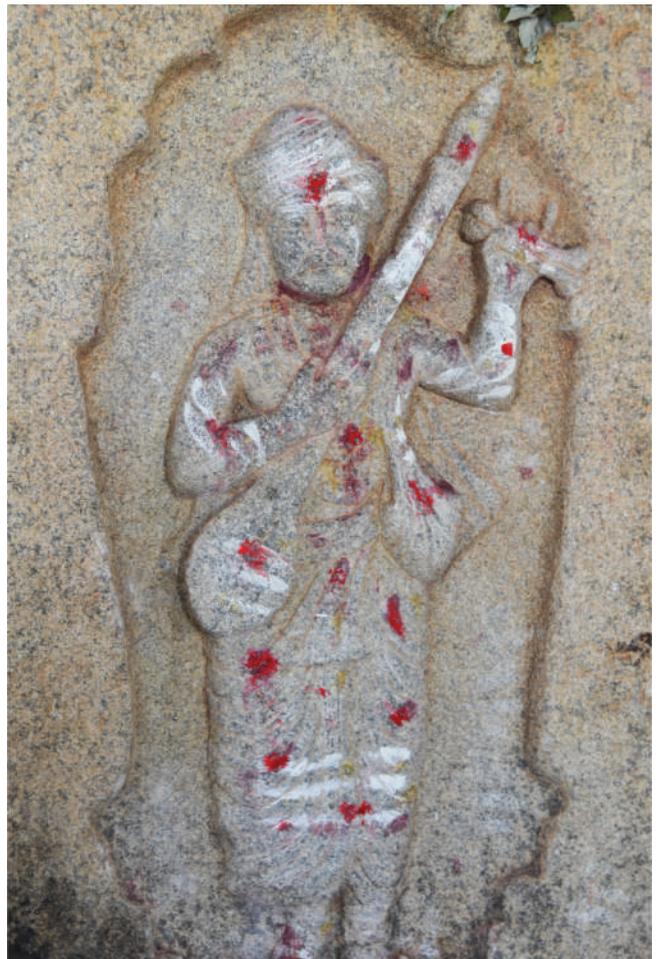
When he came to power, he had a lot of challenges. The Gajapatis from Orissa, and the Kakatiyas from Warangal had occupied Vijayanagara territories. For the first two decades he had to fight and reclaim these territories. The temple was consecrated in 1513 after his victory over the Gajapati kings from Orissa. The idol was Balagopala or baby Krishna brought from Udayagiri Fort that Krishnadevaraya captured during his battle with Orissa Gajapatis. There are inscriptions in the temple that record the military achievements of the king. The granite idol of Balakrishna is now in the Chennai museum.

Krishnadevaraya was a worshipper of Vishnu and he built new temples, added towers and *mantapas*. At Virupaksha Temple, some of the towers and *mantapa* are his contributions.

The story of Tuka

When Krishnadevaraya captured Udayagiri, he took prisoners. One of them was the Queen of Gajapati and she was sent to Vijayanagara. The King of Gajapati had to give his daughter Tuka in marriage to Krishnadevaraya in return for his wife. However, Tuka was not pleased with this. And it is said that she tried to poison Krishnadevaraya. However, the king was saved and Tuka was banished from the kingdom. Years later it is said that she repented and composed verses, and finally she returned to Krishnadevaraya.

Another worthy structure to check out is the monolith of Narasimha. It is a 6.7m tall statue sitting cross-legged, with a seven-headed snake behind him. A statue of goddess Lakshmi sits on his left thigh, but it is now in a damaged condition. An inscription mentions that this statue was carved by a Brahmin Krishna Bhatta in 1528. Nearby is a three meter tall monolithic *linga* on a pedestal.



An image of Purandardas, the father of Carnatic music

Vittala Temple

This is a beautiful temple built in the reign of Deva Raya II (1424-1446). It has three *gopuras* or towers. The east and north tower were commissioned by the two queens of Krishnadevaraya in 1513. The Maha Mantapa was built to commemorate Krishnadevaraya's victory. Worship used to happen here until the fall of Vijayanagars. The battle of Talikota that proved decisive to Vijayanagara dynasty took place in 1565 AD and the dynasty though it ruled for another 100 years never truly recovered after this battle.

A stone chariot with four wheels faces the east *gopuram*. It is dedicated to Garuda – Vishnu's vehicle. It looks monolithic, but isn't. It is in fact made from many stone blocks. Nearby the temple vicinity is a king's balance. The king was weighed here in gems and grains on special occasions, and these were then distributed to the common people. The Sugriva Cave and Narasimha Temple are other attractions nearby.

All these temple complexes – the Virupaksha Temple, the Krishna and the Vittala Temple form the sacred center of Hampi. There is one other temple belonging to this group. The Achyutaraya Temple dedicated to Lord Tiruvengalanatha at the foot of Matanga Hill. It was constructed by the half-brother of Achyutaraya – Hiriya Tirumala Raja in 1534. The temple is dedicated to Vishnu and has a shrine for Lakshmi. The temple is located east of Virupaksha Temple. Other attractions nearby are chakratirtha that is a sacred bathing ghat, and the Kodandarama Temple with huge relics of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman.

All the major temples – Virupaksha, Vittala, Achyutaraya, and Krishna, had bazaar roads. Most of them are in ruins now. The Hampi bazaar was an important bazaar -- 717 meters long, it had shops on both sides. Gold, silk, precious stones, spices, etc., were sold here. While the Arabs came here selling velvets, the Chinese sold silk, the Romans wine, and took back aromatic spices.



A carving at Hampi



The Sasivekalu Ganesha, is a monolith

Apart from the temples there are a group of monuments that fall under the Royal Center. In 1443, an ambassador who visited Hampi described it as a fortified city with seven concentric layers of walls with gateways and watch-towers. Apart from the sacred centre, there was the Royal Center that was an oval shaped layout with temples, stables, watch towers, baths, gateways aqueducts, etc., forming part of its space. The city also had a third zone. This constituted the rest of the urban city and enclosed towns and villages like Anegundi, Kampili, and Hospete.

The Royal Center monuments

At the heart of the Royal Center was the Hazara Rama Temple. The temple is said to have been constructed during the reign of Devaraya I and was the chapel meant for the royals. Palaces, platforms, stables surrounded this structure. The Hazara Rama Temple has 108 Ramayana scenes depicted in its panels. Hampi was after all considered the Kishkinda region of Ramayana. And there are a lot of scenes from Ramayana that took place here. Here is a brief summary.



A scene from Ramayana

Anecdotes from Ramayana

Kishkinda was the kingdom of monkeys and was ruled by Vali. Vali had a younger brother Sugriva who for no fault of his was ostracised from the kingdom for betraying Vali. Sugriva took shelter at Matanga Hill of Hampi with his friend and supporter Hanuman. Rama and Lakshmana while searching for Sita meet Hanuman at Hampi, who takes them to Sugriva. Rama agrees to kill Vali and make Sugriva king. In return, he wants Sugriva's help in rescuing Sita. In keeping with his promise, Rama kills Vali and crowns Sugriva king. Hanuman then goes in search of Sita while Rama waits for his return.



A statue of seated Narsimha

All these associations can be seen at Hampi. The Kodandarama Temple is the place where Sugriva was crowned king. When Sita was kidnapped by the Lanka King Ravana, she dropped her jewels while flying. This was kept safely by Hanuman in the cave at Hampi behind Vittala Temple. The Malyavanta Hill was where Rama and Lakshmana waited for Hanuman's return. Today it has a Raghunatha Temple. And you can see a number of relics of Rama, Lakshmana and Hanuman on the rocks, temples and ruins at Hampi. The Hazara Rama Temple depicts a number of such Ramayana scenes. Another surprising factor is that the temple is axially aligned with Matanga and Malyavanta Hill. Near the temple is the Mahanavami Dibba.

Mahanavami Dibba

The Mahanavami Dibba was the stage meant for royal display. It was a multi-storied platform eight metre high, with each stage being added at different time periods. The lower two stages were added in 14th century. It is said that this platform was used by the kings for important festivals like Dasara celebrations, which was one of the major events celebrated in the kingdom. Generals were awarded during this day, tributes were paid to the king by noblemen – there were exhibits of power – soldiers, horses, and elephants used to be displayed. Foreign envoys came visiting. Wrestling matches were held – prizes were awarded. Dance and music played a huge role in these celebrations. All these details are carved in every inch of granite in the Mahanavami platform. Elephants, horses led by Arabs, soldiers with weapons, headgear, and people beating drums and playing instruments – all these are depicted beautifully.

