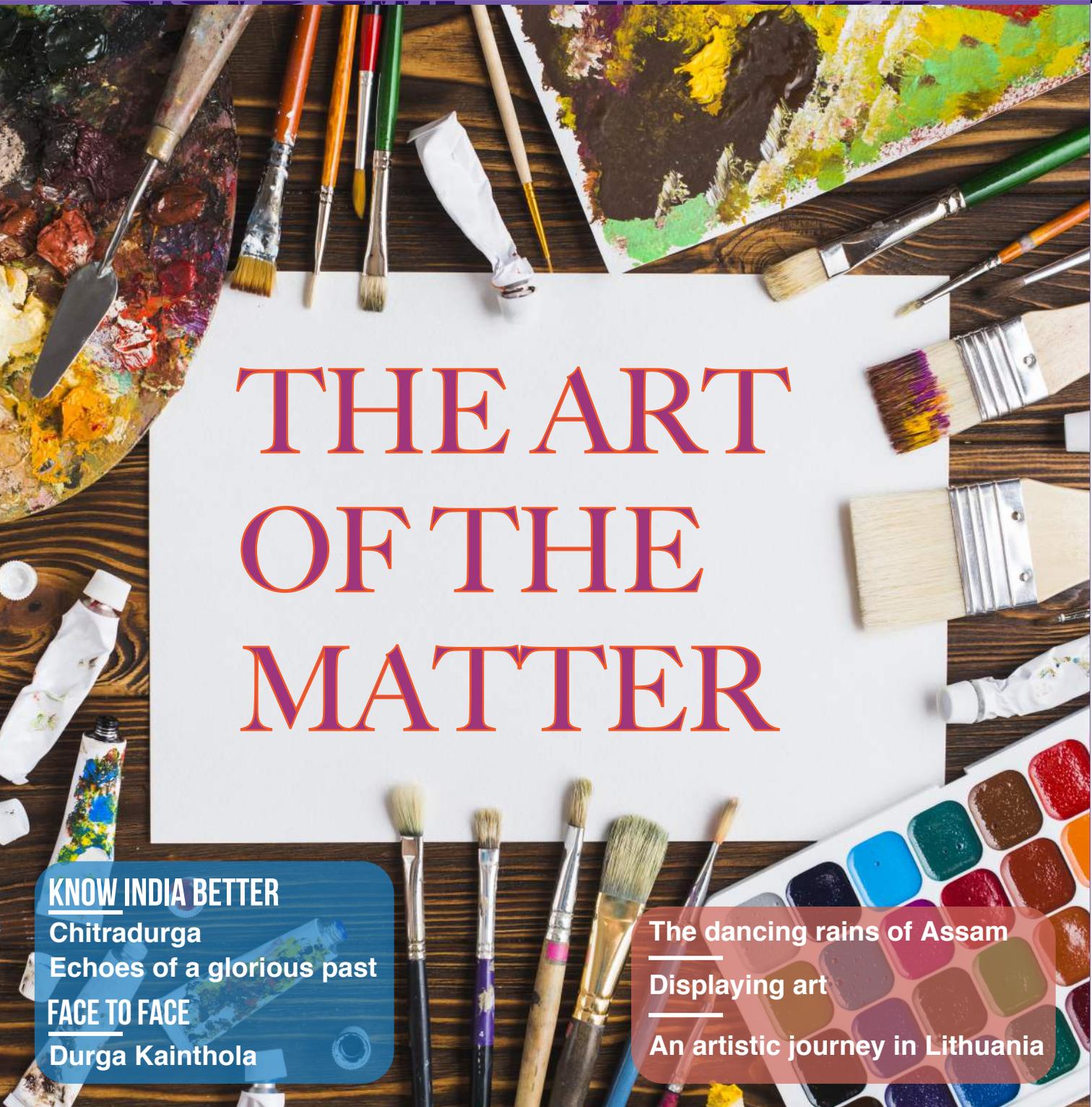


ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined



THE ART OF THE MATTER

KNOW INDIA BETTER

Chitradurga
Echoes of a glorious past

FACE TO FACE

Durga Kainthola

The dancing rains of Assam

Displaying art

An artistic journey in Lithuania

WE'VE LIVED FOR 35,000 YEARS ON THIS ISLAND... IN PEACE AND IN HARMONY WITH NATURE. WHY DON'T WE CONVERT THE OUTSIDE WORLD TO OUR CLEARLY SUPERIOR WAYS, FATHER?

THEY ARE TOO STUPID TO UNDERSTAND THIS, SON



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GREAT IDEA SIR, TO RENAME A STREET AFTER THE FIRST MAN WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF CHANGING STREET NAMES!

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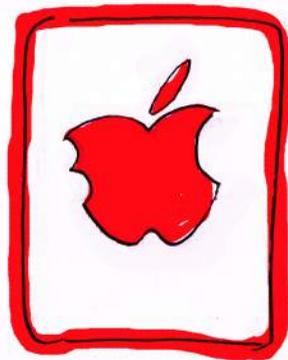
APPARENTLY, IF THEY FALL BACK ON THEIR HEAVY SCHOOL BAGS, THEY CAN'T GET UP - THEY EVENTUALLY DIE!



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APPLE



ZOMATO

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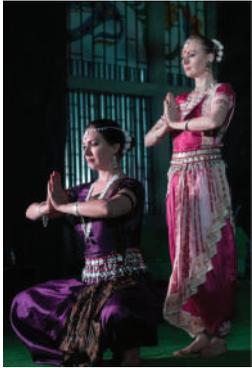
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Managing Editor
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

Editor
Anuradha Dhareshwar

Assistant Editor
E.Vijayalakshmi Rajan

Design
Resurgam Digital LLP

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Sucharita Hegde
Justice S. Radhakrishnan
Venkat R. Chary

Printed & Published by
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for
One India One People Foundation,
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Mumbai - 400 026
Tel: 022-2353 4400
Fax: 022-2351 7544

e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com
oiopsub@fouressindia.com



Alyque Padamsee



Lalan Sarang



Brigadier K.S. Chandpuri
MVC, VSM

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The dancing rains of Assam

The annual Creative Festival Dancing Rain held in Assam in January will continue its task of taking up issues of nature preservation and sustainability. Mamta Chitnis Sen on why this unique festival founded on Indian shores, is making waves internationally.



Alak Pathak, sculptor and founder of Creative Festival Dancing Rain in Assam, looks on at the participating artists at work

COME January, the small village of Barpathar in Assam, located alongside the border of Meghalaya state, will play host to the annual Creative Festival Dancing Rain. One of the much looked forward to events, the festival is the brainchild of sculptor Alak Pathak, an alumni of M S University of Arts, Baroda. The art camp begins on January 2, and culminates in the festival on January 11-12, 2019.

The genesis

“I wanted to do something for my village, and since I was always brought up surrounded by nature, I thought I should do something for it in return,” he says, further adding that this fuelled in him the idea of setting up his own NGO called ‘Parivartan’.

“Parivartan is a space for art, culture, nature and adventure. I started this initiative in the year 2008 by hosting the first ever in North-East India, an international art camp on nature and environment. The organisation continues to do events and activities related to art, culture, health, environment, and tourism, so far. The aim of the NGO is to develop the art scenario and preserve the tradition, culture, and developing nature of North-East India,” he states, further adding that the festival aims to bring awareness amongst locals and support in the international level, regarding environment and global changes in India. The name Creative Festival Dancing Rain, he continues,

originated from the colourful butterflies he had come across in the Basistha area during the monsoons. “The name Dancing Rain clicked in my mind. The area where the river Bahini and Shiva temple are located actually comes under Garbhanga forest reserve. The latter is famous for butterflies that resemble ‘dancing’ when moving around. Unfortunately their numbers too are decreasing due to environmental changes,” he points out.

“In 2012, a group of creative travellers from various parts of Europe, South America and Australia arrived at our home. Along with Sebastain Vilarino, we shaped the idea of a creative festival to include art, music, and environmental activities,” he states, continuing that their first idea, was to hold the festival on the banks of the river Bahini in Alak’s neighbourhood. Participants, both local and international, have been involved in the festival through various creative ways like shows, workshops, discussions, lectures and art exhibitions.

“The Bahini is a holy river for Hindus which flows next to the famous Shiva temple built in the 18th century by the Ahom kingdoms. The temple was under severe environmental threat and that also brought my attention on saving the river. We tried our best to convey our message to the public by organising a festival there,” he recalls, further adding that it was a big challenge for them to clean the river, and conduct a festival on its banks.



An art installation at the festival in 2015 (left); An artist creating art on a tree (right)

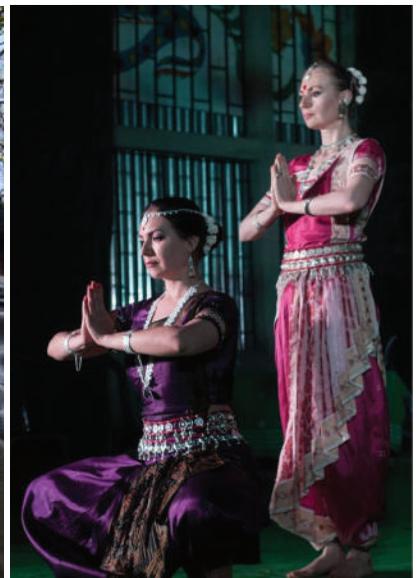
Global participation

The week-long first Basistha Creative Camp was concluded by the Dancing Rain International Festival. Local and international participants took part selflessly in this movement involving the youth. Together they performed various activities which encouraged the public to be a part of this river saving activity. A group of visual and performing artists, environmentalists, jugglers, writers, cultural activists etc., with support from local people, finally managed to clean the river.

Eleven participants from countries like France, Czech Republic, Argentina, Germany and Estonia joined hands with the locals to liven up the riverside with installations, paintings, sculptures, poetry, music, dance, and various socio-cultural activities. The whole festival was

organised without any financial support from government and any private sector, but with some essential material support and volunteering from the participants and well wishers.

“Two of the participants drove all the way from France to support the present environmental issues by using cooking oil collected from various places on their long journey. It was like sending a strong message to protect and preserve the environment, which was the main motto of the festival. Most of the work during the festival was done either with collected materials, or by using materials from the surrounding. A French artist Rose Baque did an installation of ceramics displayed on a tree, while another artist created land art using materials from the surrounding areas. I worked with stones from the river to create my own kind of installation art,” he adds.



International artists at the festival (left); A dance performance by participants in 2018 (right)



An artist at the festival being felicitated

The themes for the festival have always been connected to preservation of forests and nature. During its second year, the festival touched upon the message of ‘Saving the rhinoceros in Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary’, while in the third year it was ‘Let’s Bring Back the Forest’, and in the fourth year it was ‘Garbhanga is the lung of Guwahati city’, the festival touched upon the themes of and preserving the flora and fauna of the Garbhanga Forest Reserve, respectively. Currently in its fifth year, the theme for this 2019 Festival is ‘Recycling and creating a model village’, which includes all necessities which a village or a locality should have. The festival provides music and dance shows, educational workshops, camping, public lectures, environmental movie screening, etc.



Creating art with dry leaves to go with the festival theme of preserving nature

The idea behind this says Alak is to educate people on sustainable ways of living. “What can be better for the village, the locality, and the society around? A village which has proper toilets, a garbage system including recycling and compost making, a library, a playground for kids, a park (in nature). This model village will help send the message to

surrounding villages that they too need to develop accordingly.” Alak points out that such festivals are the need of the hour, as they create awareness on issues that need immediate attention. “Nature in itself is a wonderful piece of art, and we need to work towards preserving it with all our might,” he sums up.



A journalist for over 15 years, Mamta Chitnis Sen has worked with reputed publications like *Mid-Day*, *Society* and her writings and columns have been published in *The Sunday Observer* and *The Daily*. She also worked with the *Sunday Guardian* and handled their Mumbai bureau for eight years reporting not only extensively on various political parties but also on crime, politics, religion, art, community, human interest, and general news. She headed *Dignity Dialogue*, India’s foremost magazine exclusively for the 50 plus age group as the Executive Editor. She presently handles Media Advocacy for Child Rights and You (CRY) – an NGO working for the rights of underprivileged children in India covering the states of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat. Mamta is also an artist having studied painting and ceramics from Sir JJ School of Art, and has exhibited in various groups shows in India and abroad.

A dream museum

*The Sir J J School of Art is an enormous treasure house, and repository of art and art history, says **Dr. Manjiri Thakoor**. While some exemplary restoration has been done and a museum is being planned, one can only hope that more of this art also becomes accessible to everyone.*



The mysterious green bungalow in the JJ School of Art campus will be converted into a museum

G OING down the memory lane, in the mid 1980s, I remember seeing a mysterious looking 'green bungalow' in my college campus of Sir JJ School of Art (JJ). It was then called as the Dean's Bungalow. Who is ever attracted to the residence of higher authorities of one's educational institute? But at JJ we all were absolutely in love with this 'fairy tale' structure. Nestled between thick lush green nature, the 'big green house' was all time 'talk' of the campus. It is difficult to point out a certain time when we began calling the "Dean's Bungalow" as "Kipling's Bungalow". There was a magnetic power about it. The ground plus one structure stands with several small-big rooms, long balconies and two entrances, almost giving a feel of two different bungalows!

The founding of an iconic institute

The need of art education was immensely felt in British India by many, but a Parsi gentleman took the initiative and to his support came a Marathi businessman. Both the gentlemen made their best efforts to bring the dream come true, for their nation. The former was Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, and the latter was Jagannath Shankarseth. The latter insisted on keeping his contribu-

tion a secret, and encouraged Jamsetjee to give his name to the school, which we know today as the Sir J J School of Art. The silent but significant contribution of Jagannath Shankarseth remained hidden in some seldom told stories.

The Fine Art building constructed in 1857 is the oldest of all. Tall ceilings, beautifully designed grill windows, which form patterns of light and shadow in the long, long corridors, spacious studios with huge windows almost allowing the flora and fauna enter without hesitation, captivating murals and sculptures, columns and cornices, proudly adorn the structure, housing thousands of master pieces, quietly! The art school was taken by the ruling British in 1866. Today it is a state-of-the-art college, and more than sixty percent of the students come here from rural areas to study art. The art school is more than their home. Huge Gothic buildings, tall and wide trees...almost embracing each other and forming a thick canopy, narrow, dark paths, carpeted with dried leaves, connecting lawns, grounds, workshop, canteen, stage, and yes the bungalow, comprise the Sir JJ School of Art campus. It has been home to flora-fauna.....and master strokes. It has the prodigious legacy of British and Indian masters of art and philosophy.

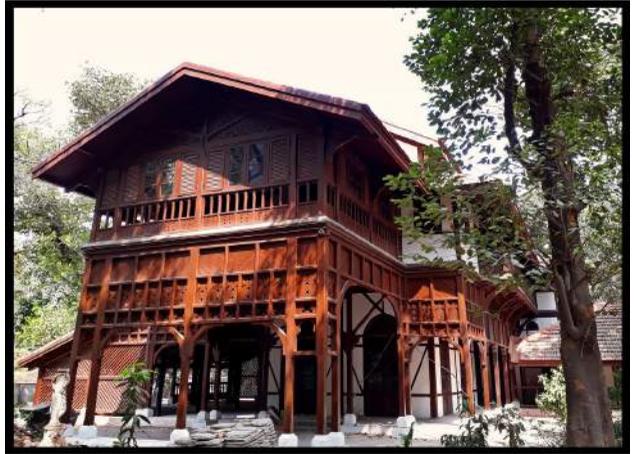


The beautifully designed grill windows which form patterns of light and shadow in the long corridors

Reviving a grand legacy

The restoration of the works of art along with the documentation began very systematically at the art school some time ago. Both the government and the school staff began the work on a serious note. Restoring the treasure of many unsung heroes and reviving the grand legacy of the masters was a big responsibility. Many hands joined this mission. The National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property (NRLC) authentically carried out the process of conservation on many, not all works. But soon the remaining works of art will also be restored by NRLC. In 2010, a report of this collection was submitted to the state government. The Fine Art building holds works of art including paintings and sculptures. On talking to the Dean of School of Art Professor Vishwanath Sabale, he made a special mention of sculptures which were imported to the school for reference study for students as being among these works.

Many murals also were restored. Among the prodigious collection that have been restored are the works of V.S. Gaitonde, K.K. Hebbar and S.H. Raza. Some works are of the studio practice of the art students who are known to us today as pioneers of many art movements. Such works are a visual treat to society. A few of them were exhibited at the 150th year celebration of the art school. But that's not enough, more works should be open for public and student viewing. The school also houses some extremely valuable books and those were



also restored by NRLC. Especially the documentation work of John Griffith, one of the deans of the school of art is significant. It is a remarkable series of works on Ajanta Caves, where the Bengal School artistes were also involved. Such a legacy of Indian art, pre and post-Independence, rest proudly in the colossal structure of the art school. The dean and professors were extremely emotional while talking about this treasure trove. The need to have the collection open for public, and most of all, to students of art and various other disciplines, was a common concern of theirs.

A museum in an educational institute is a great concept. We have references to such, e.g., The Courtauld Institute of Art in London, and the Heras Memorial Museum at St. Xavier's, Mumbai. Such collaborative educational efforts play an important role for not just students who study there, but for students who want to study them. It is an enormous encyclopedia and this city deserves to have access to it. The School of Art houses thousands of masterpieces which are in need of a proper place for display, and open to people. The state government has been keen on taking up a project of 'Making A Museum' in the campus and the Dean's Bungalow is the chosen one for such a noble cause. No doubt. But this has to be a museum with a difference. The beautiful restored house can be a tourist attraction provided that it remains free from conflicts, and becomes a valuable treasure domain for foreigners, Indian tourists, scholars, students, and art lovers.

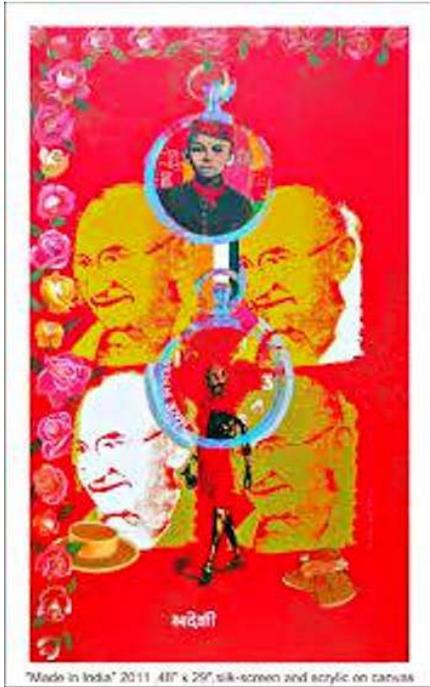
Making of the school, story of the two philanthropists and many more who contributed to the making of The Sir JJ School of Art a world renowned institute, legacy of masterpieces and the masters who made them, records, books, catalogs, films etc., imagine all these being housed in there! The legacy has to be maintained and carried forward.



Dr Manjiri Thakoor is an independent Art Curator and visiting lecturer Sir J J School of Art. She did her Ph.D in Buddhist Sculpture from Mumbai University and her Post-doctoral Fellowship – Sir Dorabji Tata Fellowship at the Heras Institute. She was former Deputy Curator of National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai and is now Hon. Sub-Committee Member, Asiatic Society of Mumbai.

Displaying art

*These are exciting times for artists in India, as avenues for them to display their art have grown exponentially. Yet, there needs to be an even more concerted attempt to encourage young artists, as the dice is still loaded in favour of the established names, says **Shoma A. Chatterji**.*



Artist Durga Kainthola's work titled 'Made in India'

WHAT are art galleries for? Do they exist to showcase the works of artists – painters, sculptors, installation artists and so on, so that art lovers, art collectors and the layman who often wanders in out of curiosity, can have their fill. Or, do they actually play a very significant role in attaching a market value to the work of an artist, that helps the artist to go on with his/her creative work? Do they help budding artists to carry on, and veteran and established artists to reinforce their recognition in the creative world of art and culture?

The role of art galleries

Art galleries are at the core of the value process, especially for peripheral artists, as gatekeepers. They select aspiring artists, shape demand through their clientele, and some even redefine their role to become art producers (gathering funds and coalitions around artistic projects). As such, galleries illustrate the ideal type of cultural intermediaries and their structural dilemmas; translating artistic value into economic price and vice versa, matching consumers' tastes and artists' innovations, combining artists' interests and their own interests as entrepreneurs. These factors are brought out very clearly by Oliver Roueff in his scholarly paper, *Elite Delights: The Structure of Art Gallery Networks in India*

(South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal, Sociology of India's Economic Elites, 15/2017).

Indian galleries v/s galleries abroad

This writer roped in three very significant artists across the board and one art curator to get to the bottom of the art scenario in India, vis-à-vis, art galleries, artists and curators. Daughter of the renowned Bengali poet, the Late Mangalcharan Chattopadhyaya, Samita Basu, is a contemporary Indian artist, whose work straddles multiple media. Essentially self-taught, she is constantly inspired by themes that are 'permanent and of durable relevance'. Basu spoke about how art galleries fare in India vis-à-vis galleries beyond shores, whether galleries are financially viable, the growth of informal spaces as art galleries and the role of the curator as a liaison between the artist and the gallery.

Says Basu, "Galleries abroad have multiple roles both visible and invisible. They spot young talent, incubate them, nurture them till they are ready to be showcased. The galleries also guide artists old and new, to institutions, museums and collectors. Their primary function is to facilitate the artists' creation of better work. They also collaborate with other galleries through shows, lectures, seminars and so on."



Kurchi Dasgupta and her work 'An Age of Our Own Making'

Kurchi Dasgupta, artist, painter, writer and translator, is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and has been witness to the abolition of the monarchy which had reigned in Nepal for 240 years, and the transformation of Nepal into a federal democratic state. As an artist she specialises in abstracts and miniatures using gouache. She is currently focussing on bringing the two disparate, yet similar, worlds of film and painting together, through a series of oil on canvas on world cinema, to be shown in London in September 2008. She says, "Art galleries in India vis-a-vis art galleries abroad are in link with artists. The main difference would be that most major galleries abroad have a list of gallery artists whom they pay periodic retainers in exchange for complete or partial exclusivity in terms of representation. This does not seem to be a popular practice in India though there are a few exceptions, of course."

Delhi-based artist, and installation artist, Durga Kainthola, says, "Galleries abroad are more professional and there is a contract signed between the artist and the gallerist and thus an artist is faithful towards the gallery whether the artist's works are sold in a given period or not. This support system thus gives the artist a financial aid so that he can follow his passion of making works of art. India has a long way to go in replicating the galleries of the West and I would say don't compare because Indian commercial galleries are only a few decades old and have still a long way to go. Signing of contract did begin in India with few artists, but I believe it failed not because of the artist but more due to the attitude of the gallery as most Indian galleries do not like to give account of artist's sold work. The moment the artists ask for account their relation will the gallery falls apart."

The curator plays a crucial role

Commenting on the role of the curator Sounak Chackraverti, a well-known curator of long-standing based in Kolkata, who recently curated the massive Art Mela at Arts Acre, Kolkata, says, "In the contemporary art scenario, the role of the curator is of great importance. The gallery, the artist and the curator should work in synergy to achieve the best. A gallery can support and promote the artist but for that the curator is indispensable. It is the curator who will place the emerging artist among the many established names. This positioning of the artist is pivotal for the growth of the artist. A curator is not merely an organiser, but much more than that, so he/she should be well-versed about the contemporary art practices and also should have a sound knowledge about the history of art."

Asked to comment on whether art galleries today are commercially viable, Kainthola says, "Galleries can't solely depend on sale of art. The recession all over the world has put the artist and galleries in similar situations, and only those galleries are surviving who have sprawling business to support their side business of an art gallery. Further, the demonetisation in 2016 in India, has paralysed the art sale remarkably."

Samita Basu strikes a different note and says, "Following the economic boom of the 1990s, the role of art galleries came to the fore – to nurture and shape artists to realise their full potential and take recourse to innovative marketing practices in terms of recognition and price. They also need to promote art appreciation and artist recognition,



Samita Basu and her work 'Masquerade'

leaving the artists to do what they are meant to do – create.”

Says Dasgupta, “It depends on the kind of artists they represent or deal with. The market for classics and older, ‘famous’ artists is still very strong, and galleries who deal with their works can easily sustain themselves. But those trying to represent newer or emerging artists find it difficult because of the financial risks involved. To create a demand for such artists, a sizeable amount of initial investment is required. Smaller galleries often have to shy away from such expenses for obvious reasons. It is a paradox of sorts, because it is again the smaller galleries that want to show less exposed mid-career and even emerging artists. But they lack the means. While the bigger galleries, who have the means, do not want to show new, experimental work from less established artists.”

Are informal spaces an option?

The demand for art galleries is much more than the supply of galleries in India, because artists are growing in number every passing day. With the merging of art with photography, digital art, video, installations, and so on, the number of artists also is multiplying. In order to sustain themselves, they need to showcase their creations. To fill this gap between demand and supply, informal spaces are now being converted into small galleries open to creative artists, at prices lower than established art galleries across metro cities.