Zenana quarters and other structures

Zenana quarters was supposed to be a place

reserved for royal women, but it does not seem to be true. The presence of a parade ground and stables nearby these quarters signifies that the royal women of Vijayanagara could not have lived here. The quarters however is a walled area with three watch towers. It has various structures like a treasury office, Jal Mahal, Queen's Residence and Lotus Mahal. The Lotus Mahal is a square shaped plan with symmetrical projections on every side. It is a double storied hybrid structure in Indo-Islamic style.

Close to the the Zenana area you come across elephants stables. There are rows of 11 chambers here, each having space for two elephants. The rooms have arched doors and are topped with domes of pyramidal, octagonal or circular shapes.

Apart from these, there are other structures like the Queen's Bath and temples nearby.

The Queen's Bath located south-east of royal centre has an arched doorway, a square pool 1.8 meters deep, surrounded by ornate balconies with arched windows.

A water channel runs around the bath. Once again Queen's Bath could not have been reserved for women. Most likely it was for men and their companions. Near to the Queen's Bath is the Chandrashekara Temple.

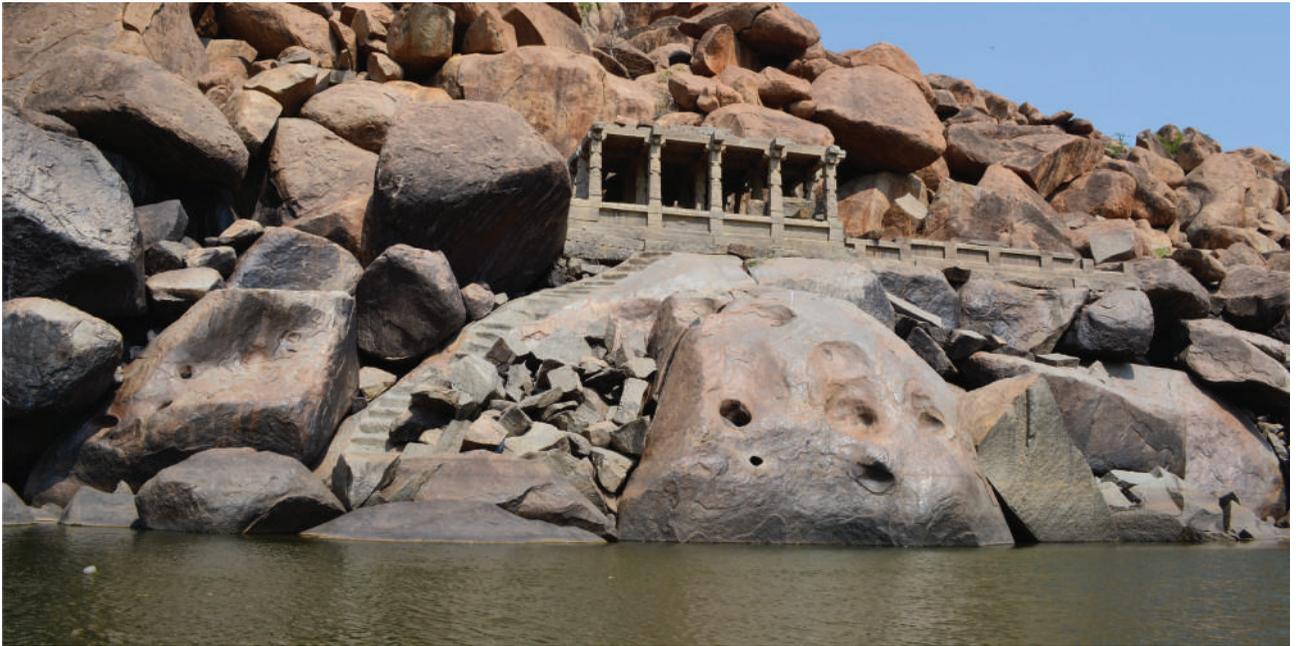
There is also an underground Virupaksha Temple here. It seems to be a 14th century structure and was perhaps used by the royal family.

Other attractions of Hampi

There are more than 1,000 ruins in Hampi. Significant among them are gateways. One of them is Talarighat gateway – a toll collection point near the Vittala Temple complex. It is a two-storied structure built into the city's fortification wall. Another is the Bhima gateway. Other important monuments are the Saraswati Temple, the octagonal bath, Jain monuments like Ganagitti Temple dedicated to Kunthunatha Tirthankara, and Islamic structures like mosques and tombs. Also check out the archeological museum at Kamalapura that exhibits bronze sculptures, pre-historic and proto historic antiquities.



The Queen's Bath, but was it really used by the queen?



The Tungabhadra River, where one can have a coracle ride

A coracle ride

A coracle ride in Tungabhadra River, though not allowed in some months, is a must-do activity while you are at Hampi. Not only does it give you a peek into the granite landscape, it gives you splendid views of weathered rock formations on either side of the river. There are also some ruins on the banks of the river – Koti-Linga, Sun Temple, and dilapidated *mantapas* etc., that are partially submerged during the monsoon months. The Purandara *mantapa* with the idol of Purandaradasa, father of Carnatic music, and Vijaya Vittala *mantapa* are other attractions that you can visit during the ride.

Anegundi

You can also check out Anegundi that was a fortified town even before the advent of the Vijayanagaras. It has a small Ranganatha Temple, a Jain temple and also has the Anjanadri Hill that is supposed to be the birth place of Hanuman. Pampa-sarovar dedicated to goddess Pampa is also nearby. Nava Brindavana, the brindavan of nine Madhwa saints, is also located here. It is a pilgrimage spot for Madhva Brahmins, the followers of saint Madhwacharya, and is reached via a ferry from Anegundi.



Usha Hariprasad is a freelancer who is fond of travelling, discovering new places and writing about travel related destinations around Bangalore at 'Citizen Matters'. Currently, she works in a trekking organisation.

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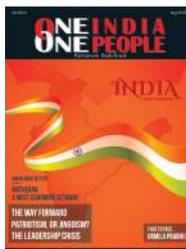
The right to be a child



Literature



India: Past Forward



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“Archaeology is no more the handmaiden of history.”

Dr. A.P. Jamkhedkar is today one of the most respected names in Indian archaeology for the wide range of field experiences in various sub-branches of archaeology, such as temple architecture, rock-cut caves, excavation and exploration, art history and Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions. Having studied and taught Sanskrit and Ardhamagadhi, and having done a Ph.D on the topic of ‘Vasudavahandi: A cultural tradition’ he acquired the proficiency to handle with equal ease both literary and archaeological sources for the reconstruction of history.



From 1977 to 1997 he was the Director of Archaeology and Museums in the state of Maharashtra. He has been associated in senior consultative roles with prestigious institutions and has over 12 books and 60 odd academic articles to his credit. At present he is the Chancellor of Deccan College, Pune, and the Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi.

Raamesh Gowri Raghavan in conversation with Dr. Jamkhedkar.

You are the first archaeologist appointed to head the ICHR. What perspectives and approaches are you bringing to ICHR?

Archaeology is no more the handmaiden of history. When we take into consideration the various evolutionary stages of archaeological studies, we can understand the role played by classical archaeology, new archaeology, contextual archaeology, and cognitive archaeology. If you see India in the light of these developments, persons like John Marshall and the generation of scholars trained by him and Mortimer Wheeler, have added a lot to our understanding of ancient India — protohistoric and early historic, through excavations.

You said, “Archaeology is no more the ‘handmaiden of history’”. So what role does archaeology play in Indian History?

Prof. H.D. Sankalia (of the Deccan College) and his colleagues are a different generation, and indicate a different approach to the study of the past. Prof. Sankalia had been initiated in archaeology in the University of London by Prof. F. J. Richards, who was famous for his studies that tried to evaluate the role of geographical factors in India’s historic past. When Sankalia came back from England after completing his thesis on the archaeology of Gujarat, he introduced a new method: of understanding the history of a region from the archaeological point of view.

He was very much perplexed to see that in Indian prehistory, we don't have any prehistoric man or his remains, as were identified in Africa, Europe, or coming to the nearer regions, in Indonesia (Java Man), or for that matter even in China (Peking Man). Though researchers in the Himalayas as also in peninsular India clearly showed that man had inhabited, if not all the parts of India, at least the peninsular and sub-Himalayan regions.

Recognising this lacuna in the understanding of prehistoric man in India, he assigned different regions of India to all those students who came to him and aspired to work in prehistoric archaeology: The Tungabhadra-Malaprabha valleys (Karnataka), Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Assam. With this collaborative effort, in his seminal work *Prehistory and Protohistory of India & Pakistan*, he gave a fairly good picture by the 1960s of prehistoric India right from the early palaeolithic, mesolithic, neolithic, and even megalithic period. Like the picture of India drawn by Sankalia on the basis of archaeology for prehistoric India, he initiated studies of historic India through a systematic study of the epigraphs of a given region. After his archaeology of Gujarat, he delivered the Bhagwanlal Indraji Lectures in the University of Mumbai that were published later on as *Historical, Geography and Cultural Ethnography of Gujarat*. In his study of Gujarat, Prof. Sankalia put to scrutiny all the names of villages, cities, geographical units and administrative units referred to in the inscriptions. This not only helped to understand initially the naming patterns current in different sections of society, but the professions held by these respective persons, shedding light on the social history of the times, right from the times of Ashoka.

Because of the initiative taken by Prof. Sankalia up till now, studies in the inscriptions of the following regions have been completed: The Deccan (Dr. Sumati Mule), Rajasthan (Dr. Lele), Madhya Pradesh (Dr. Shobhana Gokhale), Uttar Pradesh (Dr. M. M. Mathur), Tamil Nadu (Pallava inscriptions by Dr. T. K. Seshadri and Chola inscriptions by Dr. B. Suresh Pillai), and the Konkan (inscriptions of the Shilaharas) by Dr. Binda Paranjpe. This type of study of inscriptions and the study of actual sites and mounds is going to help not only to understand the revenue system of a given time in a better way, but also to choose individual key sites for historical archaeology.

What other areas is the ICHR planning to focus on?

There are some other areas which seem to have been, if not neglected, only sparsely touched upon by individual studies of historians. One such is the environmental history of India. The ICHR has envisaged that it will publish this history of India in six volumes. The first volume of this series is now ready and soon will go to the press. There is another area which has remained not completely understood, and that is the economic conditions of the pre-modern states, or princely states of colonial India. the economic conditions of the pre-modern states, or princely states of colonial India.

A history of the sciences in India by Dr. M. D. Shrinivas is under preparation, and the first volume will be released soon. Many aspects of cultural history, like sports and games, also need to be looked into, as history is often taken to be political history.

What are the lacunae in Indian history and archaeology that you see?

An area which has been totally neglected is that of the history of the so-called 'tribals' or tribal states of India. To give an example, as per the belief of the members of the Gond community of the Deccan and Central India and certain amateur historians, the antiquity of the Gond Kings can go back to 800 AD. Whatever little we know of their history is in the form of oral tradition, bakhars and archival records scattered in historical records of the Mughals, state archives and private collectors, as well as a number of monuments. All this material for the reconstruction of their history, with the help of tangible and intangible heritage left by them will have to be pieced together by linguists, ethnographers and archaeologists together. Similar can be said to be the case of the Ahoms and Dimasas of Assam. The histories of these tribes deserve to be mainstreamed.

Like the history of tribal communities, there are many small dynasties which rarely figure in the volumes like the series of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. The ICHR would like to encourage scholars taking up detailed histories of small dynasties in all periods, underlining their contribution to the political and cultural history of India. For example, from my personal experience, the Traikutakas of Western India, the Konkan Mauryas, the Vilivayakuras of southern Maharashtra, Chhatrasal and the Bundelas of Bundelkhand, the Holkars of Indore, the Gaekwads of Baroda, the Bhonslas of Nagpur etc., do not feature in a big way in nationwide history. Similarly, there are some historical personages like Yashovarman, Harishena, Rana Kumbha, Bajirao I, Sayana and Madhava, whose significant contribution have to be underlined. The cultural and social significance of religious figures like Chakradhar Swami (Mahanubhava movement), Ramanuja, Adishankara, Swami Narayan and the movements they started, have to be studied.

These and similar types of studies based on oral traditions, such as the ballads of Rajasthan, deserve to receive a systematic treatment at the hands of serious scholars. Similarly, regional sources of history, such as *bakhars*, need to be brought into mainstream by translation into other languages. For example, V.K. Rajwade, the eminent Marathi historian, has published 26 books on the sources of Maratha history.

Raamesh Gowri Raghavan is a freelance digital marketing and content professional with 11 years of experience. His interests include the history of tea and coffee, board games and ancient scripts. He also teaches archaeology and epigraphy at the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies, University of Mumbai.



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(...continued from page 16)



The public granary at Inamgaon

These communities existed before any cities came up in the Deccan. There seems to be an assortment of large villages, probably regional centres, small farming villages, and seasonal encampments. Daimabad, a regional centre in the Godavari valley, was the largest of these all, followed by Inamgaon in the Bhima and Prakash in the Tapi valleys. All these three villages appear to have acted as nodal centres for the smaller villages and populations in the surrounding areas. Majority of these settlements were located near fertile soils, good pastures and perennial water sources.

The villages were apparently not so different from villages today, with all the houses in aggregation in one locale. All the houses were similar in nature, having one or two rooms with courtyards, made of reeds plastered with clay and grass-thatched roofs. Floors were made of clay and plastered with cow-dung. A typical house had a hearth, grindstone, and storage facilities. Only the village chief seems to have enjoyed a bigger house with 4-5 rooms. People used clay pots of various shapes, many of them red with black paintings. Apart from big jars and cooking pots, there were lots of bowls – big and small, basins and spouted pots, apart from big clay lamps to light the houses.

Storage facilities were elaborate. These people inhabited the semi-arid Deccan with variable and occasionally failing monsoons, just like the present times. In the absence of regulated markets, monetary systems and trading mechanisms, storage was essential for survival. There were various types of storage, viz., pit-silos lined with lime, huge four-legged storage jars, as well as clay platforms for keeping wickerwork bins. These clay platforms were filled with sand and thorns to keep rodents away. At Inamgaon, a huge public granary was located just behind the chief's house, and was probably under his control.

Though these were the first farmers of the region, who kept animals like cattle, buffalo, sheep-goat, pigs, hens, dogs and cats, they also practised hunting, gathering, and fishing. The traditional crop package of the Deccan seems to have originated with chalcolithic farmers, consisting of wheat, barley, rice, green gram (moong), black gram (urad), pigeon pea (arhar), Bengal gram (chana), lentils (masoor), pea, ragi, kulith, and sesame, among others.

Fruits such as amla, ber, dates and jamun were gathered from surroundings, along with leafy vegetables. Various deer species were hunted for their meat, along with a variety of fish and turtles, though beef was the mainstay of the diet. Although Inamgaon is located at the heart of the famine zone of the Deccan, the villagers had constructed a canal to divert flood waters from the river in the monsoons. It also enabled them to retain water after monsoons and irrigate the wheat crop. This is the earliest example of water management in the Deccan.

Apart from potters, there were artisans who had the skills of lime-making, bead-making, and copper-smelting. Such workshops, including a few complete specimens of pottery kilns, have been found from Inamgaon and Daimabad. Stone tools, which essentially included microlithic blades made from siliceous stone, were made by almost all the families. Copper, imported from the Khetri mines in Rajasthan, was used for making fish hooks, harpoons, arrows and jewellery items like bangles and beads. Beads and bangles were also fashioned out of conch shell and terracotta. Various coloured siliceous stones were used for bead-making.

Although these seem to be self-sufficient communities to a large extent, they had exchange relations with contemporary communities from the regions of Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat and central India. Commodities like copper, gold, lapis lazuli, and conch shells were imported from such places. We also see that a group of later Harappan communities migrated to this area and gradually became assimilated with the local people. A large late Harappan settlement has been recorded from Daimabad, with the presence of Harappan round seals.