Chackraverti adds, “Whenever we think of an art exhibition, we think of the white cube, i.e., a sprawling gallery space,

with clean walls and apt lighting. But art exhibitions can also be organised at informal spaces, such as a garden, in a balcony, even in a courtyard or a park. One has to assure proper display. Displaying art objects or paintings or sculptures is a tough job. One needs to visualise first, and arrange accordingly. The first thing that comes to mind when we talk about informal spaces is the roadside. Artists in Kolkata had organised several art fairs on the streets (behind the New Market) near the Chowringhee area, which was then known as Chaplin Square. This was probably in the 70’s. To make art more accessible to the hoi polloi the road or a park is the best option. The passerby can halt for a few moments and look at the displayed art.”

According to Kainthola, “Informal spaces for exhibiting art are becoming common in metro cities, and they are turning out to be commercially sustainable. Not every gallery can afford its own space, and the rent is very high. Renting an informal space is easy on the pocket as the exhibition/show lasts as per the financial condition of the gallerist/ exhibitor.” She adds, “If the curator is well educated about art, the exhibition is bound to be interesting, but one has to know that good art is not always commercially successful, and if the gallerist is also well acquainted with contemporary art all over the world, then it surely takes two to tango.”

Basu begs to differ. She says, “Informal spaces per se cannot do much for art. The art work at the Oberoi or the arts exhibited in the lobby of the Taj Group in different cities, do not do anything to promote the artist or his/her art.

(continued on page 29...)

An artistic journey in Lithuania

Back from an art residency in Lithuania, **Mamta Chitnis Sen** believes India has a lot to learn from this Baltic nation, and its serious efforts in preserving art and culture.



A view of a street in Uzupis

ON the invitation of Sanskritik Mandala, I made my way to Lithuania to participate in the fourth edition of the project - a month-long art residency in Vilnius city. I was expected to paint and exhibit my finished works, as well as give a talk to Lithuanians on the idea and inspiration behind them. The exhibition concluded in a week-long art exhibition in Berlin, Germany.

Why a residency

The need for space to create art continues to be a challenge for many artists and art residencies I believe, are a boon, since they not only offer an artist the much required space and time, but also the opportunity to showcase his/her work to a wider and select audience. For an artist, writer, and adventurer like myself, who also juggles a family and a 9 to 5 job, the current art residency gave me the perfect opportunity to not only display my artworks to more people, but at the same time, it also gave me a chance to glimpse the everyday lives of Lithuanians, and learn from them their art, culture, lifestyle, etc., and incorporate these learnings in my work.

A summer in Vilnius

It was summer in Vilnius, and Tamara Artajeva,

Founder and Director of Kūrybos Ratas, received me at Vilnius airport, and drove me to the Republic of Uzupis, a once abandoned and neglected neighbourhood, located in the old town of Vilnius, which is now a UNESCO heritage site, and the most visited place by both art lovers and tourists from all over the world.

Tamara, an arts project curator who graduated from Vytautas Magnus University as an art researcher, shared with me the meaning of Sanskritik Mandala and its origins. "It is not only a residency programme, but Society's Art Development and Bilingual Cultural project, which includes a residency programme. In Hindi language, it means the Circle of Culture. The aims of the project were to establish dialogue between two geographically different cultures, bring together creators of contemporary art, inspire new circulation and exchange of creative initiations, and represent contemporary Indian artists' expressions and aspects of art," she said, further adding that the project had been successful in connecting over 20 Indian and 20 Lithuanian artists over the last four years.

The idea of a residency, was conceived by her husband Alak Pathak. "After we got married in 2014 and started living on both sides, in India and Lithuania, doing our personal projects, we realised that we could start a project of this kind.

Although at the beginning we weren't sure about its success and development, but we are happy that over the years, it has garnered wide interest and recognition and is now growing very fast," said Tamara.

The magic of Uzupis

Uzupis, to me, was love at first sight. This magical place was to be my home for the next month. My studio-cum-apartment in a red-bricked old building, stood facing the river Vilnele. Since it was summertime, the riverside was dotted with people, some merely sitting around, while some made music on their musical instruments.

The studio was nice and airy with wide windows and equipped with a compact kitchenette and a cozy bed. I was to share this apartment with two other Indian artists. The realisation of working and living out of this historical space, which had been home to several renowned artists in the past, was a surreal experience.

Art was everywhere around Uzupis — in all its nooks and corners – and I was surely living and breathing it all in, every day. The walls of the buildings in Uzupis were covered in paintings created by artists living here, or who were merely passing by. Pianos in various stages of decline lay scattered around the old structures, as yet another art form. Often one could find tourists settling themselves on an antique piano that stood outside the Uzupis Art Incubator (a gallery located below my studio), and play their favourite melodies. While I would work on my canvas, this mesmerising music would filter in through the windows, creating a heady atmosphere, making it one of the most beautiful moments ever.

Uzupis, meaning 'on the other side of the river', is often compared to Montmartre in Paris, and Freetown Christiania in Copenhagen, due to its bohemian atmosphere. The Independent Republic of Uzupis, has its own flag and constitution (like all Republics), since it came into existence



A defunct piano on the banks of the river Vilnele becomes a piece of art



Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzupis, Tomas Chepaitis

n 1997 (few years post its exit from the Soviet Union), and is Lithuania's biggest art project. With over 7,000 inhabitants and 500 ambassadors and honorary citizens worldwide, that also include the Dalai Lama, Uzupis celebrates April 1st or April Fools Day as Uzupis' National Day.

A quirky Constitution!

The Constitution of Uzupis is also the most funny and affectionate one ever written, and is translated into over 33 languages, including Hindi and Sanskrit. These translations along with its three mottos—'Don't Fight', 'Don't Win', and 'Don't Surrender', adorn the walls in the old town.

I got a chance to meet the Constitution's co-writer, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzupis, Tomas Chepaitis. The latter had penned it together with his friend Romas Lileikis. Tomas, who also teaches the Lithuanian language to a few Indians in Vilnius, says he finds Indian art colourful, lively, unexpected, and attentive to the essence of colours, and different from the European perception. The Minister cited he would love to set up art districts like Uzupis, in India too.

A poet and writer, Tomas is credited with translating and publishing stories of Indian author Anita Desai, in Russian. His dedication towards supporting the arts beyond Uzupis is evident through his initiatives like 'Mobile Multi-



A street with art graffitis on its walls, in Lithuania

cultural Poetry Festivals – Frannie’ which is aimed at promoting international poets and writers, as well as the unveiling of the Uzupis Constitution at Munich’s Kreativquartier on December 18 this year. The latter is an effort to build bridges between the arts and technology. “It is the first constitution to mention artificial intelligence! Mr Roboy, an Uzupis Consul, is the first robot diplomat in the world!” he informed with pride.

Keeping art alive

A walk through Vilnius is enough to make you aware the seriousness of the country in not only preserving its past, but also its future. The blend of the old and the new is evident through the old churches with exquisite architecture that dot the city’s landscape, the modern buildings, the numerous art galleries, and the articulately planned public spaces.

Art in every form is kept alive by Lithuanian people, and I was fortunate enough to meet many such wonderful men and women – artists, painters, musicians, writers, art historians, chefs – each one creating their own artistic path for others to follow.

I am thankful for meeting the wonderful gallery duo Giedrius Bagdonas and Leva Matulionyte of Uzupis Art Incubator, who offered me their friendship and advice, the talented and vivacious musician and photographer Vadim Korotajevs, who introduced me to some amazing electronic music. I am thankful to artist Danielius Rusys, for connecting me to various facets of Lithuanian art, and the dignity in pursuing one’s work in silence, and to Chef Dominykas Gedvilas for exposing me to wonderful Lithuanian cuisine. I am thankful to the graceful Ruta Julija Klovaite and her lovely daughter Vytene, for their support and encouragement. I am thankful for having met the warm and loving artist Saulė Urbonė Urbanavičiūtė, for welcoming me into her life. I am also thankful for having met the wonderful and kind art historian and writer Vytautas Tumenas, who showed me the Lithuania he grew up in, its forests, countryside, lakes, its festivals and religion, and taught me the importance of smiling through life’s ups and downs. Last, but not the least, I am thankful to Sanskritik Mandala and to Lithuania, for making this art residency happen.

I hope, to make Lithuania proud, in my own way, someday.



A journalist for over 15 years, Mamta Chitnis Sen has worked with reputed publications like *Mid-Day*, *Society* and her writings and columns have been published in *The Sunday Observer* and *The Daily*. She also worked with the *Sunday Guardian* and handled their Mumbai bureau for eight years reporting not only extensively on various political parties but also on crime, politics, religion, art, community, human interest, and general news. She headed *Dignity Dialogue*, India’s foremost magazine exclusively for the 50 plus age group as the Executive Editor. She presently handles Media Advocacy for Child Rights and You (CRY) – an NGO working for the rights of underprivileged children in India covering the states of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat. Mamta is also an artist having studied painting and ceramics from Sir JJ School of Art, and has exhibited in various groups shows in India and abroad.

The artist's voice

"Art to me is not just an external expression, but also a deep internal connect"

– **Chitra Vaidya**

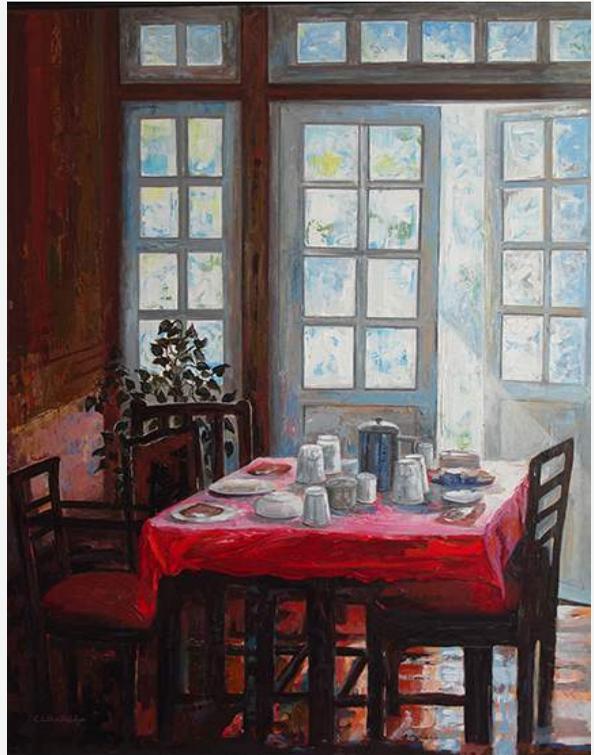
Art to me is not just an external expression but also a deep internal connect. My artistic expression may be seen by others in the form of my paintings and sketches, but to me it is also a journey of self-discovery. As I engage in my art, I travel on the voyage of self-discovery. Each painting is an expression of what I have felt and how I have reacted to the subject that I have chosen to paint.

Painting is my profession and passion. I love to paint. I like to explore themes and subjects dear to me and capture their essence in my paintings. Over the years, I have been painting on themes such as nature, flowers, hills and heritage. I believe that an artist should always explore new ideas and forms. I do not believe in being confined to a particular medium. You will find my paintings done in mediums such as pencil, charcoal, pen and ink, water colours, acrylic on canvas and oil on canvas. Till date, I have done nineteen solo shows and participated in fifteen group shows at leading art galleries.

Being a full time artist is not easy. You need dedication and years of practice. You need to explore new possibilities and learn through your experiences. There is no shortcut to success in the field of art. Art is an expression of the artist, which needs to reach out to people to get appreciated. From my experience, I can say that you should display your work in public art galleries or public spaces apart from displaying your art online on reputed art portals or websites. Presence on online art portals gives you the opportunity to be seen by global audiences, art collectors, buyers and art lovers. I have been represented by India Art Gallery and it has worked well for me.



Chitra Vaidya painting her son's flute



I also enjoy teaching art. It is such a pleasure to see your students learn art and evolve as artists. For more than twenty years, I have been teaching art by conducting painting workshops for all age groups. My students are spread all over the world and they keep in touch with me and respond whenever they see my work. They also share their work when they do anything new. These interactions with my students mean a lot to me as I believe that the bond between the teacher and the student is one of the strongest in human relationships. (Chitra Vaidya's works can be viewed at: www.artist-chitra.com.)

- As told to Anuradha Dhreshwar

Artists belonging to different genres of art, who are carving a niche for themselves, spoke to **Dr. Manjiri Thakoor** about their art, their journey, and their challenges.

“My work is influenced by tribal art with a touch of my experience. And I believe it is contemporary.”- Anuradha Thakur

I began life as an artist almost 22 years after my art education from Pune. I began as an art teacher for under-privileged children near Ahmednagar. The rough life of those innocent children was naked in front of me. I accepted that challenge with patience. From 'no' interest in art to 'passionately living art', was followed by children. I taught them to make murals and collage with natural objects like clay, vegetables, plants, etc. Minimum accessories-maximum art became motivational for them. They enjoyed it. This was then extended to the women of the village. My life became a mission, and I started visiting tribal areas. Women and children in those remote areas were very creative and skilful. They got their potential source of income through arts and crafts. Their own art and craft was incredible, but sans any knowledge of techniques and modernity. Unfortunately, these arts are not part of any teaching in formal education.