The practices of chalcolithic communities

Chalcolithic communities were essentially tribal and bound by their clan structures and ruled by chiefs. There were no social classes like caste system. Pre-dating any known form of religion in Indian history, their belief-system must have been tribal in nature. They made figurines of bulls and mother goddesses. There is also a depiction of a half-man, half-leopard figure on a big jar which definitely had some 'religious' connotation. They buried their dead within the village, often in the courtyards, but cut off the feet of the dead; either for prohibiting them from coming back to the mortal world or alternatively, for stopping them from leaving the place. Children were buried in big clay jars, making a womb-like enclosed space. All the graves had offerings placed within, indicating a belief in the 'after-world'.

There were similar communities in western and central India, as well as Karnataka. Most of these communities gradually adapted iron technology and progressed towards urbanisation. However, Deccan has a different story to tell. Around 1200 BCE, villages in north and central Deccan were abandoned. Only a few villages in the Bhima valley survived till 900/800 BCE. The palaeo-environmental

data shows that rainfall had become erratic around this time, with frequent famines becoming the new normal. In the absence of buffers like cities and supra-regional administrative system, people were forced to shift from farming to semi-nomadic pastoralism and gradually to nomadic life. Inamgaon was one of the last abandoned places. People, despite being on the move, kept coming back once a year. However, they too gradually stopped. The village was buried under the dust of time.

After a few centuries, around the third century BCE, Deccan was repopulated with villages, towns and cities. Riding on the back of iron technology and the forces

of urbanisation coming from north India, the Deccan prospered once again. However, the descendants of the chalcolithic people have been lost to anonymity, they must have been assimilated in the new world, but archaeology still has no idea about the intervening centuries. Their story is yet to be completed, and the quest is still on!

S.A. Sali, the clerk who was responsible for bringing in the experts in the initial discovery, left his job, earned a degree (and subsequently a PhD) in archaeology, and joined the ASI. He not only went on to become a famous researcher, but also ended up excavating the largest known site of the Deccan chalcolithic, viz., Daimabad!



Varada Khaladkar is an independent researcher. She has acquired training in archaeology and ancient Indian history from Deccan College, Pune, JNU, and University of Calcutta. She specialises in proto and early history of Western Deccan.

(... continued from page 08)

The story of Ajanta

The result is a holistic view of the monument which tells its own story to one who is willing to listen. The coherent, seamless year-by-year Ajanta narrative, woven by Spink within the Short Chronology, thus reads as follows: *“Harisena ascends the imperial throne in 460. By 462, excavation work is initiated in about 22 caves, including Cave 16 sponsored by Varahadeva, and Cave 17 by Upendragupta planned initially as viharas. Harisena’s Cave 1, also designed as a vihara, starts in 466 when Harisena realises that he himself must donate a cave at this magnificent site. The Ashmakas threaten war in 469, due to which Upendragupta orders all work halted, except his own Caves (17, 19, 20) and Harisena’s Cave 1. This is the beginning of the recession when many workmen migrate to Bagh. As the Ashmaka attack looms, Upendragupta rushes his Caves 17, 19 and 20 towards completion. Work altogether stops when a hiatus begins in 472 due to Ashmaka aggression. By about 473, the Ashmakas become increasingly dominant at the site, focussing on Cave 26 while work is renewed on all other caves, except those of the defeated Upendragupta. Harisena dies suddenly (perhaps murdered by the Ashmakas) in 477, when his Cave 1 has not yet been dedicated. In 479 the inept Sarvasena III succeeds his father Harisena, while the*

site’s anxious patrons rush their shrine Buddhas to completion and dedication.

The period of disruption, starts about the year 479, just after the major courtly patrons had rushed to get their caves dedicated and then abandoned the site. Now lay devotees and still remaining monks rushed into the site, to place their own helter-skelter, intrusive images of the Buddha inside and outside every cave which had been brought to life by the dedication rituals for all of the completed shrine Buddhas. Other caves, where the ceremonies never got performed (like Harisena’s splendid Cave 1) were “dead” and never have intrusions.”

The Short Chronology turned a languid, orphan monument into a beehive throbbing with activity; noblemen, merchants, pilgrims, monks, artisans, supervisors, and local devotees from the villages around the site bustling about, rushing desperately against time as political events unfolded ominously before them. Looking to the startling complexity, energy, and beauty of Ajanta, Spink proposes that the zenith of the Golden Age of India must be seen not in the Gupta regime, but in the short-lived reign of the ill-fated Vakataka Emperor Harisena, whose sudden and catastrophic death in about 477 brings this glorious chapter to an abrupt end. The devotional complex of the 30 Buddhist caves of Ajanta is nothing less than a mirror of those halcyon days.



Shubha Khandekar is the author-illustrator of *ArchaeoGiri: The Bridge Between the Archaeologist and the Common Man*, an infotainment book on Indian archaeology. After an M.A. in History from Delhi University, she completed her diploma in archaeology from the School of Archaeology, ASI, New Delhi, and has field experience of excavations at Shringaverpur, Inamgaon and Chandore. Her writings include history and archaeology related features and historical scripts for Amar Chitra Katha. She worked on the news desks at *The Economic Times*, and *Free Press Journal*, Mumbai. She has been a communications consultant with St. Jude India Childcare Centres, Mumbai, and with Moneylife India Foundation.

Jaina basadis of North Karnataka

North Karnataka has been a strong centre for Jainism, with the region having many monuments and basadis. Abdul Aziz Rajput chronicles the Jaina influence in this region.

The origins of Jainism, a faith that expresses the śramaṇic stream of thought, goes back to pre-Aryan times. Since sources for this hoary past are obscure, we have to fall back upon secondary courses for the reconstruction of Jaina history and thought. But one thing is certain; scholars today accept that the Jaina religion existed much before Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, the last of the 24 tīrthaṅkaras. Jaina tradition says that the Jaina religion is eternal, even though preached successively by the tīrthaṅkaras in different time-cycles.



Jainism entered Karnataka after the 4th century

The Karnataka origins

Jainism is said to have entered Karnataka after the fourth century, and retained its popularity till the mediaeval period. Jainism wielded its influence in North Karnataka, and Gulbarga region became a stronghold of Jainism. Rulers from great dynasties such as Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mānyakheṭa (modern Malkhed), and Cālukyas of Badāmī and Kalyāṇī patronised the faith. Many *basadis* (Jaina temples with residences of scholars attached to the shrine), monasteries and sculptures of *tīrthaṅkaras*, *yakṣas* and *yakṣiṇīs* etc., are found scattered in a dilapidated condition even today in North Karnataka. The Bagalkot, Bijapur, Gulbarga and Bidar districts of North Karnataka have inherited a unique cultural heritage, as these areas were ruled by such ambitious royal dynasties as Rāṣṭrakūṭas, Cālukyas, Yādavas, Kalachurīs, Vijayanagara emperors, Bahāmanī sultans and their off-shoots. As a result, this region acquired many religions and cults. Both Vedic and non-Vedic religions have left deep impressions on the socio-religious life of the people. Of the non-Vedic religions, Jainism played an important role in the region. Under the royal patronage of Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Cālukyas, Jainism became a very popular cult.

Eminent Jaina preachers, ascetics and monks like Jinasena, Guṇabhadra, Mahāvīra, Akalanka, Indranandi, Puśpadanta, tri-ratnas of Kannada literature namely Pampa, Ponna and Ranna flourished in this region. Hence an attempt is made in this article to throw some light on the Jaina *basadis* and sculptures lying orphaned in the temple premises in this region.

The Jaina basadis

Before the 12th century, Jainism was the dominating religion of this region. About a third of the total population were Jains. Especially during the rule of Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Chalukyas and their feudatories, namely the Haihayas and Kalachurīs, Jainism reached its peak. Many *basadis* were built throughout the region. Many places of this region became popular as Jain *kṣetras*. These centres have played an important role in the socio-religious life of the people of this region. Almost each village had a Jaina *basadi* that served as an important centre of Jainism.