I feel, in India we should seriously undertake the revival of tribal art. Why can't technology be incorporated for these small scale artisans? My style is tribal, but my subjects are not. My works talk about 'women in the world today' or about issues – social, customs and rituals, all of which I feel need to be highlighted. And I do it by using the colour black. Using black in painting is like showing confidence and completeness for me. My works are influenced by tribal art, with a touch of my experience. And I believe it is contemporary.



“Contemporary scene today is quite open with no boundaries. It`s an interesting time to be in.” - Prajakta Potnis

I wanted to create art through my own experience and not from nostalgia. My art came from my middle class background, my surroundings, my perceptions, and my wanting to break free of boundaries. So the choice of objects or media came from my surroundings.

The contemporary art scene today is quite open with no boundaries. It is an interesting time to be in. It is open in the sense where a scientist can be an artist, a filmmaker can be an artist, or a writer can be an artist. It is not necessary for an artist to learn in an art college. In contemporary art, materiality and possibility of using things comes naturally to you. I am not from a generation which follows rules like oil painting has to be done on canvas. I like to experiment with material.

(continued on page 28...)



Chitradurga

Echoes of a glorious past

About 200 km from Bangalore is a unique medieval fort called the Chitradurga Fort. It is replete with interesting legends of its invincibility, and the machinations employed by Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore, who eventually captured it. Chitradurga also boasts of prehistoric settlements, unique temples, tanks and caves, and is a worthy weekend getaway, for both the history buff, and the eager tourist.

Text & photos: Usha Hariprasad

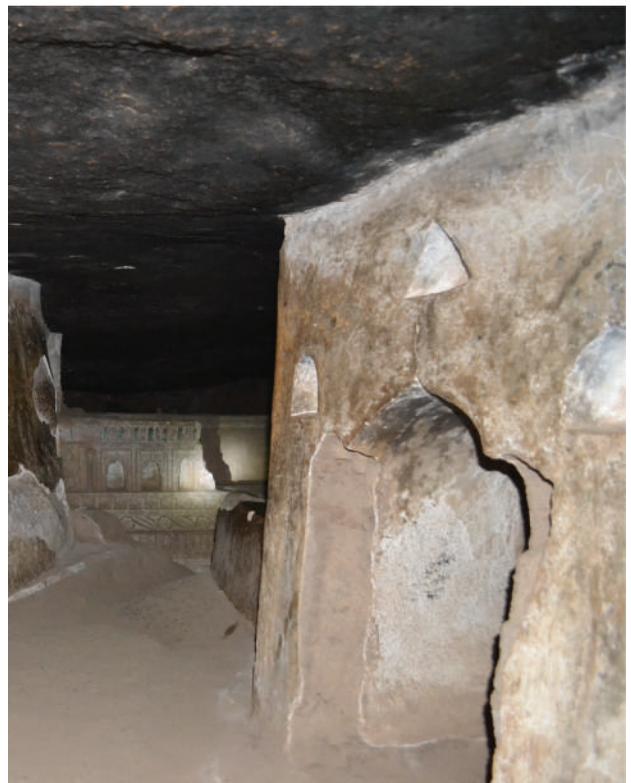


The Chandravalli Lake

I had a deep desire to see Chitradurga. Chitradurga you see, is touted as one of the complete medieval forts in the State still standing proud and erect. All other forts that I have seen, be it the Bangalore Fort or the fort at Devanahalli, are only partial remnants of the fortified stone structures they originally were.

So on a Sunday morning I set out towards Chitradurga. The town is around 200 km from Bangalore and is a scenic drive on the Bangalore-Chitradurga Highway, crossing towns like Tumkur and Sira. Dozens of windmills greet you as you near Chitradurga. The hills of Chitradurga are saturated with windmills. The nearby Joggimatti forests are a hub of these turbines.

The town of Chitradurga is quaint and charming. Small one-storeyed homes greet you – most of them old. Unlike the city of Bangalore, high rise apartments have not yet replaced old structures. The town has remnants of the past. I can see scattered colonial structures, lime-mortar buildings, and surprise fort walls too. As I near the fort, I am taken completely by surprise. Ramparts, bastions, watchtowers, gateways stare at me, and I am impressed. The Fort of Chitradurga looks impregnable. And it looks unsurmountable. From what I had read, the fort defended the city and its people until the end. It was only due to treason and betrayal that it lost, and was captured by Hyder Ali, the Muslim ruler of Mysore.



The Chandravalli Caves, which was the dwelling of many kings

The impregnable fort

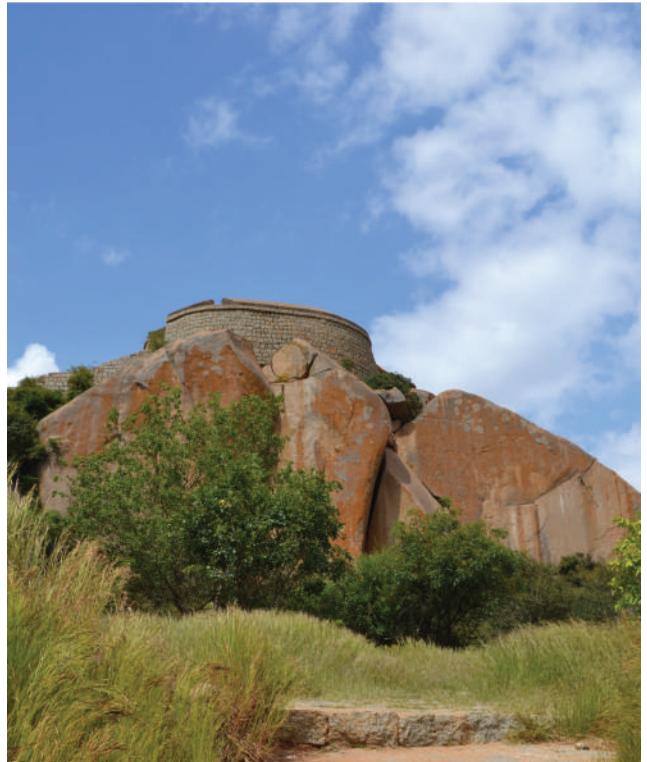
Consider this. The stone fort has seven lines of defences. There are 19 main gates, seven bastions, 35 secret entrances. A moat surrounds the fort. The fort walls are around 8-15 metres high. There are bastions at regular intervals, some circular, some square, and some octagonal. The gateways inside the fort were said to be spiked, and were accessible at 90 degree turns. The idea was to prevent attacks from elephants. The fort walls have loopholes that were used by soldiers to fire the advancing enemies. Some guard rooms were hidden between walls and unless pointed to, were not visible to naked eye.

There are granaries, tanks, oil reservoirs showing you how self-sufficient the fort was. In some places inside the fort there are mud walls still standing. This is not all. The water storage system inside the fort was so ingeniously designed that even if there were no rains the, fort residents could survive for 12 years. No wonder Hyder Ali had to use bribery and other means to learn its secrets and bring the fort down.

So, who ruled this place? And who constructed this strong fortress?



The gateways inside the Chitradurga Fort had spikes



The Chitradurga Fort

Mythological tales of Chitradurga

The name Chitradurga means picturesque fort. The rocks and boulders of the hills form myriad shapes, and hence the name. I saw an elephant shaped rock; high above I could make out other shapes - boat, frog, a serpent's hood, etc. Rocks and boulders are plenty, and they have been used quite effectively in the construction of the fort and its structures.

Chitradurga is not a new city. It is quite ancient. In fact, it first appears in the tales of Mahabharata. Then it was known as Hidimbapatna. A demon named Hidimbasura roamed these hills. As he was a man-eater, he caused quite a terror in the villages around. He was killed by Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers. Bhima had come along with his mother during their course of exile. Bhima then married the demon's sister Hidimbi, and had a son Ghatotkacha. As proof of Bhima's combat with Hidimbasura, two of Hidimba's teeth are said to be preserved in Hidimbeshwara, and the nearby Siddheswara Temple. Shiva Lingas were also established by Pandava brothers at Chitradurga. They are the Hidimbeshwara, Dharmeshwara, Bhimeshwara, Phalguneswara and Sahadeshwara.

History of Chitradurga

Chitradurga boasted of prehistoric settlements. Brahmagiri and Chandravalli caves nearby are witness to prehistoric remains like tools and pottery. Later, the Chitradurga region probably came under Maurya rule as Ashoka's inscriptions have been found near Chitradurga.



The elaborately constructed Chitradurga Fort

In most parts of Deccan, Satavahana rule followed Mauryas. Coins from this period have been found at Chandravalli and Brahmagiri. After the fall of the Satavahanas, Chitradurga town seems to have come under the rule of Kadambas. There are early inscriptions of this period found in Chitradurga district. At Chandravalli, a Kadamba inscription talks about the construction of a tank by King Mayurasharma. Other dynasties like Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas, and Hoysalas followed. Rashtrakuta inscriptions, and Hoysala inscriptions during the rule of Ballala II and later have been found. There are inscriptions from Vijayanagar times as well. These are present in the Siddheshwara Temple inside Chitradurga Fort. The upper storey of Siddheshwara Temple was built during the time of Mallinatha Wodeyar, and two inscriptions dated 1355 and 1356 have been found here.

The Nayakas of Chitradurga

The 14-16th century saw the rise of Vijayanagara kings in South India. To keep their region in control Vijayanagara kings supported local chiefs or Palegars who controlled their regions, and in return these chieftains collected taxes, maintained law and order, and supported the kings. Chitradurga too was under chieftains known as Nayakas. They were from the Beda caste, and according to one version had their origins in southern Andhra Pradesh. There were 13 Nayaka kings, and each of them contributed to building of the majestic Chitradurga Fort.

One of the first chieftains of Chitradurga was Timmanna Nayaka. Initially he was the chieftain of Holalkere during the time of Vijayanagara King Saluva Narasimha. Later, he was made the chieftain of Chitradurga. However, during his final days, he was imprisoned by the king. His son Obbanna Nayaka ruled next. He strengthened the existing fort of Chitradurga. And he declared himself an independent king when Vijayanagara kingdom collapsed in 1565. Then his son Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka came to power in 1602. He expanded his territory to include Holalkere, Santebenoor.

In 1652 he died, and after his death Madakari Nayaka I came to power and expanded his territory to the east. As he had no son, his adopted son Obbanna Nayaka II came to power. However, he was murdered, and his son was brought into power. He too was killed in 1676.

Then Madakari Nayaka's brother Chikanna Nayaka came to power. He defeated the Muslims who had attacked Harihara, fought against Palegar of Harapanahalli, and established marriage alliances with neighbouring regions such as Rayadurga. After his death in 1686, his son Madakari Nayaka II came to power. But he was put to prison by the Dalawayis and Rangapa Nayaka was crowned king. After him came Brahmappa Nayaka who ruled from 1686 to 1721. He was a popular king and he built numerous tanks, around 30 temples, and four palaces.

After him came the Nayaka King Madakari Nayaka III and he was constantly engaged in battle with Marathas, and Palegars of Savanoor, Bidnoor and Harapanahalli. He was killed in the battlefield at Mayaconda, and his second son Kasturi Rangappa came to power.

Madakari Nayaka – a courageous Nayaka king

After his death in 1754, his adopted son Madakari Nayaka was declared king in 1755. When he ascended Chitradurga, he was only 12. Not only he had to fight with neighbouring Palegars, but he also had to deal with Hyder Ali and Maratha troops. He first defeated the Palegar of Rayadurga. Later, Rayadurga Palegar teamed up with Savanoor, Bidnoor and Harapanahalli Palegars. But the brave Madakari Nayaka still defeated them. Hyder Ali came with a huge army to defeat him. Madakari Nayaka on seeing his strength paid two lakh pagodas and avoided war. Their relationship turned friendly after this, and he supported Hyder Ali in the Bidnoor campaign. Pleased with him, Hyder Ali gifted land, horses etc. And he also helped him win against the Marathas.