Hallur, ancient Hallavūr, lies 23 km from Bagalkot, and is a prominent Jain centre that grew under the Cālukyas of Badāmī. On the outskirts of the town is a beautiful but ruined Jaina temple, locally called *mele gudi*, the upper temple. It is built in the Badāmī Cālukyan style; it has a square sanctum, *ardha maṇḍapa*, and a spacious *navaraṅga*. It shows the later intrusion of a *sivaliṅga* in the sanctum. Its lintel has no images. The *ardha maṇḍapa* is ordinary and the *navaraṅga* has 20 pillars, four of which are ornamental. On either side of the *ardha maṇḍapa*, *dvārapālakas* and Jaina figures can be seen. On the outer walls of the *navaraṅga*, 24 *tīrthaṅkaras* in *samabhaṅgī* are well carved. The entrance to the *navaraṅga* has *jālandharas* on both sides. The Jain basadi looks very attractive at dusk. There is a ninth century inscription on the *maṇḍapa* pillar of the upper temple on which only the name “Trimuṣṭi Deva” can be made out.

A delightful legend

Babanagar is an ancient Jain centre 32 km from Bijapur, an important town of the Kalachurī era. The Pārśvanātha *basadi*, situated in a narrow lane of the town, is completely renovated. It is a two-storied building. The *garbhagrha* has a main gate which is so small that only a single person can enter at a time. The gate of the *garbhagrha* is flanked by *yakṣa* and *yakṣiṇī* figurines carved in black stone and bear Jina icons on their heads. The image of Pārśvanātha, the main deity installed in the centre, is carved in green-black granite, and is 45 cm in height. It is a mesmerising sculpture, with its face exuding tranquillity and serenity. On the main platform there are several bronze images of Jinas. On the second floor there is a *mānastamba*, which is just above the main entrance of the *basadi*.



A Jaina monument in North Karnataka

Legend has it that the idol of Pārśvanātha was in the possession of the Muslim queen of an Ādilśāhī ruler. She kept this idol as a toy among her valuables. Once, so the legend goes, when she was suffering from severe pain and no treatment worked, a layman from the village dreamed about the Jina sculpture. He went to the Ādilśāhī sultān and offered to treat the severe pain of the queen. The sultān agreed to it. The man applied water to her affected part, and she was cured. The happy sultān asked what the man wanted as a reward. "I want the Jina idol in the queen's collection," replied the man. The sultān granted the wish. On his way back to his village, as he rested at a place, an old man who was from Gundwad in Raybag taluka, also a traveller, saw the Pārśvanātha idol. He was so happy that he gave a bath to the idol with the drinking water he was carrying during the travel. Till today this tradition continues as on every Ugādi Amāvas people from Gundawad village bring water from River Krishna in a number of small pots, and give a bath to the idol. Meanwhile, the Ādilśāhī sultān gave a grant of 30 acres of land to the Pārśvanātha *basadi*.

Towards the west of Bijapur city at the distance of six kilometres, near the dargah of a Sufi saint Khwajah Aminuddin Aala, there is an ancient *basadi* of Sahasraphaṇi Pārśvanātha. It is roughly square and is strengthened by semi-polished stones. The small entrance at the south leads to the rectangular assembly hall which opens to three doors of the temple all along the western wall. There are several Jaina images on the raised platform at the centre. The Sahasraphaṇi Pārśvanātha idol is claimed to be 1,500 years old. The graceful black idol of Pārśvanātha is sitting in the padmāsana posture. Generally a seven-hooded serpent covers the head of Pārśvanātha, but here the serpent has 1,008 hoods. Even more remarkable is the fact that all the hoods are interconnected and during the abhiṣeka, the milk poured over the central hood spreads, and all the 1008 hoods shower milk over Pārśvanātha.

Ingalgi village of Chittapur taluka, four miles away from the Shahbad railway station, has a large number of temples and

other artefacts associated with Jainism. One temple dedicated to Jina was found in a dilapidated condition. Another was a heap of ruins. They must have been fair specimens of the Kalāyṇī Cālukyan architecture in their original state. The first *basadi* is situated in the heart of the village. This *basadi* was constructed by Jakkaladevi, a queen of the Cālukya king Vikramāditya-VI, and the circumstances of its origin have been narrated in an interesting manner in the inscriptional record. The inscription, now on a stone at the entrance, is in old Kannada script, and dates back to the 11th century. The inscribed slab had fallen into a corner of the madhya maṇḍapa of the *basadi*.

Lines 19 to 45 narrate an interesting story about the installation of the Jina image and the making of an endowment. It states that on an auspicious day, a certain trader brought an image of Lord Mahāmanikya to Jakkalādevi, who looked upon the image with great admiration. The Cālukya king happened to drop in at this moment. Impressed by the sight, he looked at her face and said, "This image of Jina is peerless in beauty. He is the traditional tutelary deity of your household. Do install this image in the township of your authority; it will for ever be a source of inspiration for the followers of your faith!"

Thus instructed by the king, she installed the image and caused a magnificent *basadi* to be constructed over it, a model for others to emulate. Then she prayed to her family teacher, Indrase-na Bhaṭṭāraka, to receive an endowment duly bestowed by her for its maintenance.

Another *basadi*, now totally renovated in modern style, is popularly called Jakkavana or Vajjakkavana Gudi. It is located outside the village. There is an image of Queen Jakkalādevi whom the local people address as Kuśmaṇḍinī yakṣī, but I could not get any symbol of Kuśmaṇḍinī yakṣī at the site. The *garbhagrha* has a sculpture of Mahāvīra on a *simha pīṭha*. Jina figures are carved on the door jambs.



Abdul Aziz Rajput is a freelance historian and translator, of Bijapur Karnataka, and has authored two books titled *A Historical Guide to Bijapur Monuments*, and *The History of Temples and Inscriptions of Bijapur District*, translated above 100 genealogies and *farmans* of medieval times from Persian, Arabic, to English, and Kannada. He has received many awards.

Killing a tigress

The current debate about killing a man-eating tigress in Maharashtra, is indicative of our rather ambivalent feelings towards wildlife and its conservation. Harshad Sambhamurthy gives us the lowdown.

Of all the tools available to protect and conserve an endangered tiger, killing it is certainly an unlikely, and astonishing one. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court's recent dismissal of an appeal to stop forest rangers from killing a "man-eating" tigress officially known as T1, or affectionately, Avni, in Maharashtra, is demonstrative of a larger and more nuanced issue; where short-term utilitarian pragmatism is prioritised over a much-needed psychological transformation in how we perceive, and relate with our wildlife.

The tiger and conservation

The tiger is our national animal; an emblem of longevity, a legendary creature that has predominated our collective fascination with it for centuries. Now endangered, its population — contrary to whatever recent increases provide optimism for — is alarmingly low in comparison to just a century previously. In a rapidly urbanising India, a tiger's search for prey and space in ever more fragmented landscapes forces them worryingly close to human settlements. This encroachment, whether of the tiger into human habitation, or the human into tiger habitat, is a matter of constant debate and varying perspective.

Afforded the highest amount of protection under the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), it is only deemed legal to kill a tiger when retaliating in self-defence, or with the requisite permission under the WPA. Usually, the Chief Wildlife Conservator of a state is responsible for declaring a tiger a "man-eater"; giving the necessary evidence — that the tiger in question has preyed on humans several times — to support such a declaration.

When dealing with a "man-eater", preference is given to tranquillisation, or translocation; but when unsuccessful, the last resort, often coupled with immense political and societal pressures, is to kill the animal. However, and perhaps more importantly, a tiger responsible for killing more than one human within a reserve forest area is not a "man-eater" under the WPA; for the fault lies with the intrusive human trespassing into an area allocated for the tiger.

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T1 supposedly consumed a substantial percentage of a human corpse, successfully avoided tranquillisation over the past six months, and was blamed for three human deaths within reserve forest areas. A petition was recently launched to save her and her two cubs.

Is the tiger to be blamed for the 'conflict'?

Humans are unnatural prey for tigers, though in our fractured world, we push tigers to the peripheries of their natural habitats, feeding into the issue of human-wildlife conflict. A "man-eating" tigress is certainly a problem for humans, but tranquillising the tigress and transferring her to another location spells danger for other communities. Likewise, placing her in an enclosure, like a concrete and synthetic zoo, raises other moral issues pertaining to potential divergences in her psychology, physiology and endurance. Killing her is immoral, unnecessary, careless, and lethargic in promoting her conservation.

The presumptive conclusion of placing a human life over and above the life of an equally vital species — albeit an endangered "man-eating" one, critical for the healthy functioning of its surrounding ecosystem, presents a challenging moral dilemma. On the one hand, the utilitarian view that the killing of one "man-eating" tigress will provide a greater benefit to a larger number of people holds considerable weight, both logically and practically. At a fundamental level though, to have arrived at a consensus whereby killing is an option for conservation, is mind-boggling.

To be clear, I am not advocating for the placement of a tigress's life over and above the lives of humans. Rather, I am attempting to understand where, and why, we have failed to recognise the pitfalls of our own imperialistic expansion into forests in the name of progress and advancement. The endangerment of a species prompts one to protest policy, or for a policymaker to demarcate a protected area for those same species

STOP KILLING TIGERS #LetAvniLive



Avni the Tigress
with her cubs
(Trap camera images)

The Save Avni campaign, which goes against the government's position

we have collectively — sometimes indirectly and ignorantly — imperilled, and whose populations we have severely jeopardised.

Human-animal conflict is a result of our burgeoning growth and mushrooming sprawl. An unfortunate extension, and perhaps expected offshoot of this is the widening chasm between conservationists and local villagers living with a “man-eater”; posing one of biggest challenges in conservation. Conservationists in general have, regrettably, focussed on extrinsic means and pathways for safeguarding the natural world; by

making a bad situation marginally better with the tools and technologies we presently have.

But there is no intrinsic change. None, in how we perceive and relate to nature and wildlife, which is essentially the root cause of the divisive human-wildlife fiasco we find ourselves in. The scope for intrinsic change is staggering, yet, psychological blocks to change, coated with a cynicism that dismisses and brands such an approach as excessively panglossian, are equally colossal. An intrinsic means of conservation is based on harnessing the power of

collaboration across a variety of sympathies, and in effectively using creative platforms steeped in indigenous knowledge systems — like storytelling, folklore, art, music and theatre — to re-engage with nature in a methodology that is personally, culturally, and historically relevant to each individual.

Without this intrinsic shift, we might, in the future, still consider killing a tigress as a constructive step towards her conservation. Hypocrisy at its finest!



Harshad Sambhamurthy is an environmental educator with a strong foundational background in sustainability. A recent graduate of NYU's Environmental Conservation Education Programme, Harshad is striving to develop an environmental consciousness that recognises the inherent link between culture and nature by using creative educational and pedagogical tools like storytelling and folklore. He is based in Chennai. He can be reached at: harshad.samba@gmail.com

Paper cups, not a choice?

Just when you thought you were being most environmentally conscious by using paper cups, there comes evidence that even paper cups are lined with plastic! Yet, not all is lost, says Usha Hariprasad, as she describes several viable alternatives.

Recently I had been to a colleague's house warming ceremony. The house was grand, the food was great, served in areca plates, cold lemon juice was poured into paper cups, and we got return gifts in paper bags. I was pleased. No plastic water bottles or cups, and everything eco-friendly, or so I thought.

Paper cups are not eco-friendly

Imagine my surprise when I read an article in *The Hindu* recently about the issues with paper cups. It mentioned that paper cups are lined with plastic or wax. This is done to make it sturdier and impervious to leaks. Unfortunately, this makes the product difficult to compost. The plastic and paper components of the cup need to be separated. This means these cups cannot be composted using your traditional backyard composting tools.

Not just this, there are more issues. Creating a paper cup is not that eco-friendly. An article titled 'After all, your paper cup is not that eco-friendly' in *The Times of India* reported that it takes around three lakh litres of water to make 60,000 cups, not to mention the raw materials – wood, oil, being used in the process, and the resulting pollutants it releases. Similarly, to recycle these cups it takes around 26,000 litres of water plus 250 kg of air pollutants that get released into the air. The greenhouse gas, methane, released is also worse – it is 23 times worse than carbon dioxide.

Paper cups usage

Yet, we continue to use paper cups thinking they are a better choice when compared to plastic. Not just individuals, organisations too



Paper cups, unfortunately, are not the way to go!

continue to use them. The rules are not strict, and sometimes not clear too. Take the case of Bangalore. Though the Karnataka government has banned the use of plastics in government meetings and functions, paper cups are still not prohibited. Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) still uses them in meetings. However, plastic bottles have been banned, and BBMP has urged officials to bring their own water bottles.

Globally, there have been a lot of advancements. We know that paper cups lined with polyethylene are not biodegradable. However, if a city has a paper cup converter unit, then such cups can be recycled into other products. James Cropper recycling machines in UK just do this. The recycling units churn out paper from the disposable cups. First, plastic and paper components of the disposable cups get separated. Plastic gets sent for recycling, and fibre is cleaned and mixed with dye, virgin fibres etc., to

form pulp. The pulp then passes through various stages and finally through stream rollers, to become rolls of paper – the final product. The company has tied up with McDonald's, Starbucks etc., to get the disposable cups. Rather a neat solution, isn't it?

Some companies have tried to address the issue at source. Companies like Goldman and Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BAML) have asked their staff to ditch plastic and bring their own bottles to office. It has also plans to introduce waste distribution system that can handle biodegradable cups, plates, and other crockery. BAML has also opted for eco-friendly options instead of single 'use and throw' items.

In the US, incentives are offered for individuals to bring their own cups. Companies like Starbucks offer 10 per cent discount to customers for getting their own cups.

Alternatives to paper cups

Other alternatives too have been tried out. There are recyclable cups that have arrived in the market. Instead of plastic, new options have been tried. Cups like reCUP come with a resin coating that has 40 – 50 percent less plastic. This makes it easier for the recycling units to recycle. However, they still cannot be composted at home.

Zeus, an Irish Global packing solutions has come up with a product called Treefree Cup. This is made from bagasse that is the left over extract from sugar cane processing. The lids of the cups are made from corn starch. Though their product does reduce the burden on trees, it still requires specialised plants for composting. Hence, Zeus ensures that collector bins are provided at outlets for collecting disposables. The bins are then taken for compost and taken to the correct waste facility. Similarly, a Berlin-based Startup called Kaffeeform uses ground coffee beans to produce cups. These cups are long lasting and reusable as well.

There is mention of corn starch cups as well. But once again, it does not solve the problem. Growing corn for creating cups is a strain on existing land and soil resources, and what's more, it contaminates the soil as well as it requires and uses a lot of fertilisers and pesticides. And they have a similar problem. Products made from areca and corn-starch take time to disintegrate.

In The Netherlands, cup producer Beautiful cups and Renewi, a recycling and waste unit, have come together to offer closed loop solution. Beautiful Cups made from 95 percent cardboard and 5 percent plastic, get recycled into toilet papers. The cups are collected in special bags and Renewi upcycles them into toilet paper. The plastic component of the cups is also recycled. Not just that,



Corn starch cups, an alternative to paper cups

for every 7,000 cups they recycle, they plant one tree in a rainforest. This project has been rolled out in 10 countries so far.

Recently, a Chennai family demonstrated that a plastic free wedding is possible. V.C. Kannan and his family planned all the details from shopping to invitations to food, to eliminate plastic and ensure zero waste wedding.

There are other smart solutions too. In Germany a Munich based start-up called Recup has come cup at a café, and after use return it to

the café. The deposit gets returned to you, the cups returned get washed and reused. More than 1,000 cafes have joined this venture, and they are mapped via an app of Recup. So the customer can return the coffee cups at any of these cafes. There is one problem though. Their lids are still not washable, hence not safe for reuse, and so customers have to consider that.

The way forward

Recently, a Chennai family demonstrated that a plastic free wedding is possible. V.C. Kannan and his family planned all the details from shopping to invitations to food, to eliminate plastic and ensure zero waste wedding. Tumblers were used in place of cups and bottles, banana leaves served as plates, and eco-friendly cards were used for invitations. When a big event like weddings can be planned systematically to eliminate waste and plastic, then why can't we as individuals strive to make small changes? Can't we use steel cutlery and mugs? Can't we afford to take our own mugs and bottles? Think about it. After all, change starts with us individuals.



Usha Hariprasad is a freelancer who is fond of travelling, discovering new places and writing about travel related destinations around Bangalore at 'Citizen Matters'. Currently, she works in a trekking organisation.