However, Hyder Ali did not trust Madakari Nayaka and was always suspicious of him. This made Madakari Nayaka change loyalties and support the Marathas, thus making Hyder Ali his staunch enemy. Hyder Ali attacked Chitradurga three times. In the first attack he was unable to

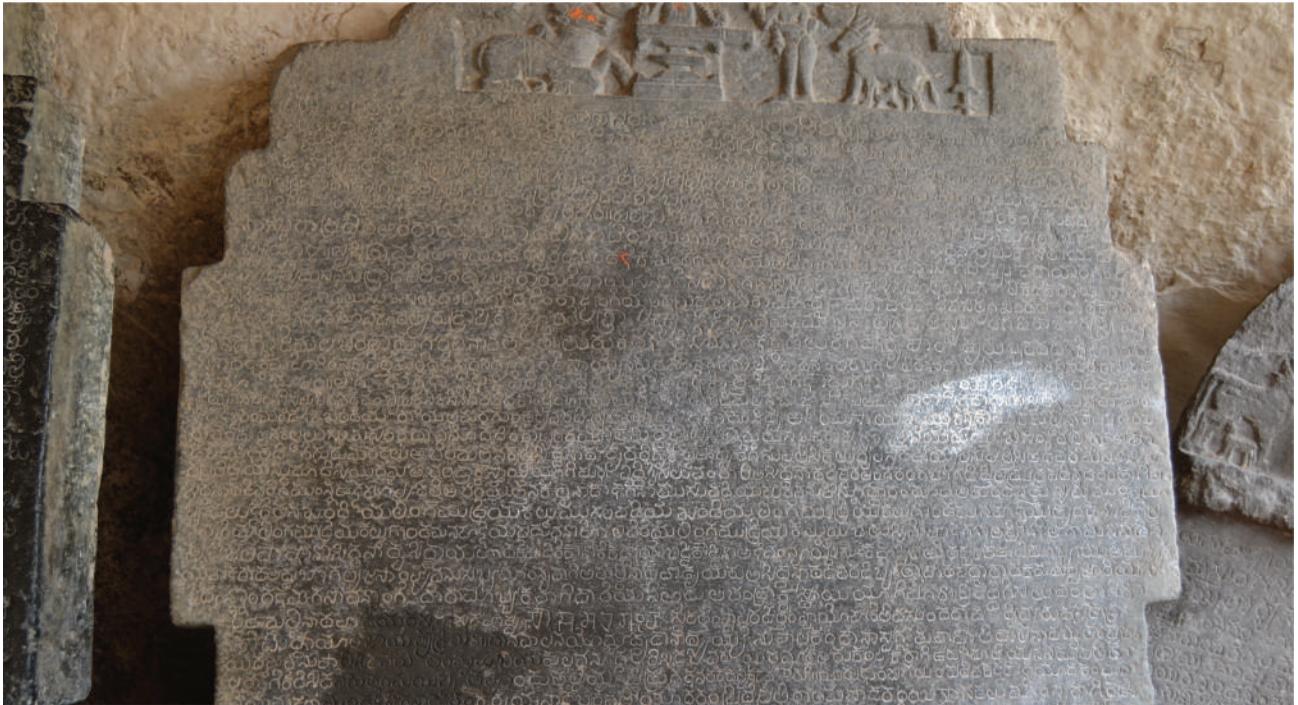
enter the fort. In the second battle he took the help of Rayadurga and Harapanahalli Palegars. But the fort did not budge. He heard about a small passageway at the north of the fort. This passageway was used by locals in transferring milk and curds to the inhabitants of the fort. He decided to send his soldiers through the passageway. And that's when Onake Obavva intervened and defended the fort.

The story of Onake Obavva

Obavva was the wife of a guard of Chitradurga Fort. One afternoon when he departed for lunch, his wife went to get water from a stream nearby. She heard muffled noises coming from the small fort passageway nearby. This passageway was generally used by locals to transfer milk/curds to the inhabitants of the fort. However on this day, Hyder Ali had learnt about the passageway and sent his soldiers to get inside the fort. Obavva heard the soldiers trying to get in and she gathered up a pestle (onake in Kannada) and stood adjacent to the passageway. When a soldier entered through the hole, she struck on his head and dragged him out. When her husband finished his lunch and came out to take his place he was shocked to see the bodies of soldiers nearby, and his gentle wife with pestle in his hands. He immediately climbed the bugle tower above and sounded the bugle, thus alerting the soldiers about the enemy's entry. The fort was saved. However Obavva is said to have died during this confrontation.



The Gopalswamy Tank



The inscriptions at Hidimba

In 1776, Hyder Ali lured soldiers in the name of religion, money, jewels, and land. And managed to learn all the secrets of the fort. He made soldiers open doors of the fort and attacked. He imprisoned Madakari Nayaka and took him to Srirangapatna. The king's two wives committed suicide jumping into the twin ponds of Chitradurga. The Bedas were moved from Chitradurga to Srirangapatna, and were absorbed in his army.

Hyder controlled the fort. The lower parts of the fort were strengthened by Hyder and his son Tipu Sultan. After Tipu Sultan's death in 1799, the fort served as a garrison for the English troops for some time. It later went into the hands of Mysore.

This then is the story of the fort. To see all the attractions of Chitradurga it takes half a day at least.

Attractions of Chitradurga

You will see plenty of interesting things inside the fort.

Mud walls of the fort: The yesteryear mud walls are still standing. They have survived for more than 100 years. The mint room of the fort where they used to mint coins is one such place that has mud walls. Mud is simply not used for the walls. The mud is first soaked in water, then kneaded well; egg shells, pottery, jaggery are added to increase their strength. It is then used to make the wall or shaped into bricks, left to dry, and then used.

Temples: Enroute you will see many temples. Some interesting ones are Hidimbeshwara, Sampige Siddeshwara, Gane-

sha, Gopal Krishna Temple and Ekanatheshwari. You will also see the ancient Murugarajendra Mutt.

There are some 14th century inscriptions found at the cave temple of Sampige Sidheshwara. The 1355 and 1356 inscriptions mention that the swing and Gali mantapa near the temple was constructed by a mason Jadeya Ramoja. It further mentions that the grant of two villages was given for the upkeep of the temple worship and rituals during the reign of Mallinatha Wodeyar – a feudal lord during Vijayanagara times.

In some temples you will also see carvings of traditional games. There are square and triangular shaped drawings. The games generally people played were Aadu-Huli and Navakankari. These were strategy games and were played using stones, beads or tamarind seeds.

Tanks: The water harvesting system of the fort was ingeniously done. You can see this when you near the twin ponds, Akka Honda and Thangi Honda. Akka means elder, and Thangi means younger sister, in the local language.

Two hundred metres above these twin ponds is the Gopalswamy Tank. This pond next to Gopal Krishna Temple, is at a higher elevation. The pond collects water from the rains and the hills. Excess water from this pond drains into Akka Honda, and from there filters to Thangi Honda. The surplus from here goes downstream and reaches another tank known as Sihineeru Honda, i.e., found at the lower fort area. From here through an underground conduit it flows to the town.

Apart from this there are other attractions not to be missed.





A view of the town from the fort

Chitradurga Archaeological Museum This is near the east main gate of the fort, and is inside the town. The museum has some 2nd century pottery from Chandravalli, Jain figurines, gods and goddesses from 14-16th century, hero stones, etc. For lack of space some of the figurines are kept outside of the museum as well.

Chandravalli Caves Chandravalli is a triangular shaped valley holding a lot of secrets. It was named after a king of Kuntala-Chandrahasa. Pottery, coins and inscriptions have been found here by archaeologists. It is said to be the capital of Satavahanas. The chief attraction of this place is the 80-foot underground Chandravalli Caves. It was the

dwelling of many kings – Kadambas, Satavahana, Hoysala, etc. It was also inhabited by a saint Pardeshappa, in the 19th century. The caves have a number of rooms like the puja room, bedroom and a secret room too, that was used by royals for secret meetings. There are some vegetable dyed paintings found on the walls of the caves. Nearby is the Panchalinga Cave that has Shiva Lingas.

Chitradurga makes a very good weekend getaway from Bangalore. It is a history rich place. But caves, ruins and inscriptions make it all the more a colourful destination for a day visit.



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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“I believe that my art has liberated me from mundane ties of common life while keeping me tied to these very values and emotions that make life and art meaningful.”

Durga Kainthola has a multi-layered perspective on life. She views life through tiny bits of coloured glasses of her imaginary kaleidoscope. Sometimes, she looks at her inspiration through a prism with light refracted not in a straight line, but with a break. She has an immense capacity to move backwards and forwards through time, place, subject, media and technology, with the fluidity of the free-flowing waters of a river that knows no borders. Yet, she can anchor herself to a subject close to her heart at any given point of time, seamlessly. She is a practicing artist who, over the past 25 years, has been constantly renovating and reinventing herself through different realms of art. She has held umpteen exhibitions, beginning with group shows, and moving to individual exhibitions across the country and the world. She spoke extensively about her art to **Shoma A. Chatterji**.



Let us hear about your formative years in art.

I was born in Kolkata but am originally from the Garhwal district of Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand). The family shifted to Mumbai and I joined the JJ School of Art. For my first exhibition, the subject was footprints. “Footprints for me then, represented the human form – the part suggesting the whole, metaphorically and figuratively. A chance visit to Juhu beach brought the focus. I saw a man walking out of the sea. He had left his footprints on the sands till the waves washed them away. I felt I had found my destination. Before that, I explored the entire universe of landscapes, portraits, heads,

still life, abstracts and nudes. Then, the tragic death of a close and brilliant friend drove me to move around the theme of ‘Death’ in oils and in graphics.

What about your sojourn at the M.S. University in Baroda?

I did my post-graduation here. I picked up narrative work, and using oil on canvas and water colour on paper, studied under the empathetic guidance of Nasreen Mohamedi. The figures I painted sort of floated in space, and were experimental in nature. I built an intellectual relationship with Mohamedi who had a way of understanding the need of each individual



'Durga' by Durga Kainthola

student, and guided them accordingly. My journey at the M.S. University was a fine blend of ability and innovation. I believe that my art has liberated me from mundane ties of common life while keeping me tied to these very values and emotions that make life and art meaningful.

How did marriage and motherhood change you?

Marriage and motherhood have made me a different and much stronger person. After marriage, I surrendered myself to God. I began to ignore every thing around me and concentrated on my work. Home and career both are my priorities. Maintaining a balance between the two took some time but my total faith in God saw me through this phase of coping. My philosophy lies in the Gandhian dictum of the three monkeys –'see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil' - and that helps me sail through my hassles. My three kids, one boy and two girls, are now grown up and fine-tuning their own careers, and I am free to follow my own religion – art.

After all these years, how would you define the term 'art'?

Art is an expression of my thoughts. Myriad images are transformed, consciously or sub-consciously, the worldly experience becomes an integral part of the actual metamorphosis that renders new meaning and depth to every creation over time and space, colour and light, plane and dimension, music and rhythm, history and infinity. Today, thanks to public awareness about art, spectators understand the meaning of art. It is a much wider horizon today than it ever was before. Art is not just about subject, it goes beyond the frame, the colour, the space, the light, the subject. It is like a poem which is an expression that each one reads different meanings into. It has a language achieved with years of experience. It is like Braille, a language whose essence is known only to people who are without sight, who look at the world outside through the blackness that defines their lives.

What was the first turning point in your life as an artist?

My first turning point as an artist came during the 1989 Master of Fine Arts Finals Exhibition at Baroda, when Tizun Patheria, a noted art collector from Mumbai bought a few of my paintings. By the end of the exhibition, only a few of my works were left unsold. When I came back to Mumbai, I went on looking for a subject and the footprint works happened. This was followed by a two-year stint working under Keikoo Gandhi of Gallery Chemould in Mumbai, to come to terms with the contemporary art scenario. I found myself slowly moving from the abstract to the figurative, and allowed myself to be carried freely by the waves of change that swept over my creativity and innovation. Tina Ambani invited me to participate in her Harmony Show in 2000 and bought my large painting Mother and Child.

You moved to digital in 1999. Let us hear about it.

In 1999, out of curiosity, I bought a computer, a scanner and a printer and began to experiment. I took a portrait of myself, turning myself into both object and subject. I took fifty prints of the same image spontaneously, and was sure something new would come out of it. This led to a series called Pages from my Notebook. I began to draw my thoughts and experiences over the printed image literally like in a diary, and this began my new journey of using portraits as the central character harking back to miniatures – Indian, Byzantine or Persian. I painted portraits of Frida Kahlo, the Mexican artist whose works were an inspiration. A set of four out of these were exhibited and the entire set was sold. I then moved on to digital prints on canvas and began painting images from history, art, popular culture and images of celebrities from all walks of life.

What about your Art Factory?

My works under the Art Factory are different from my style and approach. The works are a blend of illusion and reality, and it is difficult to point out where one ends and the other begins. Seemingly controlled, at once riotous, playfully irreverent and alluding, these works compose illusion and reality. Trans-conceptual flashes of allegory resonate and push open the portals of perception is how Elizabeth Rogers chose to define it. The works spill over with a spirit so dynamic that one just cannot but get sucked into it. This began in 2001.

This is your most unique project over your long creative period as an artist. Do you agree?

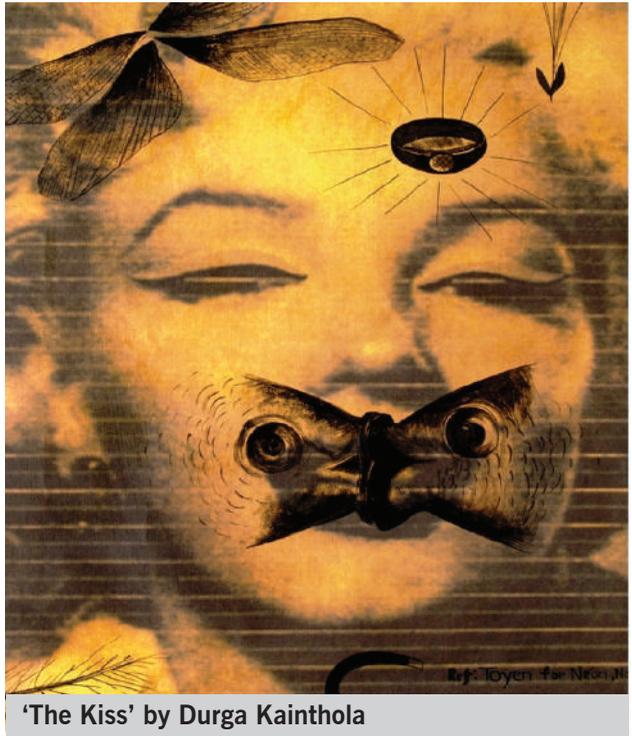
Through my series on Andy Warhol, Marylyn Monroe, Frida Kahlo and others, I try to draw my viewers into a dream world where the past and present, soft and hard vocabularies intermingle, separate and then fuse, without rhyme or reason. Vision is drawn from within the spatial nature of infinity and timelessness. The Art Factory may be summed up as a visually stunning political and social comment on the fragility of the world today through artistic expression. It is radical, contemporary and universal, cutting neatly across man-made barriers of time, space, language, line and colour, and even subject matter if one may be permitted this extension.

Does an artist bear a social responsibility towards lovers of art?

An artist depicts social subjects, because by nature, an artist is compassionate. But whether he wishes to create social awareness or to paint what his conscious and sub-conscious mind directs him to, is entirely up to him. No artist is constrained by any rigid definition. Art being a freedom of expression and most artists being believers in pluralism, at any given point of time, he follows just one mode of expression like the avant-garde or bourgeoisie, etc. An artist is a sensitive being, he is disturbed by suffering, natural calamities, death etc., but the choice is for him to get immersed in the world around him or follow his instinct. If he does not paint the Tsunami does not mean that he is not affected, there is turmoil within him and he finds a way to depict this within his own parameters of self-expression.

Does criticism depress you?

I don't get carried away if someone appreciates my work. Nor do I think ill if my work is criticised. I have learnt a great deal from critics. They represent the common man and woman and we, as artists, have learnt about art and its linkages to life, so they too will learn to think like we do, one day.



'The Kiss' by Durga Kainthola



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

WHO AM I?

*I am a proud Indian,
citizen of the world community,
inhabiting this lonely ...
but lovely little ... ★
planet ...*



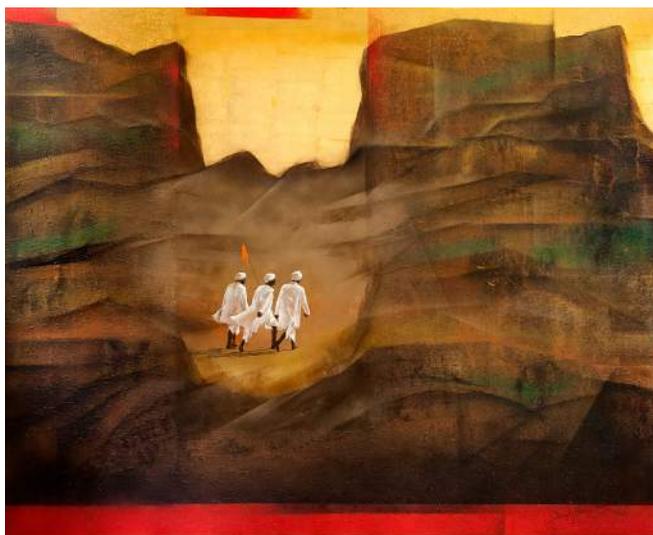
Earth... ★



(continued from page 16...)

I can use oil paint on *manjarpat* (a type of white fabric) and see its result. I do not want to make art thinking how long it will last, or how valuable it will be in the future. I want to think whether I can work in the immediacy. So the life of the material I am using is not important to me. I do not want any boundaries or restrictions for my work. One should be able to make art easily, anywhere. I want to make art which any lay person can experience. I was fascinated by site specific installations. I like Land Art where you don't need anybody's help to display your art, or you don't need a gallery. You can create art anywhere, with any material. It is empowering! You also want people to ask questions and talk about art. Your art should emerge from the space and time you occupy, and everyday material that is available in your surroundings, and not from history. My art came from the response to my surroundings, and not from history.

Camps and residencies have become an integral part of contemporary art practitioners. For funding, sale, pop up exhibitions, individual efforts are too tiring. Therefore it is important for all the stakeholders of art to come together and build a community of like-minded people.



In Search of Light , Acrylic & Gold Leaf on Canvas 72" x 60"

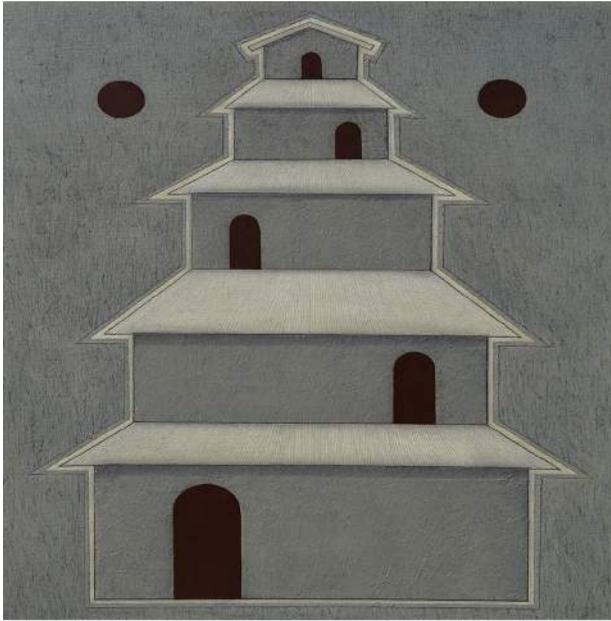


"The efforts and role of an art teacher matters a lot in grooming talent."- Douglas John

During our time, we often assisted senior artists without thinking of remuneration, and that helped us a lot later. We got to closely observe their work. No institute can give lessons in becoming a successful artist. It is learnt by observing. The efforts and role of an art teacher matters a lot in grooming talent. I always thrive to update myself. The teacher should be aware of new technology and the constantly changing trends in the world of art. When you keep experimenting, you evolve as an artist. I have noticed that many states take initiative for organising art camps where all the expenses are taken care of by the organisers. Organisers then take one work of each participating artist. Documentation is done. It encourages the practice of collecting art, hence these camps are significant. Unfortunately, in Maharashtra, we don't see this happening. Mumbai being a commercial hub, artists keep getting work, but that isn't enough. The state government must take more initiatives to promote art. Some years ago 'Artist Center' initiated many camps which gave opportunity to artists. 'Dot-Line-Space' was one such initiative in 2014, but such camps should be an ongoing process. Institutes like the Bombay Art Society can initiate such camps. Even private sectors and commercial groups need to support such activities. The Piramal group is doing its bit to promote art and artists.

For an artist, establishing his/her identity is extremely challenging. It does not happen as soon as you graduate from an art institute. It takes years of struggle to get noticed.

(Douglas John's work can be seen at : www.douglasjohnindia.com)



YASHWANT DESHMUKH 'HOME' 24" X 19" ACRYLIC AND PENCIL ON MOUNTED CANVAS 2018



“Experimental art is accepted, but has not reached the masses yet” - Yashwant Deshmukh

I used to have long conversations with the Late veteran artist Prabhakar Barwe, and always admired his style. I used to observe him closely. The simplicity of form in his works, the process, and his philosophy, greatly influenced me, and it reflected in my work. He was much ahead of his time. My journey from academic practice to an artist was very profound and silent. My work evolved from observing objects and chores of everyday life, to looking at the complexity of your surroundings and simplifying it in your work, and this wonderful process I picked up spontaneously.

While there are many artists who follow the traditional art practice, there are several others experimenting with new genres. Artists these days are well versed with various challenges and issues. The art scene today is not pessimistic. Experimental art is accepted, but it has yet to reach the masses. Art galleries and artists of the last generation mutually worked with each other. Unfortunately, that is lacking now.

Artists on international platform are working in various mediums. They are widely using the Internet and the social media to keep ahead of trends. Video art, graphics, films and technological works are included in art practices almost the way the canvas was, a few years ago. There is lot of pressure to produce new work. It is a competitive scenario, and funds are a major challenge for artists. Government initiatives are few and far. Most artists generate their own funds, which in a way allows them to make art more liberally. Young artists today are smart, but they should learn to believe in themselves and their roots. Many foreign artists come to India to experiment new genre of art in traditional style. American artist Waswo based in Udaipur, is one such example. It is interesting to see how he uses miniatures in contemporary context. Now that is experimental!



“Fundraising is always difficult. Art production and labour costs are paid for, but the artist is for free!” - Mansi Bhatt

I see myself as a professional minority! I am an artist, and I like to imagine impossible ideas and shape them into reality. That space is art and it is extraordinary, full of voice and sharply made.

The process of 'making' is an art space. The readability of your thought process is art. The reason for thinking of 'making art' itself is 'art'. But such art comes with many questions. To this, my answer came from “my body” as “my work.” I make my questions readable to viewers through my performance using my own body. Well, this needs vision for an artist, and also the viewer. That process is challenging. As Mansi Bhatt, I have my identity, but when that becomes 'a question' for audience (viewers), I need to undergo a long process. Only then people can authentically reach to the meaning of that question.



Stage design by Mansi Bhatt

Here, art production and labour costs are paid for, but the artist is for free! Galleries learn to look at art through a commercial angle, and work a lot on building an image. Very few galleries are sensitive to the need of an artist to explore uncharted territories crucial to one's practice. It's all about art, except the art.

Does the government even recognise art as a part of our ecosystem? It understands only folk and traditions as art to support, and that space is fixed. NGMAs (National Gallery for Modern Art) are few, but can have a wider approach to contemporary art. I have been working independently with curators/galleries towards selective projects/shows and so far they have been supportive. Fund raising is always difficult. We are a market obsessed country, and people invest in the market of art, not for value of art! In such a scenario, believing in your ideas and realising them, becomes even more important.

(You can follow Mansi on Instagram @Mansi9710)



Dr Manjiri Thakoor is an independent Art Curator and visiting lecturer Sir JJ School of Art. She did her Ph.D in Buddhist Sculpture from Mumbai University and her Post-doctoral Fellowship – Sir Dorabji Tata Fellowship at the Heras Institute. She was former Deputy Curator of National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai and is now Hon. Sub-Committee Member, Asiatic Society of Mumbai.



(continued from page 11...)



Art curator Sounak Chackraverti

Informal spaces can only substitute galleries if these are curated by an art curator. Art needs write-ups, promotion, contacting buyers, etc., which only a curator can achieve. The curator has a very important role to play as liaison between the artist and the gallery, be it in an informal space, or in an established gallery. Today, parts of heritage buildings are also being converted into informal spaces for exhibiting art works, which is a very good thing. Each and every curator has his/her favourite artist he wishes to nurture and promote, and most of them are established. The curator rents his art space to promote his/her favourite bunch of artists. No artist therefore, needs to exhibit his art continuously.”

Dasgupta says, “The role of the curator is becoming increasingly important as a link between artists and galleries, as they are responsible for intervening in popular discourses, or initiating new ones. To retain relevance, a gallery must make use of a range of curators with varied specialisations.”

“Within the body of existing work on contemporary art worlds, India has not yet been subject to much investigation. Important studies do exist, as shown above, but a systematic empirical inquiry into the Indian art world as a whole has yet to be made,” writes Oliver Roueff.



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



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Conserving the art of storytelling

In this highly digitalised world, with our noses forever buried in various gadgets, are we losing out on the wonderful tradition of conversing and storytelling? asks Harshad Sambamurthy. If yes, it would be a huge loss for the field of conservation too, he avers.

When you used to tell me stories about animals and the wildlife around us, I listened with rapt attention. You framed it in a language that was both accessible and familiar to me. You gesticulated with great vigour, your eyes glistened and sparkled, you smiled capaciously, furrowed your brows when attempting a foolish frown, and displayed, rather effortlessly, a range of expressions that guided your each intonation, holding the outstretched hand of my imagination in a tight grip as you escorted me through the forking, twisting path of your fantasy. You told me stories that made me feel. For I heard, lingering upon your every word, and in that listening, I learned.

However, it is 2019, and with a phone in my hand, it is difficult to listen to you anymore with full attention. I would rather check the latest Hollywood gossip, or respond to a friend's message on where to eat, or even, mindlessly scroll through a never-ending live-feed of message after message, tweet after tweet, Instagram post after Instagram post. The saturation of information-overload is mysteriously fulfilling, and I observe, carelessly, that the road to a digital infinity for which I possess and almost addictive affinity towards seems riddled with every possible obstacle to stifle my capacity for listening, and volume for attention.

Nowadays, you tell me stories that are invariably about climate change, increase in global temperatures, the age of humans – the Anthropocene, the rapid deterioration of our forests, the extinction of our wildlife, the numerous social injustices, the gross inequalities between rich and poor, the acidification of our oceans, the greed and acquisitiveness that now seems an almost innate trait of our

species. You tell me how it is only with the infusion of story can anybody listen to what is going on in this world, its calamities, and rediscover empathy for both our environment and the wellbeing of our wildlife. You claim we are becoming ignorant of our sense of place, lackadaisical in attempting to re-learn the linkages between our cultural and natural heritages, and practically indifferent in our attention to the environmental issues that do not directly affect us.

However, it is 2019, and with a phone in my hand, it is difficult to listen to you anymore with full attention. I would rather check the latest Hollywood gossip, or respond to a friend's message on where to eat, or even, mindlessly scroll through a never-ending live-feed of message after message, tweet after tweet, Instagram post after Instagram post.

I listen, again, with just a feigning recognition, and appreciation for the reality you postulate. The world you paint is too bleak for me and the solutions you provide too quixotic. I would rather escape it, preferring the illusory luxury of my own digital utopia. As far as I am concerned, there is some pliable shape there, some malleable structure that I can tweak to suit my mood, seeing what I want, when I want, while ignoring the rest. And it all

goes away with the click of a button. Instantly. You startle me when you ask me to weave my own story. To explore and chart the deepest waters of my mind, and after coming up for air, invite me to dive deeper into the recesses of my heart and soul to touch the resplendent Moon that dwells within. You allude to the Sufi poet Rumi who said there is a Moon inside every human being, and that this poet encouraged us to become companions with this moon, "to give more of our life to this listening."

Acquiescing, I begin to listen to myself and a memory lets itself in, graciously lighting up a darkened corridor of reflection and recollection. As a child, I used to visit the zoo frequently to satiate my fascination for animals, but mostly the tiger. Like Borges, I stood in front of its cage, and stared at its fiery orange and black stripes, and the amber of its eyes. I noticed the tiger pace up and down its small enclosure tirelessly, sporadically growling, the conflagration in its intense scrutiny forever, undying. There was a lady standing near me, equally spellbound and captivated, muttering something to herself as the tiger relentlessly moved to and fro. I shifted my attention now, to her. She looked over and asked me what I knew about the tiger. I told her whatever little I gathered from an encyclopaedia I had read, essentially summarising the tiger's taxonomy in one measured swoop. She smiled, and asked if I knew what the tiger meant as a creature of legend, fantasy and mythology? She asked me if I understood its fathomless value in folklore; of its rich heritage as a species in India and the rest of the world? I shook my head, ignorantly. I only knew what my encyclopedia said, and regurgitated fragments of information I had retained from it.

We sat down on a bench near to the tiger cage, and while watching it pace up and down continuously, she told me about the tiger. That the tiger was known to be a steed for the Immortals; and in Korea, was the guardian of the land, and how some believed the white-tiger to be a part of the Milky Way, protecting the Earth from afar. That Jim Corbett referred to the tiger as a “large-hearted gentleman.” That the wind was created from the breath of a tiger, and in Vietnam it is believed that the soul of a tiger’s victim is forced to ride its back, and this is perhaps why tigers — from Siberia, China, Indo-China, South-East Asia and India — are depicted as vehicles for goddesses; like Durga. She recounted the Mahabharata: “Do not cut down the forest with its tigers and do not banish the tigers from the forest. The tiger perishes without the forest, and the forest perishes without its tigers. Therefore the tiger should stand guard over the forest and the forest should protect all its tigers”. She ended by narrating the peculiar tale of Henry Caldwell, who saw a fabled blue-tiger in China many Moons ago. The lady then paused, stood up and wandered away to see a jaguar in a neighbouring cage. I was enchanted.

You asked me to listen to my Moon, and here is what I heard it tell me. I don’t know what such stories are useful for, but they are most invigorating to listen to. You tell me there is a surfeit of scientific knowledge that we utilise for understanding the way the world works, and of the species that inhabit it. That the tranquil river these legends, myths and symbols have flowed through from immemorial time, fundamentally shaping our realities, have now dried up, being disregarded. You tell me there is a profound knowledge in these now antiquated myths and stories, and a timeless truth to them, that can, and should be embedded within our educational systems



and initiatives that spread awareness on wildlife conservation. You think that conservation needs to — without solely generating awareness — generate a sense of wonder for nature, with the gradual and organic infusion and assimilation of creative tools like storytelling and folklore in schools and universities. To develop greater public awareness, you say we must incorporate the concept of the sacred in nature that is found in all religions and indigenous spiritualities; essentially using mediums like storytelling, that have been so historically powerful and spiritually enriching in endowing humans across generations a knowledge of self and of place.

Perhaps you’re right. In an increasingly globalised world, and arguably rapidly culturally-homogenising society, it is now paramount to infuse story within our educational curricula, and develop, alongside an environmental consciousness and awareness, an appreciation for the interwoven complexities of our natural

and cultural heritages, histories, and oral narratives that have shaped our identities and interactions and relationships with the natural landscape over millenia. The usage of storytelling, as well as folklore can aid in the reframing of the conservation-education space; reviving, rejuvenating and revivifying an environmental consciousness that is culturally, historically and personally relevant to each individual in not just India, but the world over. The Moon within is the story waiting to be told, to be reframed, and re-told a countless times. For this new year, let us re-write and re-frame old, oft repeated narratives in the conservation field, in a language both accessible and relevant to ourselves; that will inspire and revolutionise how we perceive and relate with our wildlife for a more environmentally-conscious, and thereby, socially-equitable future.



Harshad 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

Devdas, version 2.0

Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Devdas* is very popular among the film fraternity. But recently, *Devdas* was staged as a play and it was an absolutely awesome adaptation and performance, says **Prof. Avinash Kolhe**.



A still from the play 'Devdas'

The unique quality of classics is that they continue to engage generation after generation of creative people, be it theatre or cinema. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's (1876-1936) novella, *Devdas*, published on 30th June, 1917, carries that quality in abundance. This novella was adopted for cinema so many times and in so many languages.

It began in 1928 when a silent movie was made on this piece of literature. In 1936 came the first Hindi version directed by Prathamesh Barua in which the eponymous role was played by the legendary K.L. Sehgal. Then in 1955 came the second Hindi version of *Devdas* directed by Bimal Roy, in which Devdas was played by Dilip Kumar. In the year 2002, Sanjay Leela Bhansali presented his version in which the lead role was essayed by Shah Rukh Khan. Then there was Anurag Kashyap's *Dev.D*, released in February 2009, which was a novel interpretation of *Devdas*, followed by

Sudhir Mishra's *Daas Dev* released in April 2018.

Devdas staged!

What needs to be noted about these versions is that they are all movies. Not many could imagine staging *Devdas*, a multiple-locations story. But then AGP World has always been an ambitious entertainment company. This time AGP World decided to offer a theatrical rendition of *Devdas* that has been narrated through the eyes of Chandramukhi, a glamorous courtesan, and a principal character in the play. AGP World commissioned Saif Hyder Hasan, senior theatre person, who in turn put together a team of extremely talented people to essay various roles. The stage version has been adapted by Saif Hyder Hasan, who has made a few drastic changes in the original story. For example, there is no character of a police officer in the novella, yet, this

character plays an important role in the stage adaptation.

This *Devdas* opens up when Chunni Lal notices Chandramukhi on the outskirts of Calcutta, leading a life of a hermit. As they go down memory lane, Chunni Lal realises that Chandramukhi, who once was the most famous and wealthy courtesan of Calcutta, has truly given up that life, and now is totally immersed in her love for *Devdas*. And yet she does not even know the whereabouts of Devdas, but feels confident that someday her Devbaboo will come to her.

A unique interpretation

This is a completely different and thought-provoking interpretation of *Devdas*. Saif Hyder Hasan's *Devdas* is also a lover of art, and a dancer himself. And hence he very well understands the art of Chandramukhi, the courtesan. This is another change



Hasan has introduced in the theme of *Devdas*. A dancer-son is a big no-no in a zamindar's family, and Devdas has to leave this palace as his autocratic father tells him that his son should either be a zamindar, or a barrister. Devdas wants to be neither, and has to leave to wander in the lanes of Calcutta, and takes to the bottle. Soon he becomes an incorrigible drunkard, with deteriorating health.

This is his phase of life when Chandramukhi looks after him without expecting anything in return. Devdas continues to pine for Paro, who in the meanwhile has been married off to a wealthy widower and a big zamindar of Hatipota, Bhuvan Choudhary, who has three sons from his first marriage. Devdas realises that he is in the last leg of his life and decides to go to Paro as was promised to her some time back. Though he manag-

es to reach Hatipota, he does not get to meet her as he dies at her doorstep. On hearing of his death, Paro runs outside to see Devdas, but is prevented by other family members. Thus ends the tragic story of Devdas.

Saif Hyder Hasan felt that the story has always been presented from Devdas's perspective and does not tell readers about what happened to Paro and Chandramukhi? This play is a serious and ambitious attempt to look at the same story from Chandramukhi's perspective.

An awesome spectacle

The stage version of *Devdas* is a spectacle that takes your breath away. The light designs, the choreography, the music and the singing, all are simply mind-blowing. Never before has such a gigantic produc-

tion been attempted on the Indian stage. Shampa Sonthalia, daughter of the acclaimed Kathak maestro Padmashree Gopi Krishna (choreography), has given life to the music score of *Devdas* with a fusion of contemporary and classical dance forms; original music is composed by Parivesh Singh, and is sung by Bollywood's acclaimed singers like Alka Yagnik, Antra Mitra, Suresh Wadkar, and Bhoomi Trivedi; sets are designed by the national award winning art and cinematic director Omang Kumar (Mary Kom, Sarbjith and Saawariya), is the team anybody would envy. Saif Hyder Hasan has taken big risk by casting a relatively lesser known face Sukhada Khanderkar as Paro, who takes the character of Paro to new heights. Gaurav Chopra acts as Devdas, and Manjire Fadnis as Chandramukhi – all of them have done a competent job. This is a 'not-to-be-missed' play.



Prof. Avinash Kolhe retired as Associate Professor in Political Science from D.G. Ruparel College, Mumbai.

ALYQUE PADAMSEE

The 'brand' father of advertising (1928-2018)

One of India's most celebrated advertising professionals, Alyque Padamsee, breathed his last in Mumbai on 17 November 2018, at the age of 90. A multifaceted individual, Alyque's contribution to the world of advertising was invaluable, and he was often referred to as the 'Brand' father of Indian advertising. He created over a hundred brands during his stints in advertising agencies, notably, Lintas, where he worked for 14 years and retired as the Chief Executive.

Alyque Padamsee was born in the Kutch region of Gujarat, and finished his education at the St. Xavier's College. He had a flair for advertising, and after working for some time in the advertising sector, joined Lintas. His tenure at Lintas saw him at his creative best, and brands like 'Liril', 'Lalitaji', MRF Muscleman', 'Cherry Blossom', and 'Hamara Bajaj', soon became household names. He was one of the earliest to gauge the potential of Television, and produced content exclusively for the medium that was taking shape during that time.

Hailing his contribution to the advertising industry, the Advertising Club of India, Mumbai, conferred on him the honour of the 'Advertising Man of the Century'. It would be no exaggeration to say that Padamsee revolutionised Indian advertising, and was the only Indian to be voted into the Clio International Hall of Fame, deemed as the Oscars of Advertising. After his stint at Lintas, Padamsee founded the 'AP Advertising Pvt. Ltd.', a firm of image and communication consultants that provided consultancy services to a number of national and multinational firms. His services were also requisitioned by several large corporate houses.

Padamsee will also be remembered for his contribution to the theatre movement in the country. He produced and directed over 70 plays significant among them being *Evita*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Broken Images*, and also produced and directed Jnanpith award winning playwright and actor Girish Karnad's play *Tughlak*. His play *Broken Images*, was invited to perform at the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC in 2011.

He was awarded the Sangeet Natak Academy Tagore Ratna for Lifetime Achievement. Trained at the Royal Academy of Drama in London, the playwright-director was one of the most acclaimed celebrities in Indian theatre, and his plays were performed in theatres worldwide. An accomplished actor, Alyque Padamsee won critical acclaim for his portrayal of the role of the architect of Pakistan, Mohamed Ali Jinnah, in the multiple Oscar winning production *Gandhi*, directed by Sir Richard Attenborough. A high degree of civic consciousness was always conspicuous in his activities, and he worked relentlessly for the common cause. He was affiliated to an organisation named 'Citizens for Justice & Peace' formed after the Gujarat riots,

and was an advisor to the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on commercial TV. He was also associated with the Department of Biotechnology in their AIDS prevention drive, and was a member of the PM's AIDS Task Force. Alyque was bestowed with the Padma Shri in the year 2000.

While one of Padamsee's brothers Akbar Padamsee is a very well known painter, his sons Quasar Thakore Padamsee and Shazan Padamsee, and his daughter Rael Padamsee, have all taken after him, and are popular theatre personalities in their own right. Condoling his demise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his sadness at his passing, and hailed his role as a wonderful communicator, and averred that his extensive work in the world of advertising would always be remembered. He also lauded his contribution to theatre deeming it as noteworthy. Padamsee's autobiography *A Double Life* that dealt extensively with his twin passions, advertising and theatre, turned out to be a best seller, and has been prescribed as a text in business schools. A large hearted man, the late advertising genius was also a philanthropist who shunned publicity for his charitable activities, or for his social activism. Alyque Padamsee led a long, fulfilling life, and remained active till the very end.

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



LALAN SARANG

Renowned actor-writer (1938-2018)

Lalan Sarang (December 26 1938–November 9 2018), was a veteran Indian film, theatre and television producer and actress in Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati productions. She also produced several plays and as a culinary expert, was the owner of ‘Masemari – The Fishing’, a seafood restaurant in Pune. She loved interacting with people who would visit her restaurant and talk about her plays and movies. Born Lalan Paingankar, her middle class family had no acting background, but in college, she began participating in college-level theatre, and developed her acting talent.

Sarang received several accolades for her roles in path-breaking milestone plays, including *Sakharam Binder*, *Gidhade*, and *Kamla*. She also played key roles in Marathi films such as *Samna*, *Ha Khel Savlyancha*, *Mani Mangalsutra*, and *Mahek*. Apart from the theatre, she was also appreciated a lot for her TV serials like *Rathchakra*. She was connected to the screen for a long time. Even after getting on in age, she continued acting in order to teach her juniors. Known for her impeccable acting in plays, her portrayal of characters were not only entertaining, but also backed by important social messages.

Her rebellious roles such as the pivotal role of Champa in the Marathi play *Sakharam Binder* written by contemporary playwright Vijay Tendulkar made her popular. Lalan had to put on make-up to play Champa at the age of 53 in 1995 to play the character opposite Sayaji Shinde. She faced a lot of flak, but stood by her character in the play. The play, translated into other languages, generated a lot of controversy, when it was first performed on stage in February 1972, and was even banned in 1974. Since the first show at Shivaji Mandir, the strong and powerful play directed by well-known Kamlakar Sarang, Lalan’s husband, ruffled feathers of many till its 13th show, which led the censor board to not grant permission to stage it on grounds of vulgarity.

But it won the fierce legal battle in the Mumbai High Court, braving the so-called moral police, and paved the way for

dissolving the same censor board, which stopped its shows. Lalan Sarang, the only surviving member had opined, “This masterpiece is relevant even after 40 years. There are plenty of Sakharams in society treating women as slaves. They still pick up other men’s destitute women as their domestic servants and sex partners.” She had added, “Some detractors poisoned the mind of the censor board, which imposed a ban citing vulgarity as a reason just after 13 shows. But the court announced the verdict in our favour.”

In 1974, the Shiv Sena started an agitation against the play. “Wherever we went, the party workers would follow us until Bal Thackeray himself watched the play and the agitation went into oblivion,” remembered Lalan. “During the initial two years, we had to undergo mental and economical sufferings. Actor Nilu Phule opted out of his role of the main protagonist of *Sakharam* after 10 years. In him, we lost the most suitable actor, who could do justice to the character. The other actors tried to do their best, but unfortunately could not reach the mark,” Lalan had mused.

She presided over the 87th Marathi Natya Sammelan at Kankavali in 2006, and her several awards include the Grahini Sachiv Award of G.D, Madgulkar Pratishthan; Pimpri Chinchwad Kalarang Sanskrutik Sanstha-Kalagaurav award 2015, and the Jivan Gaurav award, 2017. The veteran actor, famous for being diverse in terms of creativity, was also very prolific, and went on to pen some books also such as *Nataka Magil Natya* (The drama behind the play), a book of memoirs of the incidents and experiences she went through during her days on stage, *Mi Ani Majhya Bhumika*, *Jagle Jasi*, and *Bahardar Kisse Ani Chatakdar Pakakruti*. Lalan died of age-related ailments at the age of 79 in Pune. It led to a wave of mourning in the Marathi theatre and cinema circles. She is survived by son Rakesh and his family.

- A.Radhakrishnan is a Pune-based freelance writer, poet and short story writer.



BRIGADIER K.S. CHANDPURI MVC, VSM

Courageous and committed soldier (1940-2018)

Brigadier Chandpuri was born on 20 November 1940, in Montgomery, which is now part of the Punjab province of Pakistan. The family migrated to village Chandpur Rurki in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar after Independence. He graduated from the Government High School, Hoshiarpur, in 1962. Encouraged by his two uncles who were serving in the Indian Air Force (IAF), he joined the Officers' Training Academy, Chennai, in 1962, and was commissioned into 23 PUNJAB on 30 June 1963.

In 1971, he was commander A Company of 23 PUNJAB, and was deployed in Longewala in Rajasthan. This post was earlier held by Border Security Force (BSF). He did not have any armour support. The only defence weapons against tanks were Recoil Less Guns (RCL) and Rocket Launchers (RL). Artillery support of one battery of 170 Field Regiment was available. In desert, movement is difficult, both for men and vehicles. Longewala post blocked the approach to Jaisalmer. It was an isolated post; the remaining battalion was about 17 km away. The company had prepared the defences well on a sand dune, which gave them a dominating position.

After facing bombing by Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on 3 December, Chandpuri sent a platoon strong patrol under Lt. Dharam Vir to the border to observe any enemy activity. On the night of 4/5 December, Dharam heard noises suggesting movement of Pakistani tanks. Chandpuri reported this information to the battalion HQ. General Khambata stressed on Chandpuri to hold the position firmly. 51 Infantry Brigade of Pakistan Army and 22 CAVALRY were given the task to attack Longewala and drive on to Jaisalmer. The attack commenced with heavy bombardment by medium guns after midnight. Two enemy tanks were destroyed by RCL guns. Pakistani attack stalled about 50 metres from the locality. They mistook the barbed wire at the defended locality to be a minefield. This had been erected by BSF to keep the camels from running away. Pakistan engineers came after two hours and found that there was no minefield. They decided to encircle the post instead of a frontal attack.

Their vehicles got bogged down. Chandpuri moved from bunker to bunker encouraging his men. He was hit by shrapnel. It was a saga of human resolve and motivation in the face of danger and adverse situation.

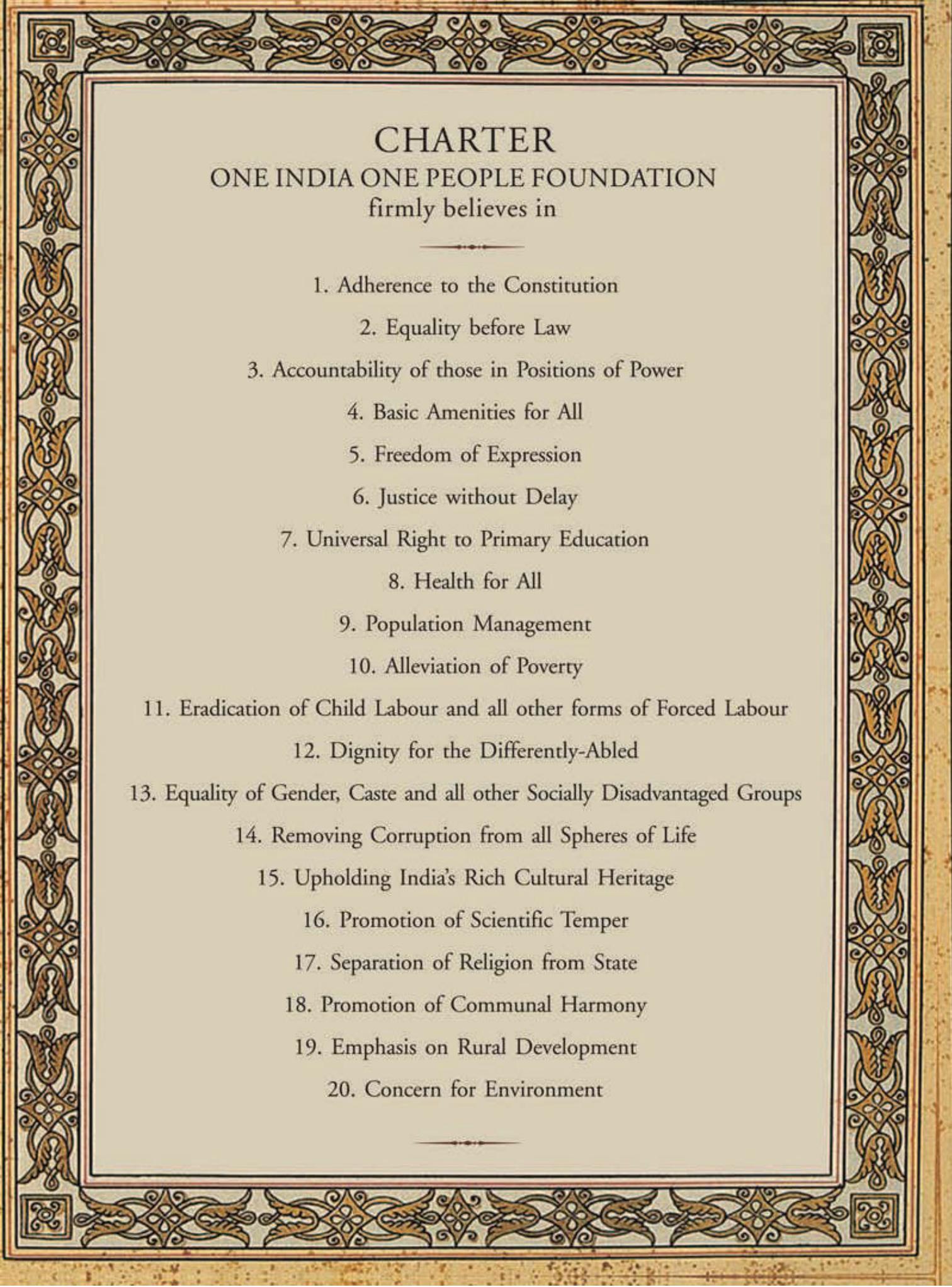
At first light, the IAF Hunter aircraft struck. They were not able to locate the enemy tanks and air observation pilots guided them to the target. The air strike continued throughout 5 December. The destruction of tanks was aided by barrels of fuel loaded on tanks to take them to Jaisalmer. Twenty two tanks and a number of vehicles were destroyed. Another 12 tanks were destroyed by infantry. The enemy tried to attack again on night 5/6 December. By then the post had been reinforced by 17 RAJ RIF. On 7 December, Pakistan forces withdrew in face of Indian counter-offensive, leaving 200 dead behind. Our own casualties were 12 killed and 12 injured. Plans captured from the tanks revealed that Pakistanis had planned to enjoy dinner at Jaisalmer.

Chandpuri was awarded the second highest gallantry award of MVC. 23 PUNJAB was awarded the Battle Honour. Tribute was paid to the unit by Field Marshal R.M. Carver, Chief of Imperial General Staff, when he visited the location. A film, *Border* has been produced on this epic battle. Mrs. Chandpuri recalls with pride that on the same day her father Sardar Baldev Singh of Punjab Police received the President's Police Medal. Chandpuri's two uncles serving in IAF were awarded VrC in 1971. Chandpuri retired as Brigadier and settled down in Chandigarh. In recognition of his contribution, the Indian Army named a road in military area of Rajasthan as Chandpuri Road in December 2017.

He was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in a private hospital in Mohali on 17 November 2018. He is survived by his wife and three sons.

- Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)





CHARTER
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION
firmly believes in

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

WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
(October 9 १९३० – February 23 २००७)
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Chitradurga
Echoes of a glorious past

FACE TO FACE

Durga Kainthola

The dancing rains of Assam

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An artistic journey in Lithuania

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