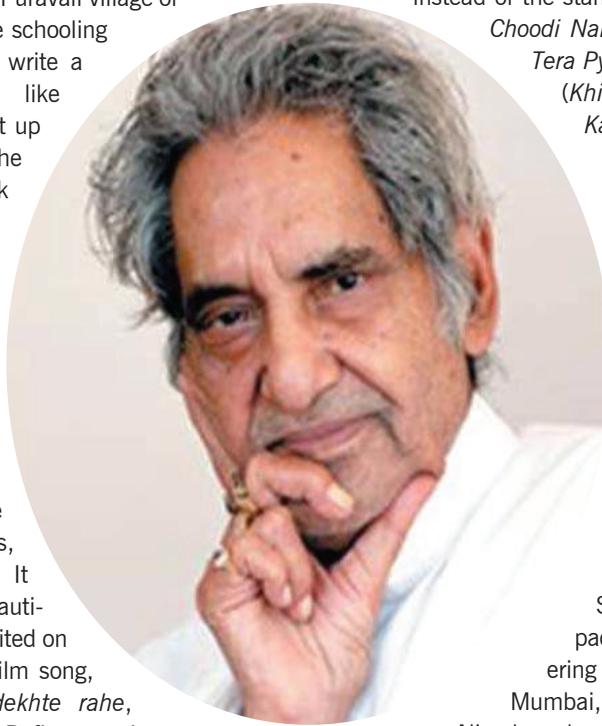
KAVI GOPALDAS 'NEERAJ'

The romantic wordsmith (1925-2018)

Beedi-smoker Gopaldas Saxena 'Neeraj' (4 January 1925–19 July 2018), Indian poet, song writer, and author of Hindi literature, in a vest and lungi, with a several-days-old stubble and a distinctly bleary look about him, was a far cry from the wizard of words he was. He offered unadorned, everyday emotions that anyone could relate to - heartache, memory, the joyous beauty found in nature, ego, and a sense of helplessness against the onslaught of time – and in a way, that did not require that one arm oneself with heavy vocabulary.

Born in a poor family in Puravali village of Etawah in Uttar Pradesh, while schooling itself, he had already begun to write a little, influenced by poets like Harivansh Rai Bachchan. Caught up in the freedom struggle of the 1930s and 40s, his early work naturally had a revolutionary shade. Neeraj remained observant of society and the polity, and turned his critical gaze into rousing poetry. However, soon his work leaned to romance, beauty, and spiritualism.

Neeraj was among the first romantic poets of the 1960s, the era of *Kavi sammelans*. It began with his most popular, beautiful and sad poem, one he had recited on the radio in 1951, and also a film song, *Karwaan guzar gaya, gubaar dekhte rahe*, sung equally well by Mohammed Rafi, to music set by Roshan. This debut film as a writer in R. Chandra's film, *Nayi Umar Ki Nayi Fasal* (1966), bombed at the box-office, but its songs immediately struck a chord, capturing the angst of the young Indian generation. Though he refused to move to Bombay, his poems were turned into songs. Dev Anand, however, mesmerised watching him recite it at a *mushaira*, later brought him to Mumbai to compose songs. The rest is history. Hit songs continued from the wordsmith. They included, *Phoolon Ke Rang Se, Shokhiyon Se Gholi Jaaye, Rangila Re*, besides the patriotic tune *Taaqat Watan Ki Humse Hai* (*Prem Pujari*, 1970). Notwithstanding his romantic songs and poetry of sadness and betrayal, his most memorable composition based on marshal music, *Taaqat Watan Ki Hum Se Hai*, set to pipes and drums, like a proper marshal band, was elevating. And no surprise, almost every year at the Beating Retreat on Republic Day, the bands



play this tune. With Shankar-Jaikishan *Likhe Jo Khat Tujhe* (*Kanyadaan*, 1968) and a song that would, in later years, inadvertently become an anthem of gay love, *Aadmi Hun Aadmi Se Pyar Karta Hoon* (*Pehchan*, 1970) and *Chanda Aur Bijli*.

In 1970, he wrote the iconic *Ae Bhai Zara Dekh Ke Chalo* for Raj Kapoor's *Mera Naam Joker*. In 1971, *Tere Mere Sapne* (*Jeevan Ki Bagiya Mehkegi* and *Ae Maine Kasam Li* and *Jaise Radha Ne Mala Japi*); *Gambler* (*Dil Aaj Shayar Hai* written in the *nazm* style of free verse, instead of the standard *mukhda-antara* format, *Choodi Nahin Yeh Mera and Mera Mann Tera Pyaasa*). Then it was *Sharmilee* (*Khilte Hain Gul Yahan, Kaise Kahen Hum and O Meri Sharmeelee, Megha Chaaye Aadhi Raat and Aaj Madhosh Hua Jaaye Re*). *Dheere Se Jana Khatiyon Mein O Khatmal...* for Dev Anand's *Chhupa Rustam* (1973) and *'Sunday Ko Pyar Huwa, Monday Ko Iqrar...* for Kanyadan, constituted his frivolous songs.

After the death of S.D. Burman and Shankar, of Shankar-Jaikishan fame, he packed his bags, in 1975, considering himself as 'unlucky' for Mumbai, and returned to return to Aligarh, where he taught Hindi literature, published poetry compilations, and recited at *mushairas* with huge success.

From diving into the river for coins as an impoverished youth, to being appointed chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Bhasha Sansthan by the Samajwadi government with cabinet minister rank, he was later Chancellor of Mangalayatan University, Aligarh. Surprisingly, a week before his death, he had sought euthanasia in a letter to the Aligarh district magistrate. Awarded Padma Shri in 1991 and Padma Bhushan in 2007, his was a rewarding, fulfilling life full of passion and creativity.

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ANNAPURNA DEVI

The melodious silence (1927-2018)

The legendary Annapurna Devi (16 April 1927–13 October 2018) nee Roshanara Khan, was a surbahar (bass sitar) player of Hindustani classical music. Named 'Annapurna' by former Maharaja Brijnath Singh, she was born at Maihar, a small princely state of present Madhya Pradesh, India, where her father Allauddin Khan was a royal court musician, and founder of the Senia Maihar *gharana* of Hindustani classical music. Music had caused marital problems in her elder sister's conservative in-law's house, but Allauddin perceived that Annapurna had a genuine interest in music, and her *taalim* began with vocal Dhrupad training, then the sitar, and then shifted to the surbahar, a larger and more difficult cousin of the sitar, but ultimately a more rewarding instrument. Soon she even started guiding many of her father's disciples, in classical music, as well as in the techniques and intricacies of instrumental performances.

Aged 14, in 1941, converting to Hinduism, she married her father's talented student, sitar maestro Ravi Shankar. Their only musician son, Shubhendra Shankar, died prematurely of contracted bronchial pneumonia in the U.S. on 15 September 1992. Ravi and Annapurna, in the 1950s performed duets in Delhi and Calcutta (Kolkata), principally at the college of her brother, Ali Akbar Khan. Connoisseurs and music critics believe her to be a more gifted musician. Totally absorbed in her playing, eyes closed, she seemed totally cut off from the world. Shankar was ambitious and egocentric; and loved to shine alone in the sky and soon started getting insecure, suffering from an inferiority complex since she used to be applauded in concerts more than he was. This led to the discord in their marriage. But while she was so gifted, she also had a tremendous temper, like her father.

A puritan, Annapurna was allegedly enraged when she came to know of Ravi Shankar's extra marital dalliances. Again, while she wanted to steadfastly stick to the music her father had taught her, her husband always looked for opportunities to experiment. Both were pinnacles of the two functions of music – as an inner doorway to divine joy, and as a medium of sharing divine joy with others.

Hrishikesh Mukherjee's popular film *Abhimaan*, was based loosely on their marriage. To save her marriage, Annapurna Devi even vowed never to perform in public again, but eventually divorced him in 1962. Moving to Mumbai, Annapurna remained a recluse for most of her life, rarely stepping out of her residence. She stonewalled the media and was not photographed since 1956. A legend, she was more heard of, than heard. The tragedy is that her music was lost to the world. She never made a recording or socialised, but still monitored her select students in the drawing room, while she cooked and cleaned. Her determination to hold her vow, even after the marriage was lost, even after Shankar passed away, was a twisted way to deprive the world of her music, the unforgiving finger of blame pointing forever to Ravi Shankar.

In 1982, she married her student Rooshikumar Pandya, then 42, a management consultant, and a well-known communications expert, and a successful satirist in the United States. He died in 2013 of a cardiac arrest. Three decades of marriage to him seemed to have settled her, and healed long-held scars. She was the true Saraswati of Indian classical music, the Guru Maa - a combination of music teacher and spiritual guru to hundreds of students. She was unhappy at the declining standards in music, its lack of purity, the flight of excellence, all vanishing in favour of crowd-pleasing antics.

She was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1977, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1991. In 1999, she was conferred the Deshikottam, an honorary doctorate degree by the Visva-Bharati University. In 2004, SNA appointed her as the prestigious Ratna fellow in 2004. At 91 years, the doyenne of Hindustani classical music, died in Mumbai of respiratory infection, and other age-related problems.

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CAPTAIN SUNIL KUMAR CHAUDHARY, KC, SM

A true and brave patriot (1980-2008)

Captain Sunil Kumar Chaudhary was born on 22 June 1980, to Lt. Col. P.L. Chaudhary and Satya Chaudhary at Shaheed Joginder Nagar, in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir. The eldest of three brothers, he was educated in Kendriya Vidyalayas, and graduated from the Garware College of Commerce, Pune. He joined the MBA course at Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune. He was brilliant and hardworking, with a good personality. He won many prizes in sports, and represented junior nationals in swimming and diving. He excelled in football and boxing. He used to visit his younger brother, Ankur Chaudhary, undergoing training at the NDA (National Defence Academy) at Khadakvasla. During his visits to the NDA, he was inspired by the statue of Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey who had been awarded the Param Vir Chakra. He dropped the MBA course and joined the IMA on 1 July 2003. He was commissioned on 10 December 2004, and moved to Kolkata. He had expressed a desire to join the 7/11 Gorkha Rifles, the regiment of Captain Pandey. He joined 7/11 Gorkha Rifles on 1 February 2005.

The unit moved to Tinsukhia District in May 2006 for counter-insurgency operations against the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). He was awarded the Sena Medal on 26 January 2008, for his courage and leadership in killing two ULFA militants in 2007.

On 27 January 2008, officers and men of his unit at the Army's Kopahtoli Base in Tinsukhia District were celebrating the award of Sena Medal to Chaudhary, when information was received at noon that four to five ULFA cadres had taken shelter in two houses at Rongagore, Borpathar. The militants included hardcore cadre, Joonu Bhuyan, who was involved in many heinous crimes.

He led a team of three from the front to charge into the house, along with help from a similar team. As the army closed in, the militants took shelter in the dense Mechaki reserve forest, and a fierce gun battle ensued. He was the prime target as he had shot two militants a year ago. He was unsuccessfully attacked twice on earlier occasions. In spite of having received a volley in the chest, he continued to fight, and killed two militants, and wounded one.

Bhuyan managed to escape. Chaudhary was grievously injured, and airlifted to the Air Force Hospital at Roroiya, where he was declared dead. Captain Chaudhary died just 24 hours after he had received the Sena Medal for shooting two militants a year earlier. He was awarded the Kirti Chakra (KC, posthumous).

His grief stricken and proud Commanding Officer, Colonel Pramit Saxena, commented that he was an excellent and committed officer. 27 January will be remembered as a sad day for that day a brave and gallant officer died fighting. His body was moved to the Air

Force station in a six-vehicle convoy. The

body was received at the Jammu airport by his father Lt. Col. P.L.

Chaudhary. The tricolour-draped

body reached Govindsar village at night. Like the

celebrations by his unit on

27 January, the family

members were also

celebrating the award of

Sena Medal when news

was received of his

martyrdom. He was

engaged to Monica, a

lecturer in Jammu College,

and the two were to be

married on 9 March. The

Commanding Officer's wife

had spoken to her that very

morning to congratulate her. The

Captain had already applied for leave.

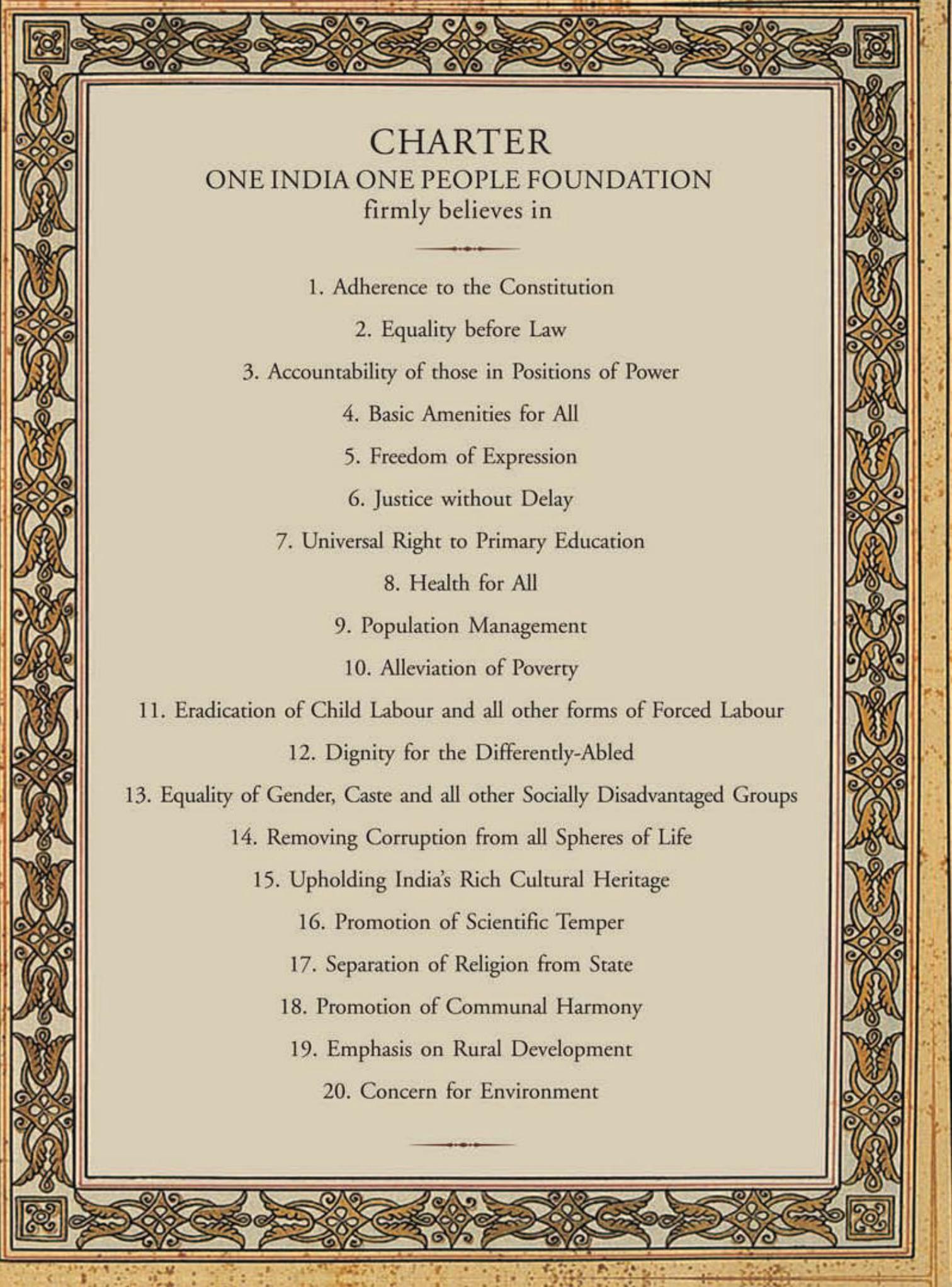


The whole village came out to line the streets as the body was taken in an army vehicle to the sounds of mournful tunes played by the band. When Sunil was awarded the Sena Medal, he had asked his father, "Father, do I make you feel proud of me?" "He kept his promise of making me proud," said Col. Chaudhary and broke down as the pyre was lit.

"And they who for their country die
Shall fill an honored grave,
For glory lights the soldier's tomb
And beauty weeps the brave."

- Joseph Rodman Brake

- Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



CHARTER
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-

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?

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Be a Proud Indian. Make this country Great, Strong and United.



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
(October 9 १९३० – February 23 २००७)
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE