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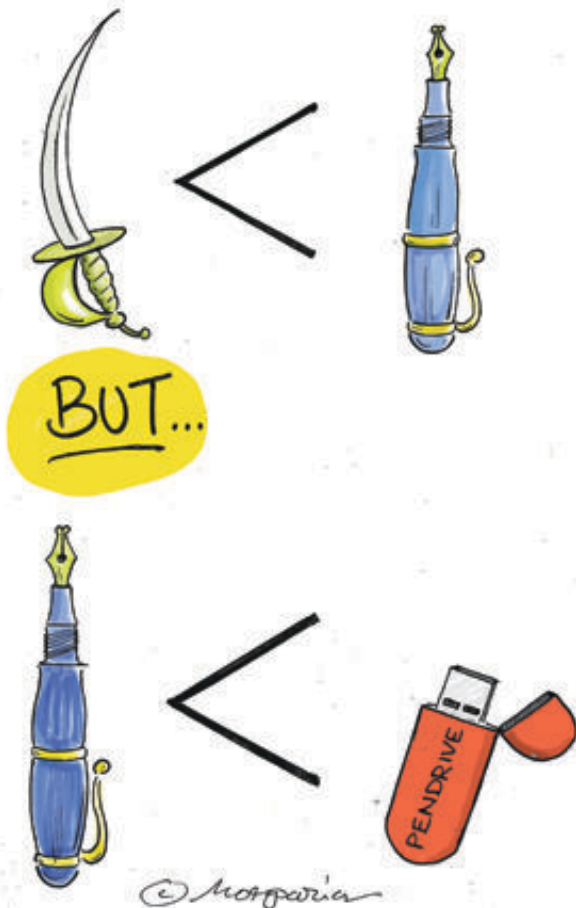
MANDAWA:

JEWEL OF SHEKHAWATI REGION

Face to Face

KARNEET KAUR NARANG

Great Indians : Fathima Beevi | Fali Sam Nariman | Captain Mnr Samant Maha Vir Chakra



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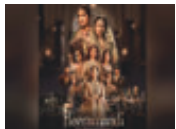
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FATHIMA BEEVI



FALI SAM NARIMAN



CAPTAIN MNR SAMANT
MAHA VIR CHAKRA



Managing Editor
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

Editor
Anuradha Dhareshwar

Design
Ananta Art Services

OIOP Clubs
Nagesh Bangera

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

visit us at:

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www.facebook.com/oneindiaonepeoplefoundation

The legacy of sports in India

Tracing the history of sports in India to centuries back, **Nandini Rao** dwells on how it has become a part of urban and rural landscape. Integral to the country's economy and tourism, it has also become a platform for marketing sports products. Sports build a feeling of nationalism and togetherness in people, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. They also promote physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle, contributing to overall well-being.



Teenage Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa

Sports have always held immense importance in the social and cultural ethos of India. From traditional games played in rural villages to the modern sports arenas that grace cities, the evolution of the sports landscape in India speaks volumes about its historical significance and the nation's pursuit of excellence.

The development of sports in India and its global recognition has been a result of myriad sports initiatives and the efforts of governmental bodies, their policies and the participatory role of sports personalities.

The history of sports in India dates back centuries ago when several traditional forms of sports originated. Ancient epics like the Mahabharat, written around the third century BCE, mention traditional sports played in the Indian subcontinent.

There is an acknowledgement of a game of dice in the ancient epic. Others include indoor games similar to chess and outdoor games such as archery. It is believed that the game of chess also originated in India. Modern-day chess has evolved from the Indian game called 'chaturanga' that was played even before 600 AD, with the earliest reference coming during the Gupta Empire.

Additionally, several ancient forms of martial arts also



Indian boxing legend Mary Kom

existed in the subcontinent at the time. The ancient texts also point towards the existence of wrestling, boxing, sword fighting, etc., in varying forms. Also, records indicate that students of ancient Indian universities like Nalanda and Taxila engaged in ball games and swimming.

Ancient remains

The history of sports in India is presumed to be thousands of years old, starting from the times of ancient civilisations. Dholavira in Kutch, Gujarat was included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 2021, making it the fourth such site in the state. Dholavira is one of the two most exquisite sites of the remains of the Indus Valley / Harappan Civilisation dating back to 5,000 years ago. The other such site is Lothal which is also located in Gujarat.

In Dholavira, a terraced arena was excavated which is known to be the world's oldest and indicates the existence of sports in India. Located on Khadir Beyt in the Rann of Kutch, rectangular-shaped Dholavira is older than Lothal which was a port city.

Divided into three parts - Citadel, Middle Town and Lower Town, the citadel in Dholavira had a 30-40 feet long



Wrestling Phogat sisters of India with their dad

protective ramp and wall. On the right side of this ramp is a large area of open land which we today call a stadium.

Interestingly, in the stadium at Dholavira, one can still find the remains of spectator stands, indicating the ancient inhabitants were fond of sports and games. This indicates that stadiums existed in India millennia before European colonisation, further highlighting the longstanding presence of sports in Indian culture.

The significance of sports

Several sports in India such as hockey, cricket, football, badminton, and wrestling have also made a mark in the sports arena in India. Hockey, the official national sport, has brought India eight Olympic gold medals, making it one of the most successful sports in India's history. In recent years, sports like badminton and wrestling have also gained prominence in the country.

The importance of sports in society cannot be overstated. Sports build a feeling of nationalism and togetherness in people, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. They also promote physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle, contributing to overall well-being.

Furthermore, sports are recognised as a soft power, serving as a global medium to improve diplomatic relations and promote peace and prosperity.

Sports initiatives in India range from governmental policies and bodies to the role of sports personalities. The government has played a crucial role in promoting and developing sports infrastructure and training facilities.

Additionally, the contributions of sports personalities and their impact on the nation's sports landscape are also worth examining. The evolution of sports showcase India's rich sporting heritage and the significant role they play in society.

India has historically been known for its diverse culture, vibrant traditions, and flourishing arts. However, alongside these artistic pursuits lies a rich legacy of sports that reflects not only India's ancient past but also its contemporary aspirations.

Deep roots

While cricket continues to reign supreme among India's favourite sports, there is no denying the growing popularity of several others, including boxing, wrestling, kho kho and kabaddi. These sports have deep roots and are embedded in India's cultural fabric. Traditional sports, on the other hand, continue to engage players across generations, till today.

Another critical element of Indian sports is how they reflect the values and priorities of society. Sports often become powerful symbols representing societal goals, aspirations, and emotions. For

instance, cricket serves as a symbol of national pride, while hockey represents resilience against adversity.

Similarly, India's success in athletics showcases the dedication and discipline demanded by the nation's athletes. It also exhibits how team work and collective effort with a common goal can create change and bring laurels to the nation. Understanding sports within the broader social context allows for better appreciation of their role in shaping society.

Integral to society

Sports are integral to India's economy and tourism sector. Events like the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, and Olympics generate billions of dollars in revenue through ticket sales, advertising, sponsorships, and foreign visitors.

Sports events attract tourists from across the world, creating employment opportunities and boosting local economies. Government initiatives aimed at enhancing sports infrastructure and supporting athletes serve multiple purposes - besides encouraging talent development, they facilitate job creation, stimulate economic growth, and promote regional integration.

At the same time, sports figures play an essential role in inspiring future generations to pursue sports enthusiastically and live a life of discipline and purpose. Indian athletes have achieved considerable milestones globally, earning laurels and accolades along the way.

Sportspersons like Kapil Dev, M S Dhoni, Mary Kom, P V Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Mithali Raj, Phogat sisters, Sunil Chhetri, Abhinav Bindra, etc. became household names because of their extraordinary abilities. Their achievements encouraged many young Indians to dream big and strive for excellence, in turn, benefitting the nation at several levels.

Sports stars transcend boundaries, class and caste differences and resonate with millions of fans who share similar ambitions. They inspire younger generations towards achieving greatness both inside and outside sports.

Policies and goals

The goal of a sports policy should be to improve sports facilities and infrastructure, generate funds for athletes so they could train properly and stay fit, organise competitions and tournaments regularly in order to showcase sporting talent of the country and generate revenue and employment as a by-product.

Over the years, sports in India have been marred with several issues such as gender disparity, inadequate financial incentives, corruption, lack of transparency, mismanagement, poor governance, etc. New policies and initiatives have been striving to address these obstacles and necessitate systemic reforms.

Technology plays an increasingly vital role in Indian sports today. Training techniques, nutritional requirements, physiological analysis, player performance tracking, analytics, and data interpretation benefit significantly from technological advancements.

Technological adoption enhances athletes' efficiency and ensures fair competition based on merit alone. Social media platforms offer athletes unprecedented access to fans, enabling them to communicate directly with supporters, thereby strengthening relationships beyond sports. Digital platforms provide tremendous potential for marketing sports products effectively.

Nandini Rao is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Cricket, a religion in its own right

Anushka Singh points how cricket has overshadowed its original colonial flavour to become a national obsession and a binding force for the people of the country. Once played in presidency and gymkhana clubs, it has become sports' greatest money spinner. It has emerged as a unifying force that brings people from diverse backgrounds, states, and cultures together, bridging social and cultural divides.



India win at the second ODI World Cup in 2011 in a final match played against Sri Lanka, under the captaincy of M S Dhoni (file pic)

Cricket has come a long way from its origins as a game played by the British in India during the colonial era to becoming a national obsession that brings people from all walks of life together. It has evolved into a sport that is not only popular in India but also across the globe, with an estimated 2.5 billion fans worldwide.

The history of cricket in India dates back to the time when the British soldiers introduced the game to India during the colonial era. However, it wasn't until the early 20th century that cricket truly began to take shape as a sport in India.

In 1721, a British vessel arrived and docked along the shores of Kutch in western India. The leisure pursuits of the sailors on the coastline sparked interest among bystanders. One of the sailors (mariners) in the East India Company, known as Clement Downing, reminisced about their time on the Kutch coast, at Cambay, in his memoirs. He wrote, "We entertained ourselves daily with games of cricket and various other activities." This happens to be the earliest recorded reference to cricket in India.

The beginnings

Over time, the British merchants became colonisers and starting to rule the land. Their recreational activities persisted and that's how cricket began to spread in India.

By some accounts, it was in 1751 that the first recorded Cricket Match was played in India, when the British Army played with the English settlers. Another significant milestone for the sport in the region was the founding of the Calcutta Cricket Club (CCC, now known as CC & FC) in 1792. It was the second-oldest cricket club in the world, following the MCC (1787). A match was played against Barrackpore and Dum Dum.

In 1804, the CCC orchestrated a match against the Old Etonians, a game remembered for Old Etonian Robert Vansittart's noteworthy century, the first recorded hundred in India. The match was between the Old Etonians vs Rest of Calcutta.

In 1846, the Madras Cricket Club was founded and the

sport quickly gained popularity among the British and Indian communities. The formation of cricket clubs and the establishment of cricket stadiums in major cities, such as Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, played a significant role in the growth of the sport in India.

The Parsis pioneered cricket among civilians in India by forming the Oriental Cricket Club in Mumbai in 1848. Though short-lived, this venture was succeeded by the establishment of the Young Zoroastrians Club in 1850 by the Parsis.

Soon after, the Hindu community formed the Hindu Gymkhana in 1866. By this time, cricket gained momentum in Mumbai and the hub of Mumbai's cricketing scene was the Esplanade 'maidan.' It's noteworthy to state that at the distant end of this 'maidan' lay a parcel of land called Bombay Gymkhana which was restricted to dogs and Indians at the time. In 1883, Muslims in Bombay formed the Muslim Gymkhana.

By this time, cricket was being played in Karachi and Lahore as well. In 1884, a team from Sri Lanka played a match in Calcutta making the sport popular in other countries as well. It was India's first international cricket venture.

The same year, Parsi Gymkhana was established in Mumbai. In 1892, the first Presidency match was played in Bombay (Europeans v. Parsis). Lord Harris was the Governor of Bombay Province and he was instrumental in promoting cricket in India. He even instituted an annual 'Presidency' match between the Parsis and the Europeans.

Princely power

By now, cricket had already spread across the Indian subcontinent. In the 1890s, its popularity surged when the Prince of Nawanagar Kumar Ranjitsinhji dazzled the English with his batting prowess. His mesmerising wristwork and unconventional shots captivated the traditional-minded and closed British spectators.

His success, both with Sussex in the English County Championship and later with the English Test Cricket team elevated him to iconic status within the British Empire. He inspired other princes to embrace Cricket.

This princely patronage, coupled with other developments, fuelled the growth of cricket in India further. H.H. Maharao Umedsinghji of Kotah became the first Indian cricketer to take all ten wickets in an innings, in 1891. Then, in 1898, K S Ranjitsinhji and Col K M Mistri became the first Indians to make a partnership of over 300.

In 1907, the annual Presidency match, initially a contest between Europeans and Parsis, expanded to include Hindus; then the Muslims in 1912, and later Christians and Anglo-Indians. In 1911, the Maharaja of Patiala sponsored and led an 'All-India' team to its maiden tour of England. A left-arm spinner Baloo Palwankar was among the top performers as he took more than a hundred wickets during the tour. He is the greatest Indian cricketer of his time.

In 1927, the Maharaja of Patiala, a British businessman named Grant Govan and Anthony De Mello convened a meeting with representatives from Delhi, Patiala, Sind, Punjab, Rajputana, United Provinces, Bhopal, Gwalior, Baroda, Kathiawar, etc., and key decisions were taken that eventually led to the formation of a Board of Cricket Control to represent cricket in India.

Contemporary cricket

Cricket has grown to become a significant part of India's sporting culture, with numerous events and tournaments contributing to the sport's popularity. The Indian Premier League (IPL) is one of the most highly anticipated cricket events in the world, attracting millions of spectators and generating billions of dollars in revenue. Additionally, the ICC Cricket World Cup is the most viewed cricket event globally, showcasing the best national teams from around the world.

Cricket in India has produced numerous world-class players, with legendary figures like Kapil Dev, Sachin Tendulkar, Saurav Ganguly, Sunil Gavaskar, MS Dhoni, Virat Kohli, etc. These players have set numerous records and achieved great success on the international stage, bringing pride and recognition to the sport in the country.

The Indian cricket team, also known as the 'Men In Blue', has become one of the strongest in the world, with numerous achievements in various prestigious tournaments, including the ICC Cricket World Cup and the T20 World Cup.

India debuted in ODI in 1974 when the team led by Ajit Wadekar played against England in a two-match ODI series. Indian cricket team's biggest achievement and a watershed moment in its history was in 1983 when they won their first-ever ODI World Cup by beating West Indies under the captaincy of Kapil Dev.

In the following decades the team went on to win big tournaments. The team won the ICC Champions Trophy twice in 2002 and 2013. They also won their second ODI World Cup in 2011 in a final match played against Sri Lanka, under the captaincy of M S Dhoni at the iconic Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

Beyond sports

Cricket in India goes beyond being just a sport, transcending its status as a game and becoming a symbol of national pride. It has been a unifying force that brings people from diverse backgrounds, states, and cultures together, bridging social and cultural divides. Cricket is revered in India and is often referred to as a religion, with people of all ages and walks of life passionately following the sport.

Cricket has come a long way in India, evolving from a colonial-era game to a national obsession that brings people from all over the country together. It has not only become the second-most popular sport in the world but has also contributed to the development of modern India by promoting national unity, pride, and inspiring upcoming young cricketers.

With its rich history and cultural significance, cricket continues to evolve and thrive, reflecting the resilience and spirit of the Indian people.

Anushka Singh works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analysing sources of news.

Controversies, bane of sporting spirit

Sports and controversies might be thought of as anti-thesis of each other but with so much – pride, prestige and money – at stake, they go hand-in-hand. **Ruchi Verma** points out that it is a phenomenon witnessed across the world with sporting nations courting unseemly controversies that highlight the complexities and challenges these incidents pose to the sports ecosystem. Match-fixing, doping and failure to comply with regulations are known to take away the sheen from fair contests.



Wrestler Narsingh Yadav faced a four-year ban after failing doping tests in 2016

Sports and controversy have a long-standing relationship that transcends geographical boundaries even in the world of sports. It is a phenomenon that has been observed across various sports and cultures, and India is no exception.

The country has witnessed its fair share of controversies in the world of sports, often leaving a lasting impact on the athletes, teams, and the sport itself. There have been many sports controversies in India that highlight the complexities and challenges that these incidents pose to the sports ecosystem.



Discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur faced a three year ban

Fixing facts

Another significant controversy in Indian football is the feud between Antonio Habas and Eelco Schattorie in an Indian Super League (ISL) fixture. The event unfolded during an ISL match at the Salt Lake Stadium in 2020, where ATK faced off against Kerala Blasters. Kerala Blasters managed to keep ATK at bay for the majority of the game, culminating in a late goal that put them in the lead.

A few controversial decisions went against the hosts.



Hurdler Jyothi Yarraji unjustly disqualified for a false start

When one goal from ATK was ruled out as 'offside', the built-up frustration tipped over. ATK's head coach Antonio Habas and goalkeeping coach Angel Pindado found themselves in a heated exchange with Eelco Schattorie and his assistant. As a result, both head coaches received a two-game suspension along with a fine of ₹1 lac each. Additionally, Pindado faced similar repercussions but was fined ₹2 lacs for his involvement in an altercation that included kicking Ahmed during the tense encounter.

The Indian Football Federation has also faced criticism for its handling of the FIFA suspension. The suspension, imposed for 11 days in August 2023, was seen as a major setback for Indian football.

The suspension was imposed due to the AIFF's failure to comply with FIFA's regulations regarding the election of its president. The suspension had significant implications for Indian football, including the loss of a golden opportunity for Gokulam Kerala FC Women to participate in the AFC Women's Club Championship.

In the world of hockey, the Indian women's team has faced controversy surrounding the tenure of head coach Janneke Schopman, former Dutch field hockey player. Schopman's three-year tenure was marked by inconsistency on the pitch, controversial selections, and a few hard questions for Hockey India.

Despite a few decent results, the team failed to win enough matches, especially in big tournaments. They finished ninth at the World Cup and failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics. Schopman's resignation was inevitable, given the team's poor performance and her criticism of Hockey India for gender-based discrimination.

Cricket cracks

Cricket, India's most popular sport, has also been plagued by controversies. From on-field incidents to off-field controversies, Indian cricket has seen its fair share of dramatic moments. The sport has witnessed a number of high-profile cases of match-fixing and corruption allegations. The match-fixing scandal in Indian cricket during the early 2000s involved prominent players like Mohammed Azharuddin and led to significant repercussions within the sport.

Another notable controversy was the infamous 'Monkeygate' incident involving Harbhajan Singh and Andrew Symonds during India's tour of Australia in 2008. Then, the contentious ban imposed by match referee Mike Denness on Indian cricketers, including Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly, in 2001. These controversies have not only tested the integrity of the game but have also sparked intense reactions from fans, players, and cricketing authorities, shaping the narrative of Indian cricket beyond the boundaries of the sport.

Another controversy that hit Indian cricket recently was when the Indian Premier League's Mumbai Indians Team decided to give the captaincy to Hardik Pandya over Rohit Sharma for IPL 2024 and transitioning his stint with the Gujarat Titans. This

strategic alteration, aimed at the team's long-term strategy, stirred emotions among fans who deeply value Rohit's pivotal contribution to the team's impressive record of winning 5 IPL titles.

Disqualifications and more

Sports controversies have significantly impacted the performance of Indian sports teams across various disciplines. These controversies have not only affected the morale of the athletes but also the overall perception of the sports and the governing bodies.

In the Asian Games 2023, held in Hangzhou, China, participants witnessed a series of perplexing decisions, technical glitches and peculiar incidents, primarily affecting Indian athletes. One such instance occurred when Indian track and field athlete, Hurdler Jyothi Yarraji was unjustly disqualified for a false start in the women's 100 m hurdles final, a mistake she did not commit.

Following a protest, she was reinstated, with her bronze medal upgraded to silver. Additionally, India's prominent javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Kumar Jena encountered their own challenges during the men's javelin throw final.

A technical glitch in the scoring system led to the inability to accurately measure the distance of Neeraj's initial throw. Even as that was being checked, Abdulrahman Alazemi of Kuwait proceeded with his first attempt. This was shocking as the protocol dictates that the next athlete waits until the previous one's score is officially confirmed.

In the meantime, the competition was halted for a few minutes until it was decided that Neeraj would need to redo his first throw. Despite being the defending champion, Neeraj displayed no signs of protest.

Upon returning to his mark, he sprinted in and hurled the javelin with all his might. This time, the distance was recorded, measuring at 82.38 m. While commendable, it fell short of Neeraj's initial throw.

Affecting performance

Doping controversies have periodically affected Indian athletes, emphasising the need for a strict anti-doping measures. To improve the performance of Indian sports teams, it is essential to address these controversies and ensure that the sports are governed in a transparent and accountable manner.

After finishing sixth at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Discus Thrower Kamalpreet Kaur emerged as a prominent figure in Indian athletics. Following spectacular performances, she subsequently qualified for the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

However, her career trajectory took an unpleasant turn when she tested positive for the banned substance stanozolol, an anabolic steroid, in a sample collected by the Athletics Integrity Unit. As a result, she faced a three-year ban from the competition.

The four-year doping suspension of Wrestler Narsingh Yadav, right before the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, remains a significant doping controversy in India. Failing two doping tests, Yadav claimed that a rival wrestler had sabotaged his Olympic aspirations.

Initially cleared by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), his clearance was later contested by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Ultimately, just one day before his scheduled bout at the 2016 Rio Olympics, Yadav was handed a four-year ban.

Ruchi Verma is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

The golden sports of India

Even as other sporting events have their own importance and fan base; hockey has always been associated for its patent Indian ethos. In her essay, **Kriti Kalra** highlights the high and low trajectory of this sport. Despite its glorious past, Indian hockey witnessed a steady decline in subsequent decades. Factors like synthetic turf, changes in coaching methodologies, and administrative mismanagement contributed to the erosion of India's hockey supremacy.



Star footballer Sunil Chhetri



Major Dhyani Chand - an icon in Indian field hockey and Nagendra Prasad Sarbadhikari- pioneer of Indian football



Hockey holds a special place in the hearts of Indians, deeply intertwined with the nation's history and identity. From its golden era of dominance to periods of decline and resurgence, the journey of Indian hockey reflects the country's passion for the sport and its enduring quest for excellence on the international stage.

In India, the hockey connection dates back to the 20th century. Over the decades, Indian hockey emerged as a powerhouse, dominating the Olympic Games and World Championships during the mid-20th century. The iconic triumphs of the Indian hockey team, including six consecutive Olympic gold medals from 1928 to 1956, remain etched in sporting folklore, symbolising the nation's prowess and unity.

Despite its illustrious past, Indian hockey witnessed a gradual decline in subsequent decades. Factors such as the advent of synthetic turf, changes in coaching methodologies, and administrative mismanagement contributed to the erosion of

India's hockey supremacy.

Recognising the need for a revival, various stakeholders within Indian hockey embarked on a journey of transformation. Initiatives such as the Hockey India League (HIL), launched in 2013, aimed to rejuvenate the sport by providing a platform for domestic talent to showcase their skills alongside international stars.

The HIL not only elevated the standard of competition but also reignited public interest in hockey, fostering a new generation of players and fans.

Concerted efforts were made to overhaul the grassroots infrastructure, with emphasis placed on talent identification, coaching development, and youth programmes. The establishment of state-of-the-art training facilities and the recruitment of talented coaches injected fresh perspectives and methodologies into Indian hockey.

The legacy

In India, the genesis of hockey clubs dates back to the late 19th century, with the first club established in Calcutta in 1885-86. Soon after, Bombay and Punjab followed suit, demonstrating the sport's rapid spread across the nation.

By 1908, the Bengal Hockey Association emerged as India's pioneering hockey association, marking a significant milestone in the sport's organisational structure. As hockey gained popularity, similar associations proliferated in regions such as Bombay, Bihar, Orissa, and Delhi, further fostering the growth of the game.

The watershed moment for Indian hockey arrived at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, where the national team clinched its maiden gold medal, signalling the beginning of a remarkable era of dominance.

Subsequently, India went on to secure Olympic gold for an unprecedented five consecutive times, establishing itself as a powerhouse in international hockey. The triumphs at the Olympics elevated the stature of the Indian Hockey Federation, the administrative body of field hockey in India, garnering widespread acclaim and recognition on the global stage.

The inclusion of women in Indian hockey further enriched the sport's landscape, with significant strides made towards gender inclusivity. The Asiad 82 marked a pivotal moment by incorporating women's hockey into the tournament, highlighting the growing presence and prowess of female athletes in the sport.

The legends

Legendary players such as Dhyhan Chand, Allen, Norris, Pinniger, Yusuf Gateley, and Cullen became synonymous with Indian hockey's golden era, leaving an indelible mark on the sport's history.

Born in 1905 in Prayagraj, Major Dhyhan Chand was an icon in Indian field hockey. He is revered as one of the greatest field hockey players in the world and his legacy transcends generations.

Renowned for his exceptional ball control and goal-scoring prowess, Chand clinched three Olympic gold medals for India in 1928, 1932, and 1936, marking an era of Indian dominance in field hockey. His impact reverberated far beyond these victories, contributing significantly to India's triumphs in the field hockey events.

In recognition of his enduring legacy, Chand's birthday on 29th August is commemorated as National Sports Day in India since 1995. On this day, the President bestows prestigious sports-related awards such as the Major Dhyhan Chand Khel Ratna, Arjuna Award and Dronacharya Award at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, symbolising Chand's enduring influence on Indian sportsmanship and excellence.

Today, Indian Hockey has found its bearing again. In the 2022 Commonwealth Games held in Birmingham, India clinched silver and bronze medals in the men's and women's hockey tournaments, respectively. At the Asian Games 2023 in Hangzhou, the Indian men's hockey team triumphed with a gold medal, while the women's team secured a bronze.

Indian hockey's journey from the golden era to adversity and revival epitomises the resilience and spirit of the nation. Indian hockey is now a dominant force in the international arena, inspiring generations and upholding the legacy of a sport deeply ingrained in the fabric of Indian society.

The football story

Football, often referred to as the beautiful game, has a rich history and a massive global following. In recent years, India's relationship with football has undergone significant transformations, reflecting the nation's passion for the sport and its ambitions on the international stage.

After rooting itself in the early 19th century, football quickly gained popularity, and by the early 20th century, Indian football clubs were flourishing. The Durand Cup, established in 1888 by Mortimer Durand, stands as one of the oldest football tournaments, highlighting the sport's early presence in the country.

Calcutta FC, Calcutta Football Club, is regarded as India's inaugural football club. The true pioneer of Indian football emerged with the arrival of Nagendra Prasad Sarbadhikari. This legendary football administrator played a pivotal role in establishing numerous football clubs across Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) and Bengal, significantly boosting the sport's popularity. Consequently, this zone emerged as the focal point of football in India.

He was instrumental in the formation of the three iconic Calcutta clubs - Mohun Bagan, founded in 1889, Mohammedan Sporting Club, established in 1891, and East Bengal, inaugurated in 1920. These clubs continue to thrive even today. The Indian Super League (ISL), founded in 2013, emerged as a game-changer, attracting attention from domestic and international audiences. With its star-studded line-ups and high production values, the ISL revolutionised Indian football, providing a platform for homegrown talent to showcase their skills alongside renowned international players.

Furthermore, the I-League, India's premier football competition, continues to play a vital role in nurturing young talent and promoting competition at the national level. Despite facing challenges such as financial instability and organisational issues, the I-League remains an essential component of Indian football's ecosystem. Amidst these challenges lie numerous opportunities for Indian football to thrive. The country's massive population, growing middle class, and increasing interest in the sport present a fertile ground for the expansion of football's footprint. Moreover, initiatives such as the Mission XI Million, aimed at promoting football among school children, demonstrate a concerted effort to build a strong footballing culture from the grassroots level.

The Indian national team's rise in FIFA rankings, coupled with impressive performances in regional competitions such as the AFC Asian Cup, signals progress and potential for further growth. Indian players such as Sunil Chhetri, dubbed the "Captain Fantastic," have garnered international acclaim for their talent and dedication to the sport. Chhetri's leadership on and off the field has earned him recognition as one of Asia's finest footballers, inspiring a new generation of players in India. Indian football has come a long way from its humble beginnings to emerge as a prominent force in the global footballing landscape. While challenges persist, the passion and determination of players, coaches, and fans alike continue to drive the sport forward.

Kriti Kalra is an activist and field researcher with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.

Embracing India's traditional sports

While modern-day games hog limelight for plausible reasons, the country cannot shed its rich sporting heritage where sports have made a yeoman's contribution in giving India a distinct identity despite diversity. **Gauravi Patel** finds India's sporting history originating from the Indus Valley Civilization and says some games like Snakes and Ladders, Chess, and Cards remain rooted in the Indian psyche.



Kho-Koho

The rich sporting heritage of India speaks volumes about the nation's deep-rooted cultural and historical traditions. From ancient times, sports have played a significant role in shaping India's identity and furthering unity among its diverse population.

India's sporting history dates back to the Indus Valley Civilisation (2500-1550 BC), where games like boxing, hunting and archery were played with weapons used in war. These early sports not only showcased physical prowess but also served as a means to develop strategic thinking and mental toughness.

The Vedic period (1500-500 BC) saw the emergence of games like Chaturanga, which is believed to be the precursor to modern chess. This game, along with others like Snakes and Ladders, Chess, and Cards, in traditional forms and names albeit, has been an integral part of Indian culture for centuries, transcending generations and geographical boundaries.

Chaturanga was believed to have originated during the sixth century in the Gupta empire. The board game was a game of strategy played in order to simulate war strategy with cavalry, infantry, chariots, etc. Also known as Chaduranga was played on an 8x8 unchecked board and alternatively referred to as Ashtapada.



Kabbadi

This ancient pastime is believed to be one of humanity's inaugural forays into the realm of strategic gameplay. While the exact rules of Chaturanga remain elusive, sparse historical accounts attest to the enduring visual semblance between Chaturanga and its modern successor, Chess.

Chaturanga was a test of patience and fortitude, characterised by meticulous contemplation rather than impulsive actions. Despite the simplicity of its gameplay mechanics, the mental exertion required to navigate each move was profound and intricate.

It imparted invaluable lessons on the principles of Karma (actions) and Dharma (duty), elucidating the intricate dynamics of leadership amidst tumultuous circumstances. Through its gameplay, it vividly illustrated the inherent limitations of power and the far-reaching consequences of individual actions, all while honing the intellect and fostering wisdom in those who dared to engage with its challenges.

The game of Snakes and Ladders, traditionally known as Moksha Patam, was also invented in ancient India. It derives origin from the philosophy of the highs and lows of life and the principle of karma. One of the oldest references to a game resembling its essence is found in the Mahabharat. Within its narrative, the tale of Yudhishtir's celestial encounter recounts the playing of Moksha Patam, a game akin to what we now

know as Snakes and Ladders.

Moksha Patam, as depicted in the Mahabharat, serves as a metaphorical journey mirroring life's vicissitudes. Yudhishtir, the protagonist, engages in a cosmic game of dice with a divine being, symbolic of the unpredictable nature of existence. This ancient pastime is emblematic of life's trials and tribulations, victories and defeats, echoing the cyclical nature of karma and destiny.

The game board itself was ingeniously crafted as a visual allegory of life's odyssey. Ladders, denoting virtuous acts and noble deeds, symbolised the ascent towards spiritual enlightenment and higher consciousness. Conversely, snakes, embodying vices and immoral behaviour, served as reminders of the pitfalls and setbacks encountered along the path of self-realisation.

Agility and strength

Kho Kho, a contact sport that requires agility and strength, is another traditional Indian game that has been around for centuries. This sport, which involves chasing and tagging opponents, is popular in rural areas and has been a part of Indian village life for generations.

Similarly, Kabaddi, a team sport that requires physical contact to score points, has been a common recreational sport in Indian villages for centuries. These traditional sports not only provide a platform for physical activity but also serve as a means to build community bonds and social cohesion. Over time, however, many such traditional sports were relegated to rural areas only to be revived later in the mainstream.

Today, despite the rise of modern sports, traditional Indian games continue to play a significant role in the society. Kho Kho and Kabaddi, for instance, have seen a resurgence in popularity in recent years, with the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) and the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) – the national governing body for Kho-Kho in India - working to promote these sports at the national and international levels.

PKL, in particular, has been instrumental in popularising Kabaddi, with its high-energy matches and engaging storylines drawing in millions of viewers across the country. Launched in 2014, PKL is Indian men's professional Kabaddi league and is the most popular such league in the world. It also happens to be the second-most watched sports league in the country, after Cricket's Indian Premier League.

Ancient origins

Kabaddi traces its origins to ancient Tamil Nadu, more than four thousand years ago, as a derivative of Jallikattu. The sport, reminiscent of taming a bull without physical contact, finds mention in Tamil Sangam literature.

According to folklore, the game also found favour among the Yadav people, with tales recounting Lord Krishna's youthful participation, as immortalised in the Abhang by poet Tukaram. Even Gautam Buddha is purported to have indulged in the game for leisurely recreation.

Kho Kho, on the other hand, is believed to have its origins in Maharashtra since the ancient times when it was played atop chariots, known as Rathera or Rath. It was Pune's Deccan Gymkhana that formalised the rules for the sport for modern-day version.

Interestingly, Kho Kho, alongside indigenous Indian sports such as Kabaddi and Mallakhamb, garnered attention when demonstrated on the sidelines of the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

The early roots of Indian archery are evidenced through two primary sources - ancient cave paintings and the Vedas believed to have been compiled circa 1700–1100 BC, providing invaluable insights into the ancient practice of archery in India. The famous tale of Eklavya who learnt archery from Dronacharya is mentioned in Mahabharat.

Mallakhamb boasts a rich and illustrious history that spans centuries, originating in the 12th century in Maharashtra. The term "Mallakhamb" finds its roots in Marathi, with "Malla" signifying wrestler and "Khamb" denoting pole.

This sport has been mentioned in Ramayan as well. Archaeological discoveries such as Chandraketugarh pottery dating back to the second century BCE also has references to this sport. The earliest direct literary mention of Mallakhamb is traced to the Manasollasa, an early 12th-century text authored by Chalukya king Someshvara III.

Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi, Taty Tope, and Nana Saheb, were practitioners of Mallakhamb. The training regimen, emphasising balance, dexterity, and discipline, was particularly suited to Maratha warriors renowned for their prowess in guerrilla warfare tactics.

New challenges

Despite their relevance and cultural significance, traditional Indian sports face several challenges. One of the primary challenges is the lack of infrastructure and resources, which can make it difficult for these sports to be promoted and developed. Another challenge is the limited exposure and recognition these sports receive at the international level, which can make it difficult for Indian athletes to compete and succeed in these disciplines.

The government's initiatives to promote sports at the national level, such as the 'Khelo India' programme, are helping in providing the necessary infrastructure and resources for these sports to flourish. Additionally, the rise of digital media and social platforms are increasing exposure and recognition for traditional Indian sports.

Gauravi Patel is a researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

India's prestigious athletics arena

Cricket may have held its fort as India's reigning sport but athletics are now seeing a welcome surge in recent years. **Sayali Karade** says, athletics, earlier a symbol of physical prowess, has seen subtle and refined changes as structured efforts were made to promote track and field events. Indian athletics is undergoing a renaissance, fuelled by the passion and determination of its athletes. Verdict: The future holds promise for further glory on the global stage.



Sprinters Hima Das, nicknamed 'Dhing Express,' and Dutee Chand have brought glory to the nation with their electrifying performances

India, a nation deeply entrenched in cricket fervour, has seen a remarkable surge in its passion for athletics in recent years. Track and field events, often overshadowed by the glitz of other popular sports, are experiencing resurgence, propelled by the stellar performances of athletes both nationally and internationally.

The history of athletics in India too, like many other sports, can be traced back to the ancient era where physical prowess was celebrated in the form of sports like wrestling, archery, running, martial arts, etc.

However, it was in the modern era, particularly post-independence, that structured efforts were made to promote track and field events. The establishment of institutions like the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) laid the groundwork for nurturing talent and organising competitions at various levels.

AFI is the apex body for running and managing athletics in India and affiliated to the World Athletics, AAA and Indian Olympic Association. It was founded in 1946 and organises

national events, selects Indian athletics teams for other tournaments and competitions such as Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Olympics, etc.

SAI, on the other hand, is the foremost national sports body of India established by Government of India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in 1984, with the aim to further the legacy of the IXth Asian Games (1982) held in New Delhi. SAI has been instrumental in transforming Indian sports by executing schemes for identifying young sports talent and by training athletes.

Diversity in athletics

Track and field events encompass a wide array of disciplines, ranging from sprints to long-distance running, from jumps to throws. In recent years, Indian athletes have excelled across multiple events, showcasing their versatility and determination on the global stage.

Sprinters like Hima Das, nicknamed 'Dhing Express,' and Dutee Chand have brought glory to the nation with their

electrifying performances in the 100 m, 200 m and 400 m races. Their speed and agility have earned them accolades both nationally and internationally. In July 2018, Hima Das created history in Tampere, Finland and became a world-class track and field star when she won gold in the 400 m at the IAAF World U20 Championships.

One of the most decorated athletes of India, Neeraj Chopra became India's first Olympic gold medallist in athletics when he won the gold medal for javelin throw at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. This made him the second-ranked athlete internationally in the men's javelin throw.

Also, Neeraj became the second Indian to win an individual Olympic gold medal. The first one being Abhinav Bindra who won the gold medal in men's 10 m air rifle in the 2008 Summer Olympics. Presently, Neeraj Chopra is the reigning Olympic champion and World champion in men's javelin throw. Athletes like him have set new benchmarks for Indian athletes.

Taking on the world

India's journey in athletics has been punctuated by moments of triumph and resilience on the international arena. Over the years, several athletes have carved a niche for themselves. Milkha Singh, fondly remembered as the 'Flying Sikh' was one of the most renowned Indian athlete.

His exploits on the track during the 1950s and 1960s laid the foundation for Indian athletics. His fourth-place finish in the 400 m race at the 1960 Rome Olympics remains etched in the annals of Indian sports history.

P T Usha, known as the 'Queen of Indian Track and Field' dominated the sprint events during the 1980s and inspired a generation of athletes. Her near-miss for a medal at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics catapulted her to legendary status. She had clocked 55.42 seconds in the women's 400 m hurdles, came fourth and missed out the bronze by a mere 1/100th of a second.

Long Jumper Anju George is India's first and only World Championship medallist in athletics. Her silver medal in long jump at the 2003 World Championships in Athletics, Paris brought her international acclaim and paved the way for future aspirants.

Indian athlete from Uttar Pradesh, Parul Chaudhary specialises in 5000 m and 3000 m steeplechase. She was the first-ever female athlete in the Asian Games to win a medal in the women's 3000 m steeplechase (silver) and 5000 m race (gold). Avinash Sable specialises in 3000 m steeplechase and is a record holder in the 5000 m long-distance running.

Hurdles athlete from Mumbai Siddhanth Thingalaya holds the record for 110 m hurdles. The national record holder for the fastest timing in men's category is Muhammed Anas as he ran 400 m at 45.21 seconds at the Czech Athletics Championships in 2019.

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Hurdles and opportunities

Despite the remarkable progress, Indian athletics faces its share of challenges, including infrastructure limitations, funding constraints, and the need for grassroots development programmes. However, initiatives like the Khelo India Programme and Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) are striving to address these issues and provide a conducive environment for budding athletes to flourish.

TOPS was initiated in 2014 with the goal to improve India's performance at Olympics and Paralympics. Started by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the scheme is supporting athletes in training, coaching, procuring equipment and offering stipends as well.

In the 2016 Paralympic Games, athletes from the Target Olympic Podium Scheme won two Gold, one Silver and one Bronze Medal affirming the scheme's effectiveness. And, of the 70 athletes who won medals at the Commonwealth Games, 47 were supported by TOPS.

The Khelo India programme was introduced 'to revive the sports culture in India' by building a strong framework for all sports played in the country. The programme, implemented by SAI includes - State Level Khelo India Centres, Annual Sports Competitions, Talent Search and Development, Sports for Women, Support to National/Regional/State Sports Academies, Promotion of Sports among persons with disabilities, Promotion of rural and indigenous/tribal games, and Physical Fitness of School going Children.

The Khelo India School Games, part of Khelo India programme, are for the following sports - Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Football, Gymnastics, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Shooting, Swimming, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

The renaissance

Indian athletics is undergoing a renaissance, fuelled by the passion and determination of its athletes. As the nation continues to celebrate the triumphs of its track and field stars, the future holds promise for further glory on the global stage.

With concerted efforts from stakeholders and continued support from the government, India's journey towards becoming a powerhouse in athletics is well underway, with each stride bringing the nation closer to its sporting aspirations. The nation has seen a remarkable surge in its passion for athletics in recent years and track and field events are gaining popularity.

The government has taken several initiatives to address issues plaguing athletics. For example, introducing capacity building programmes, allocating sufficient funds, expediting decision-making, creating equal opportunities for women and girls to participate and excel in various sporting disciplines, supporting athletes through schemes and programmes, encouraging participation from and initiating interests in sports among children, and more.

Sayali Karade is a volunteer with The History and Heritage Project – a DraftCraft International Initiative dedicated to documenting details, analysing facts, and addressing gaps that may arise due to oversight or the advancement of national or foreign agendas within the realms of History and Heritage across India and beyond borders.

Making waves globally

Listing the challenges and opportunities that badminton faces in India, **Neeti Prakash** observes that despite limited resources and infrastructure, Indian players began to make their mark on the international stage. Through clubs and associations, the sport has made a gradual headway to become a sought-after game. Citing some prominent names that have brought glory to the country, she says it is heartening that BAI's efforts are being fructified by promising talent.



PV Sindhu

The history of badminton in India is as intriguing as the sport itself. From its humble beginnings to becoming a powerhouse in international competitions, the journey of badminton in India is akin to the passion and dedication of its players and administrators.

The sport was introduced formally in India in the late 19th century, with the establishment of badminton clubs and associations in major cities. These clubs served as hubs for enthusiasts to gather and play the game, laying the groundwork for the sport's growth in the country.

With the founding of the Badminton Association of India (BAI), one of the oldest badminton governing bodies, the sport started to gain popularity. Another major milestone in Indian badminton came in 1934 when the International Badminton Federation (IBF) was formed, a governing body to oversee the development and promotion of the sport worldwide, which India joined in 1936.

Eventually, organised competitions and tournaments became more prevalent, providing a platform for Indian players to showcase their skills.



Sania Mirza

The evolution

In the years following independence, badminton in India faced both challenges and opportunities. Despite limited resources and infrastructure, Indian players began to make their mark on the international stage.

Notable names like Prakash Padukone and Pullela Gopichand emerged as trailblazers, winning prestigious titles and inspiring a new generation of players.

In 1980, Padukone secured his place in Indian sporting history by becoming the first Indian to clinch the esteemed All England Open Badminton Championships and ascend to the top spot in the men's badminton world rankings.

His illustrious career further shone when he secured India's inaugural Commonwealth Games gold medal in badminton, triumphing in the men's singles event in 1978. His achievements also include a bronze medal at the 1983 World Badminton Championships and a gold medal at the 1981 World Cup held in Singapore.

(Continue on pg 29)



Mandawa: Jewel of Shekhawati region

Known for its ornate havelis and majestic forts among other royal grandeur, Mandawa is a quaint little town in Rajasthan's culturally vibrant Jhunjhunu district. In the heart of the Shekhawati region, the place with its glorious Rajput history, is also known for its affluent families who have historically played a significant role in the region's cultural, social, and economic development. Owing to its royal rendition, it is also a hotspot for movie shoots.

Shikha Hazarika takes a detour!

Text and photographs: Shikha Hazarika



A quiet street in Mandawa. Exquisite art work can be seen on the outerwalls of some of the houses

Beneath the vast azure skies of Rajasthan lies a town steeped in mystique, where time dances to the rhythm of heritage and every whisper carries the echoes of a bygone era. A town whose every corner illustrates tales of regal grandeur and timeless elegance. Mandawa, nestled in the heart of the Rajasthan in Jhunjhunu district, known for its rich cultural heritage stands as a testament to the State's majestic past and vibrant present.

However, this captivating town was never on my wishlist. But now, I must say that the best adventures often arise from spontaneity, like the unexpected blossoming of a flower in an unplanned corner of the garden. Well, from the awe-inspiring frescoes that adorn the walls of centuries-old mansions to the narrow lanes bustling with the energy of local life, Mandawa invites you to immerse yourself in its splendour.

As one steps into Mandawa, one of the prominent towns in Shekhawati, one can clearly see a glimpse of Rajasthan's rich cultural tapestry and I was no exception to it. As a custodian of its architectural, cultural, and historical legacy, Mandawa holds a special place in the Shekhawati region. Shekhawati, which is a semi-arid historical region located in the northeastern part of the Indian state of Rajasthan encompasses several towns and villages, each adorned with elaborately painted havelis (traditional mansions) and frescoed walls, showcasing exquisite artwork and craftsmanship. Shekhawati essentially means "the land of the

Shekhawat Rajputs" or "the region controlled by the Shekhawat clan." Over time, the term 'Shekhawati' has come to represent not only the geographical area associated with the Shekhawat Rajputs but also the distinctive cultural and architectural heritage of the region.

Mandawa's allure lies not just in its ornate havelis and majestic forts, but in the stories that lurk beneath the surface. With each step, I peeled back the layers of history, discovering tales of triumph and tragedy etched into the very fabric of the town.

Portals to the past

In the early 18th century, when the silk route from Central Asia to China was active, Mandawa was developed as a trading outpost. Its strategic location facilitated trade between the merchants of Rajasthan and those from neighbouring regions and countries, including China and the Middle East. This is when rich merchants like Goenkas, Chokhanis, Sarafs decided to settle into the village and thus, built lavish bungalows that were covered from top to bottom by colourful frescoes. So, this town is known for its affluent families who have historically played a significant role in the region's cultural, social, and economic development. Many of these families are associated with the ownership and preservation of the ornate havelis. This is where the first of the Mandawa Havelis history can be traced.



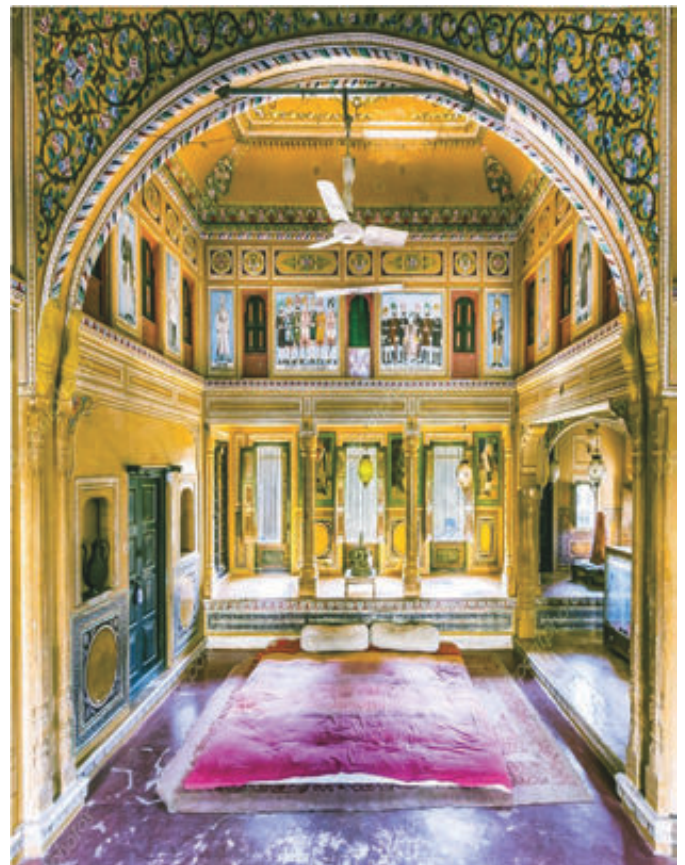
Goenka Double Haveli

Cultural oasis

Venturing deeper into Mandawa's maze-like streets, I embarked on a quest to discover few of its famed havelis and my initial efforts were towards finding a royal but budget stay. In the meantime, I came across this boutique stay at Hotel Shekhawati. While walking towards my room, with each step, I found myself transported to a world where artistry knew no bounds. Every brick, every fresco tells a story of opulence and legacy. Here I must say, staying at a heritage hotel in Shekhawati offers guests a unique opportunity to experience the grandeur and hospitality of Rajasthan's Rajput heritage. These hotels often retain the original charm and ambience of the historic properties while offering modern amenities and comforts to guests. Beyond providing accommodation, heritage hotels in Shekhawati offer guests the chance to immerse themselves in the region's rich culture and heritage. They offered evening entertainment featuring local artists and folk performances. And, this was no exception to Hotel Shekhawati. It featured well-appointed and intricately decorated rooms, a courtyard, and a rooftop terrace offering panoramic views of the surrounding area making it a popular choice for travellers exploring the region.

Restoration of architectural treasures

With the decline of traditional industries and the migration of families to urban centres, many of these heritage properties fell into disrepair. However, in recent decades, there has been a growing interest in preserving and restoring these archi-



A glimpse of one of the oldest Havelis in Mandawa



Hotel Shekhawati, one of the boutique hotels in Mandawa

tectural treasures and I suppose, Bollywood played a key role in it. While specific Bollywood movies may not have directly encouraged the restoration of Shekhawati havelis, the cinematic portrayal of these architectural marvels in various films has undoubtedly contributed to raising awareness about their cultural significance and historical importance. By showcasing Shekhawati havelis on the silver screen, Bollywood has inadvertently highlighted the need for their preservation and restoration.

The visually stunning depiction of havelis in Bollywood movies has not only captured the imagination of audiences but has also prompted a renewed interest in heritage conservation among filmmakers, tourists, and locals alike. Some notable Bollywood films shot in Mandawa include *Bajrangi Bhaijan* (2015), *PK* (2014), *Paheli* (2005), *Mirzya* (2016) etc. As a result, there has been increased attention towards restoring and maintaining these architectural gems, ensuring that they continue to stand as a testament to the region's rich cultural heritage for generations to come.

When it is Shekhawati, embarking on a haveli-hopping adventure is the best thing one can do to admire the town's exquisite

site artwork. Some must-visit heritages include Mandawa Fort, Murmuria Haveli, Goenka Double Haveli, and Hanuman Prasad Goenka Haveli. Each haveli boasts unique artwork and historical significance with paintings frequently featuring figures from Hindu mythology and folklore; Gods and goddesses such as Krishna, Radha, Shiva, and Durga are commonly depicted, along with scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and other ancient epics. Intricate floral and geometric patterns adorn the borders and backgrounds of many Mandawa paintings, adding depth and texture to the compositions. Interestingly, animals such as elephants, horses, peacocks, and camels are often depicted in Mandawa's paintings, symbolising power, grace, and the natural world. These animal motifs add visual interest and symbolism to the artworks.

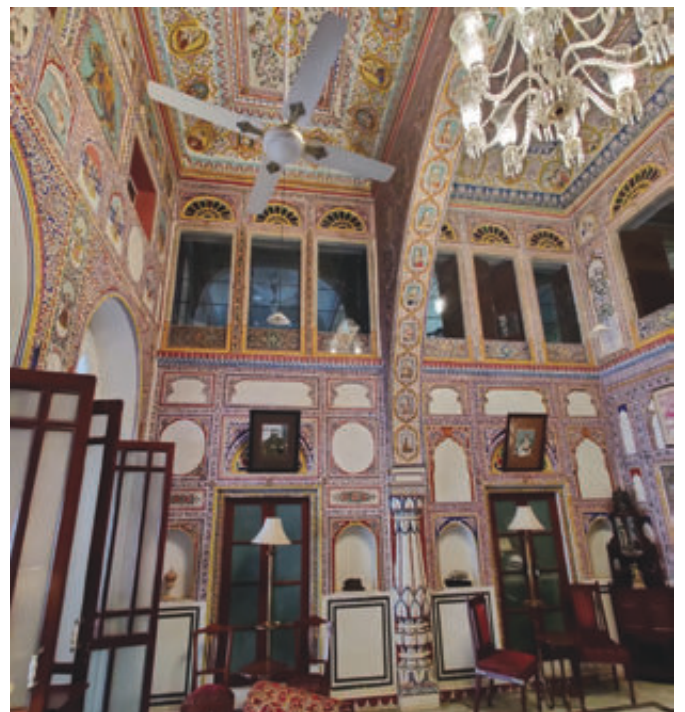
Apart from that, paintings portraying scenes of rural life are also common in Mandawa's artistic repertoire. These vignettes capture the rustic charm of village life, depicting farmers, herders, and artisans going about their daily activities amidst pastoral landscapes.



A canon displayed outside the Mandawa Fort

A Glimpse of Royalty Mandawa Fort

My first stop was Mandawa Fort, also known as the Castle Mandawa, built in the 18th century by Thakur Nawal Singh, who was also the founder of the town of Mandawa. The fort was constructed as a defensive structure to protect the town and its residents from external threats. Its strategic location on a hill provided a vantage point for surveillance and defence. The fort is a fine example of Rajput architecture, characterised by its imposing walls, ornate gateways and as I wandered through its labyrinthine corridors and ancient chambers, I felt a profound sense of awe at the sheer magnitude of its history. From the opulent Durbar Hall to the intricately carved balconies offering panoramic views of the surrounding landscape, every corner of the fort spoke volumes about Rajasthan's royal legacy. The fort was not only a symbol of power and authority but also a centre of cultural and social life in the region. Notably, this majestic bastion even today stands as a silent sentinel overlooking the town. Like many historical forts and palaces in Rajasthan, Mandawa Fort fell into disrepair over



View of the hall at Castle Mandawa



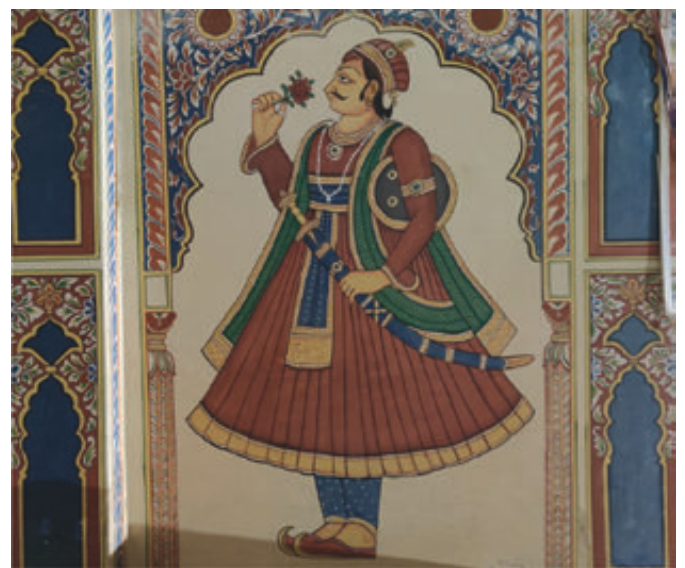
Exquisitely designed Murmuria Haveli

the years due to neglect and changing socio-political circumstances. However, later in the 20th century, efforts were undertaken to renovate the fort and convert it into a heritage hotel, allowing visitors to experience the grandeur of Rajput architecture while enjoying modern amenities.

Unveiling Murmuria Haveli

This is a must-visit. Murmuria Haveli's exquisite architecture and rich historical ambiance make it a captivating location for film shooting. The intricate paintings, ornate facades, and traditional Rajasthani architecture provide a stunning backdrop for various types of film projects, including historical dramas, romantic films, and cultural documentaries. Filmmakers can leverage the haveli's unique charm and aesthetic appeal to create visually stunning scenes that transport viewers to another time and place. The vibrant colours, intricate details, and cultural motifs present in Murmuria Haveli add depth and authenticity to any cinematic production set in Rajasthan.

Venture into the haveli's labyrinthine corridors and



Art work at Hotel Shekhawati



Murmuria Haveli Courtyard

discover hidden alcoves, secret passages, and secluded chambers. Each corner of Murmuria Haveli holds stories waiting to be uncovered, offering a glimpse into its illustrious past.

Grandeur of Goenka Haveli

Visiting Goenka Haveli in Mandawa is like stepping into a beautifully preserved slice of history, where the walls whisper stories of a bygone era. As you approach the haveli, its majestic facade adorned with intricate carvings and vibrant frescoes immediately captures your attention, hinting at the grandeur that lies within.

Upon entering the haveli, you're greeted by a sense of awe and wonder as you find yourself surrounded by a symphony of colours and designs. Every nook and cranny of the haveli is adorned with stunning artwork.

Shopping excursion in Mandawa Market

Wandering through the narrow lanes of town after sightseeing, I was greeted by a kaleidoscope of colours, sounds, and aromas and this happens exactly to be the vibrant market of Mandawa situated within the town. It's typically near the main square or in the central area, easily accessible to both locals and



Antique items at Murmuria Haveli



Paintings and Frescoes on the walls and ceilings of Hotel Shekhavati

visitors alike. Shopping here is an immersive experience that engages all your senses as you encounter the atmosphere, traditional crafts, jewellery, personalised souvenirs and cuisines of Rajasthan.

The numerous shops lining the streets stand tall with beautifully crafted items such as pottery, textiles, leather goods, and miniature paintings. Also, from colourful textiles and embroidered fabrics to silver jewellery and antique artefacts, there's something for everyone here. In fact, one cannot escape appreciating the architectural marvels of the market while gazing at the buildings with paintings of Hindu mythology, Rajput culture, and everyday life in Rajasthan. Moreover, while you indulge your taste buds with the flavours of Rajasthan by sampling local delicacies at the market's food stalls and eateries, don't miss the opportunity to try Rajasthani specialties like dal-bati churma, kachori, and ghevar.

The timeless lifestyle

Today, Mandawa stands as a testament to the opulent lifestyle and entrepreneurial spirit of its merchant princes, preserving the rich heritage of Rajasthan for future generations to admire and appreciate. Something that caught my attention was unlike many other tourist hubs, which turned quite commercial, this small town still remains a close-knit community where neighbours often know each other well and social bonds are strong. People take pride in their cultural heritage and often participate





The author posing outside an ornately designed haveli

in community events, festivals, and celebrations together. Apart from this, the community here proudly exhibits their culture through their attires, which is the colourful traditional wear. Women can be often seen wear colourful sarees or ghagras (long skirts) paired with ornate jewellery, while men wear colourful turbans, dhotis (traditional garment), and kurtas (long shirts). Traditional attire is not only worn during festivals and special occasions but is also a part of everyday life for many.

However, it is noteworthy that Mandawa retains much of its traditional charm though modern influences are also evident, particularly among the younger generation. Many young people pursue education and career opportunities in urban areas, bringing back new ideas and perspectives that contribute to the evolving cultural landscape of the town.



A routine day at Mandawa Market

Heritage meets 'Happily Ever After'

Before I come to the end of my exploration, the most exciting and happening news about this cultural hub is how the



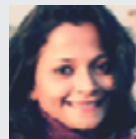
Sun sets over Mandawa town

mansions here are offered for a unique and enchanting setting for weddings, blending traditional Rajasthani charm with opulent sumptuousness. Couples seeking a distinctive and memorable wedding venue can often choose one of Mandawa's magnificent Havelis for their special day with versatile spaces that can accommodate various wedding ceremonies and rituals. From intimate mehendi and sangeet ceremonies in the intricately decorated courtyards to lavish wedding receptions in the grand halls, couples have the flexibility to customise their wedding events to suit their preferences. Out of all the perks, the best one is the stunning architecture, intricate frescoes, and timeless elegance of Mandawa's Havelis which provide a picturesque backdrop for wedding photography and videography. This offers both the photographer and the couple a wider scope to explore & grab all the attention on social media.

Wrapping up an enchanting expedition

Surrounding Mandawa are several other fascinating destinations, each offering its own unique attractions and experiences. Exploring nearby towns and spots such as Nawalgarh, Fatehpur, Dundlod, the Sethani Ka Johara (Queen's Stepwell), and

the Khetri Mahal allows visitors to discover more stunning frescoes and architectural wonders. However, due to time limitations, I had to bid farewell to the 'Heart of Shekhawati' with a promise to explore all the corners of this 'Open Art Gallery'. Also, it is remarkable that Mandawa is a very small town and one can actually finish all the tourist places in Mandawa in a single day. However, I would recommend staying here and using it as a hub for visiting the other Shekhawati towns.



Shikha J Hazarika is a seasoned communication professional, avid traveller, nature enthusiast, photographer and someone who thrives in making destinations desirable through the sights and stories she captures during her travel. She hails from one of the most picturesque states in northeast India- Assam and her interest lies in exploring the offbeat places, knowing the local people, learning about their lifestyles, culture and relishing the cuisine. A zeal for exploring the nooks and new tastes is what keeps this writer going!

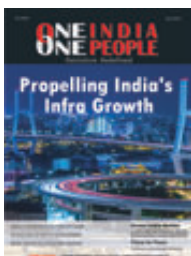
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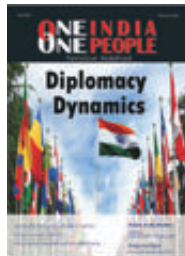
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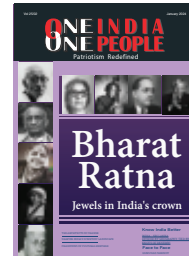
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“The biggest challenge in this industry is to create your own legacy of trust and goodwill of clients.”

Pune-based, 24-year-old part ACCA qualified **Karneet Kaur Narang**, ventured into the world of gemmology to gain a skill where her creativity and knowledge of finance administration could be put to use. Bored of a desk job, she quit to start her own jewellery business. While her firm **KAJEWELS** believes in creating bespoke jewellery using different gemstones for its clients, her personal favourite is the diamond. **Karneet Kaur Narang in conversation with A.Radhakrishnan.**

Who is a gemmologist?

A gemmologist is a person who studies gemstones formed by natural minerals in the earth surface. Of the 2,000 identified natural minerals, fewer than 100 are used as gemstones and only 16 have achieved importance due to their look, formation and uniqueness. A gemmologist identifies these gemstones and separates them from their man-made imitations.

What inspired you to pursue a career in gemology, switching from C.A to opening 'Kajewels'?

While pursuing my Masters in London, I was in search for my calling as I was not satisfied with my desk job as an accountant in London. I wanted to pursue a skill where I could put my creativity to use as well as my grasp of finance administration. I was always attracted to the vast world of nature's masterpieces in the form of gemstones, hence decided to study gemmology. I completed my Gemmology studies at GIA, India. It was a six months intense course.

The first two months we learnt about only diamonds and the various standards to follow while grading them. The remaining four months we took a deep dive into the world of coloured gems, where we identified more than 60 species of gemstones, distinguished laboratory-grown gems and learned about gem



Karneet Kaur Narang

treatments.

Why KAJEWELS?

The name 'KAJEWELS' signifies two things - KAJ means *shubh karya* in Punjabi and jewels mean precious jewellery. Hence it is a brand built on good deeds, trust the purity of precious gemstones, metals, and creative designs. Creating beautiful bespoke jewellery for clients who will treasure them for generations to come is the most satisfying job done at KAJEWELS.

What does gemmology entail?

Gemmology is an amalgamation of science and the art of studying gemstones using mineralogical criteria. A gemmologist is a skilled person who identifies and describes gems based on their characteristic pleochroism, refractive index, dispersion, specific gravity, hardness, fracture and lustre.

What do you think are the key skills necessary for a successful career in gemmology?

Gem identification; Spectroscopy (study of the absorption and emission of light and other radiation by matter); Microscopy (the technical field of using microscopes to view samples & objects that

cannot be seen with the unaided eye); Refractometry (a technique that measures how light is refracted when it passes through a given substance); Diamond grading; Colour stones grading (ruby, emerald, sapphires); Jewelry Appraisal and Computer Aided Design (CAD) are some of the requisite skills required.

What is most challenging about this business? What do you think are the most exciting aspects of gemmology?

The biggest challenge in this industry is to create your own legacy of trust. There are generational jewellers who rule this industry. Some have done exceptional jobs at creating transparency and trust whereas there have been quite a few incidents of frauds in this industry.

Hence creating a legacy of trust and goodwill is the biggest challenge. But fortunately with certifications of gemstones by reputed institutes like IGI (International Gemological Institute)/ GIA (Gemological Institute of America) and many more, re-gaining the trust of public in the gem and jewellery industry is improving.

As a gemmologist, you get to magnify the beautiful creation of Nature. Each gemstone has its own imperfections that add to its beauty and helps a gemmologist identify the gemstones and understand various aspects of its formation, origin and creation.

How do you recruit your team?

We recruit on the basis of reference, as at KAJEWELS we believe in quality. Hence we look at trustworthy, hardworking, creative individuals who would not only add, but also create value at the workspace.

What is the impact of gem mining on environment?

Previously there have been negative impacts of mining on the environment leading to soil erosion, water contamination, danger to animal species and greenhouse gas emissions. But with growing awareness about ethical mining in the last few years, mining companies have started focusing on employee health, working standards, and taking decisions keeping in mind the impact of mining on nature and not just making profits.

What is the difference between natural and synthetic gems? Do you work with synthetic gemstones?

Natural gemstones are formed within the earth surfaces by various minerals under specific temperature and pressure. They hold more value because of their formation process and the fact that they are rarer. Additionally, natural stones can have unique characteristics and imperfections that make them even more valuable.

Whereas synthetic stones are man-made to imitate the natural stones and have no inclusions or imperfections and hence hold lesser value.

How do select and procure the stones?

We buy our stones from the manufacturers of gemstones who cut and polish raw gemstones into various shapes used in jewellery.

Is there anything special about your gems?

All gemstones have a unique speciality and story due to their natural formation. The gems are studied carefully by our team to ensure we deliver the best quality gemstones and jewellery in the desired price range for an individual.

Your favourite gem?

Diamond is our favourite gemstone as we love to add the sparkle of stars on earth for our clients.

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Your favourite gem?

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How do gemmologists identify gems?

Using various gemmological tools like loupe magnification, spectroscope, refractometer etc., they identify a gemstone by its specific characteristics and properties, such as cut, colour, quality, and clarity.

What are the Big Three in gemology?

The Big Three Gemstones are emerald, sapphire and ruby. Known for their timeless beauty and symbolism, they are favoured choices for various types of jewellery.

Do you manipulate the colours of the stones?

No we do not.



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

Following in the footsteps of his mentor, Pullela Gopichand emerged as a prominent figure in Indian badminton during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Gopichand's crowning glory came in 2001 when he won the All England title, solidifying his place in the annals of Indian badminton history.

Badminton made its debut in the Summer Olympics during the Barcelona 1992 Games, featuring men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, and women's doubles events. The addition of mixed doubles to the Olympic roster occurred in 1996.

At the Barcelona 1992 Olympics, Deepankar Bhattacharya and U Vimal Kumar became the first male shuttlers to represent India, while Madhumita Bisht stood as India's sole female player.

New success

The turning point for Indian badminton came in the early 21st century with the emergence of players like Saina Nehwal and P V Sindhu. These talented athletes broke new ground by winning medals at major international events, including the Olympic Games, World Championships, and Commonwealth Games.

Their success not only raised the profile of badminton in India but also attracted more youngsters to take up the sport professionally. Today, Badminton too has come in line with the global trend of franchise-based sporting leagues with the formation of the Premier Badminton League (PBL, formerly Indian Badminton League) in 2016.

The emergence of professional leagues has further boosted the popularity of the sport and provided a platform for domestic talent to showcase their skills alongside international stars.

In addition to individual achievements, India has also made significant strides in team competitions, with the men's and women's teams consistently performing well in events like the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup.

Players and more

Pullela Gopichand's protégé, Saina Nehwal, etched her name in Indian sporting history by securing the nation's first-ever Olympic badminton medal. Nehwal's bronze triumph in the women's singles event at the 2012 London Olympics marked a watershed moment for Indian badminton. Additionally, Nehwal achieved the pinnacle of success by becoming the only Indian woman to attain the World No. 1 ranking in 2015.

PV Sindhu, also Gopichand's pupil, has made an indelible mark on the global badminton scene. With her stellar performance, Sindhu elevated India's Olympic medal tally with a silver in the women's singles event at the Rio 2016 Games.

In a historic feat, she clinched India's maiden gold medal at the BWF World Championships in 2019, further solidifying her stature as a badminton icon. Sindhu's excellence continued at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, where she secured a bronze, becoming the first Indian woman to bag two Olympic medals.

Kidambi Srikanth has been a formidable force in Indian men's badminton. With six BWF Superseries titles and three BWF Grand Prix victories, Srikanth has established himself as a dominant force on the international circuit.

His ascent to the top of the world rankings in 2018 marked a significant milestone, making him the first Indian men's

shuttler since Prakash Padukone to achieve this feat. In a historic moment for Indian badminton, Srikanth clinched the silver medal at the 2021 badminton world championships, further cementing his legacy.

Tennis glory

Tennis, a sport with a rich global history, has also left its mark on the sporting landscape of India. Some of the important names in the sport are Vijay Amritraj, Ramanathan and Ramesh Krishnan, Leander Paes, Sania Mirza, Mahesh Bhupathi, Rohan Bopanna, etc.

The sport was initially played in exclusive clubs and colonial estates, serving as a pastime for the privileged few. These early years laid the foundation for the growth of tennis in India, as it began to spread to different parts of the country.

One of the significant milestones in the history of Indian tennis came with the establishment of the All India Tennis Association (AITA) in 1920. The formation of AITA provided a platform for organising and promoting tennis at the national level, facilitating the development of the sport across the country.

In the post-independence era, Indian tennis witnessed a gradual rise in prominence, with players making their mark on the international circuit. One of the earliest Indian tennis stars was Ramanathan Krishnan, who achieved considerable success in the years spanning 1950s and 1960s. He entered the semi-finals of Wimbledon twice, in 1960 and 1961.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of Vijay Amritraj and his brother Anand Amritraj, who became household names in Indian tennis. Vijay Amritraj's success at prestigious tournaments brought Indian tennis into the spotlight, inspiring a new generation of players.

Powerful partnerships

In the 1990s, Leander Paes burst onto the international scene, becoming India's most successful tennis player of his generation. Paes achieved fame for his prowess in doubles, winning multiple Grand Slam titles and Olympic medals. His partnership with Mahesh Bhupathi, another Indian tennis stalwart, dominated the doubles circuit and raised India's profile in international tennis.

The turn of the 21st century witnessed the emergence of Sania Mirza as India's leading female tennis player. Mirza's meteoric rise to fame, marked by her powerful groundstrokes and fearless style of play, made her a role model for aspiring tennis players, especially girls, across the country.

In recent years, Indian tennis has continued to thrive, with players like Rohan Bopanna, Saketh Myneni, and Ankita Raina making their mark on the international circuit. The establishment of professional tennis leagues like the Champions Tennis League and the Maharashtra Open has further bolstered the popularity of the sport in India.

Neeti Prakash is a media researcher affiliated with The History and Heritage Project – a DraftCraft International Initiative dedicated to documenting details, analysing facts, and addressing gaps that may arise due to oversight or the advancement of national or foreign agendas within the realms of History and Heritage across India and beyond borders.

The evolution of Combat Sports

Describing Combat Sports as a comparatively recent phenomenon, **Harshita Singh** says these have gained traction with India making its mark globally. Through major events, top performers, world champions and Olympic medallists, these sports have left an indelible mark on both athletic and cultural landscapes, captivating audiences with their thrilling displays of skill, courage, and determination.



Lovlina Borgohain



Nikhat Zareen



Sushil Kumar



Bajrang Punia

Combat sports like boxing, wrestling, martial arts and others have a rich history that spans centuries, evolving from their traditional forms into organised, regulated competitions. They also hold immense cultural significance in India.

In recent years, combat sports have gained popularity and recognition. Indian sportspersons have made their mark on the international stage, with notable achievements in several international championships. The latest being the Mixed Martial Arts (MMA).

Martial arts have deep roots in ancient India. However, modern-day MMA is a derivative of several martial art forms from around the world. It is a full-contact combat sport comprising 'striking, grappling and ground fighting with minimum rules or no rules.'

The rise of professional MMA leagues and grassroots initiatives has provided a platform for aspiring fighters to showcase their skills. Combat sports continue to grow in India, fuelled by passion, talent, and increasing opportunities for

participation and development.

Boxing bouts

Boxing, one of the oldest combat sports, was often practised as a form of entertainment and self-defence in early days. In its traditional form, boxing lacked standardised rules and regulations, often resembling bare-knuckle brawls. However, the sport began to formalise in the 19th century with the introduction of Queensberry Rules, which established guidelines for fair play and safety.

Around the world, numerous iconic boxing matches have captivated audiences. One such event is the 'Thrilla in Manila' in 1975, where Muhammad Ali defeated Joe Frazier in a gruelling battle. Other memorable bouts include the 'Rumble in the Jungle' between Ali and George Foreman in 1974 and the 'Fight of the Century' featuring Ali and Frazier in 1971.

India's tryst with boxing began centuries ago. In ancient Indian texts, references to a form of boxing known as mushti-yuddha (war of fists) can be found, including in the epic

Mahabharat.

The sport's presence in India gained momentum in the early 20th century. In 1925, the Bombay Presidency Amateur Boxing Federation was established, marking the advent of amateur boxing in the country.

Mumbai, formerly Bombay, emerged as a pioneer, hosting the initial formal boxing tournaments in India. Following India's independence in 1947, the Indian Amateur Boxing Federation was established in 1949, signifying a new era for the sport.

The champions

Interestingly, India's inaugural national boxing championships were held at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium in 1950, marking a significant milestone in the sport's evolution in India.

Internationally today, India competes in four major amateur boxing events, namely the Olympics, the World Championships, the Asian Games, and the Commonwealth Games.

Vijender Singh made history as the first Indian boxer to clinch an Olympic medal, securing bronze in the men's middleweight (75 kg) category at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The introduction of women's boxing to the Olympic programme in London 2012 witnessed another momentous achievement for India. Mary Kom, a legend in the sport, claimed India's second Olympic boxing medal, earning bronze in the flyweight (51kg) category.

Mary Kom happens to be the only woman to win the World Amateur Boxing Championship six times. She is also the only woman boxer to win a medal in each one of the first seven World Championships. Additionally, she's the only boxer to win eight World Championship medals.

Continuing the legacy, Lovlina Borgohain added to India's Olympic boxing medal tally at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, capturing bronze in the welterweight (69kg) category. Other prominent names include Amit Panghal, Laishram Sarita Devi, Akhil Kumar, Shiva Thapa, Vikas Krishan and Nikhat Zareen.

Transforming Wrestling

Wrestling, another ancient combat sport, has undergone significant transformations throughout history. From its ancient origin, where it was revered as a test of strength and skill, to its modern iterations in folkstyle, freestyle, and other styles of wrestling, the sport has adapted while preserving its core principles.

Wrestling has seen its fair share of iconic moments, with events like the Olympic Games and World Wrestling Championships serving as the pinnacle of competition. Memorable matches include the showdown between Aleksandr Karelin and Rulon Gardner at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, where Gardner's victory over the undefeated Karelin shocked the world.

India too boasts a rich lineage of performers who not only excel in competition but also serve as ambassadors for the sport, inspiring future generations with their dedication and passion. These include Sushil Kumar, Geeta and Babita Phogat, Bajrang Punia, Ravi Dahiya, Sakshi Malik, Alka Tomar, etc.

The origins

Wrestling holds a revered place in the cultural and sporting heritage of India, tracing its roots back to ancient times. Known as "kushti" in Hindi, traditional Indian wrestling has been practiced for centuries, with references found in ancient texts and scriptures.

The history of wrestling in India is intertwined with mythology and folklore, with tales of epic battles and valorous warriors. The Mahabharat, one of the oldest and most revered epics in Indian literature, contains descriptions of wrestling matches and the prowess of legendary wrestlers like Bhim.

Throughout history, wrestling has been more than just a sport in India; it has been a way of life, embodying discipline, strength, and tradition. Wrestlers, known as "pehelwans" or "kushti players" undergo rigorous training and adhere to strict diets and lifestyle regimens.

During the medieval period, wrestling flourished under the patronage of kings and rulers who organised competitions and patronised wrestling schools. Akhadas, traditional wrestling arenas, became centres for training and nurturing talent, fostering a sense of camaraderie and community among wrestlers.

With foreign invaders and colonists, both challenges and opportunities arose for Indian wrestling. Some led to the decline of traditional wrestling practices in some regions, others also paved the way for the modernisation and formalisation of the sport. The establishment of wrestling associations and competitions laid the groundwork for the development of organised wrestling in India.

Passion and discipline

In the post-independence era, wrestling underwent resurgence, triggered by the efforts of passionate wrestlers, coaches, and administrators. India began to make its mark on the international wrestling scene, with athletes competing and winning medals at prestigious events like the Olympics, World Championships, and Asian Games.

Notable Indian wrestlers like Sushil Kumar, Yogeshwar Dutt, and Bajrang Punia have brought laurels to the nation with their remarkable achievements on the global stage. Their success has inspired a new generation of wrestlers and raised the profile of wrestling in India.

Today, wrestling remains a popular and revered sport in India, with a rich tradition and a thriving community of wrestlers and enthusiasts. The sport continues to evolve, adapting to modern trends and technologies while preserving its cultural heritage and values. With ongoing support and investment in infrastructure, training facilities, and talent development, wrestling in India looks set to continue its legacy of excellence for generations to come.

Combat sports like boxing and wrestling have evolved significantly from their traditional forms into globally recognised disciplines. Through major events, top performers, world champions and Olympic medallists, these sports have left an indelible mark on both athletic and cultural landscapes, captivating audiences with their thrilling displays of skill, courage, and determination. As they continue to evolve, boxing, wrestling, and other combat sports will undoubtedly inspire and enthral generations to come.

Harshita Singh is a researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Heeramandi, all gas little substance!

Shoma A. Chatterji reviews a film that carries the trademark Sanjay Leela Bhansali garish loudness, a melodrama that makes no distinction between courtesan and a prostitute. Her assessment: Bhansali has merrily mixed the two and confused the identity of the women of Heeramandi. It fares poorly in comparison with films with similar genre.



Heeramandi Poster

The problem with *Heeramandi* is not the too-much-in-the-face-glitz-glamour-colour and swishing *ghagras* in heavy *zardozi* work with beautiful dames pirouetting in the background pretending to dance which is more of an apology of dance than pure dance itself. We are more than used to the signature of Sanjay Leela Bhansali who brings in his films, loudness and chutzpah distanced from any semblance of the courtesans about who history narrates a different story.

The film fails to draw the sharp line that divides the courtesan from the prostitute. The socio-political identity of the courtesan and the prostitute is not identical. In the hierarchy of “public” women, the courtesan occupies the top of the ladder, the ‘tawaif’ comes next and low down comes the prostitute whose sole means of ‘entertainment’ is through selling her body. The courtesan maintains a strict physical distance from the men who visit her music hall and she entertains them mainly with her

trained Hindustani music and song like the ghazal, the thumri and so on. Her initiation into sex work is preceded by an elaborate *nath*-removing ritual where the man who wants to be the first to remove the *nath* (nose ring) competes with others and a kind of auction decides on the topmost bidder. But who she will sleep with once she has been stripped of her *nath* is decided by the courtesan herself.

The prostitute or sex worker does not sing or dance but only resorts to her seductive charms through titillation and use of her body for money. But Bhansali has merrily mixed the two and confused the identity of the women of Heeramandi.

The film’s choreography is terrible. The chorus dancers in the background fail to tap the natural and trained dancing talent of Aditi Rao Hydari who plays Bibbo Rani. Her acting talent and her expertise in dancing have been sacrificed at the

altar of beauty, glamour and a fake romanticisation of the very life of these *tawaifs* of Lucknow. There is no clue about their *riwaaz* with their gurus in dance. Music and dance, in any case, are just props in the series when they could easily have thrown up solid support to the characterisations.

In *Heeramandi*, Bhansali and his script writers have turned them either into tragic victims of their profession, exploited either by the feudal lords who “keep” them for sex or brutally villainous characters like the madam portrayed by the ageing Mallika Jaan (Monisha Koirala) who is desperate to organise her own daughter's *nath*-ritual that will mark her entry into the flesh trade and allow her *haveli* to flourish. There is hardly any synchronisation between the freedom struggle in the sub-plot and the main story of *Heeramandi* and its *tawaifs*.

Realism, in the shape of characterisation, script, dialogue, have defined the sum and substance of off-mainstream films like Shyam Benegal's *Mandi* (1983), Gulzar's *Mausam* (1975), T.S. Ranga's *Giddh* (1984), B.R. Ishara's *Chetna* (1970) and Basu Bhattacharya's *Aastha* (1996). There is no attempt made to veil the harshness of the subject or the brutality of the narrative with surface romanticism or cinematographic glamour. If love and romance do step in, they do so silently, and remain secondary to the core of the story.

Mausam, for instance, is a brilliant blend of realism and romanticism. The romanticisation on the other hand, comes in different colours, shapes and sizes beginning with the *genre* of the Hindi ‘courtesan’ film like Kamal Amrohi's *Pakeezah* (1971) or Girish Karnad's *Utsav* (1983) working its way through ‘modern’ interpretations like B.R. Chopra's *Tawaif* (1985), Sagar Sarhadi's *Bazaar* (1982), Yash Chopra's *Deewar* (1973), etc. In these films, prostitution is used in the storyline as an ingredient to heighten the drama, or melodrama. The practice of prostitution is rendered subservient to the romantic and the glamorous angle.

V. Shantaram's *Aadmi* (1941) was a bold and radical film which tried to portray the prostitute as more sinned against than sinning. There are two clear lines of distinction that classify the celluloid prostitute: the *kothewalli* and the no-holds-barred prostitute. The *kothewalli* or courtesan is framed with an invisible chastity belt linked to a heart of gold. She never proceeds beyond the dancing floor though her songs sometimes have bawdy lyrics. She remains untarnished till the end and entertains her clients only with her music and her *mujras* but never sleeps with them if she does not wish to. Her musical accompanists define her support system and there is a mutual bonding of loyalty between them. The *kothewalli* was so respected that her clients were not allowed to touch her much less, sleep with her. All this is conspicuous by its absence in *Heeramandi*. The stories can be pure fiction but the practices ought to have some semblance of reality.

The ‘dignity’ of the prostitute in ancient India has been highlighted in *Utsav* (Festival), directed by Girish Karnad, based on Sudraka's 4th Century A.D. Sanskrit classic, *Mrichhakatikam* (The Little Clay Cart.) *Utsav* is a glorious celebration of prostitution during a period in Indian history where the prostitute teaches her lover's wife how to make love to her husband.

The film was in open praise of prostitution as an essential social more of the period it represents, showing women who practiced their trade really enjoying what they did. Directed by noted playwright, actor and theatre personality, Girish Karnad, *Utsav* unfolds the iconography and the symbolic function of money (and by extension, the courtesan.) By showing money (signified by the ornaments) as a facilitative agent, harmless in itself, Karnad desired to evoke a golden era in Indian history

when life was not only joyous but also free from want. Karnad himself said: "The film has no message, political, social or of any other kind. The basis is the Sanskrit theory that a work of art should create a *rasa*, a mood, an emotion - not preach. What I hoped to do was to revive the two qualities which ancient Indian literature had, but which we seem to have lost in the course of the last thousand years - sensuousness and humour. Not sex, but sensuousness, the poetic, tactile quality of it."

These two designated modes, however, remain separate in the film, sensuousness being the property of the sequences associated with the courtesan and humour that of the larger social world represented in the film.

On the other hand, among the singing-dancing girls of *Mughal-e-Azam* (*The Great Mughal*, 1960) and *Pakeezah*, the chastity belt is inviolable and people accept this as the sanctified right of these professional women. Sahib Jaan of Kamal Amrohi's *Pakeezah* (*The Pure One*, 1971), remains the most typical representative of film *kothewallis*. She is the enigmatic *tawaif* trapped in her milieu, but ever-hopeful of being rescued.

All films with prostitutes as principal or important characters are mainly motivated by prospects of raising the film's commercial viability. In rare cases such as Shyam Benegal's *Mandi* or Sagar Sarhadi's *Bazaar* have the directors addressed themselves analytically to the social and economic situation of the business of prostitution.

Indian cinema has focussed on the victim-identity of the prostitute rather than on her agency. Because this is what finds the greatest audience sympathy, has greater commercial value, is the least complex and offers scope for both romance and titillation. The few agent-identities have found expression in supporting characters like the dignified brothel madams in *Mausam*, *Ek Nazar* (1972), and negatively, in *Pakeezah*. The prostitute as a subject who is the main female character in the narrative could perhaps be found in the persona of Radha in *Chetna*. *Giddh* and *Mandi* too, show the prostitutes as subjects and agents, but there are no heroines in these films, in the accepted sense of the term.

Sadly, Bhansali's *Heeramandi* does not fit into any of these categorisations in terms of the narrative, the screenplay, the characterizations, the editing, and their unfolding and most importantly, the tragedy of their lives, and deaths. The music and songs are very good but somehow, they do not seem to gel with the visuals and with the narrative. There are a few exceptions in terms of the performance such as in the portrayals of Aditi Rao Hydari, Sonakshi Sinha in a strange double role and Richa Chadha in a role spilling over with exaggerated melodrama. Sharmin Segal as Alamzeb, who may be called the heroine of this melodrama, brings down the film further with her completely flat facial expressions and flat dialogue delivery. Sorry, Bhansali, but we loved Gangubai Kathiawadi very much and *Heeramandi* stands poorly in comparison.



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.

Donkey milk, the next elixir

Hiraman discovers that donkeys are an excellent source of milk as they produce a rich, creamy product with a high fat content. Now with its usefulness catching up in India, the milk, a known good source of essential fatty acids, proteins, and minerals, emerges as a nutritious choice for a variety of products. The milk can be used to make cheese, yogurt, ice cream, and other dairy products, as well as traditional medicines.



Aby Baby in his donkey farm

Countries like Italy, Greece and Turkey have a history of using donkey milk (DM) for culinary and medicinal purposes. India is catching up too, for in recent years a handful of entrepreneurs have established donkey farms which produce DM and manufacture DM powder and even DM-based cosmetics.

DM has a long history of medicinal and cosmetic uses. Hippocrates reportedly used it as a treatment for arthritis, coughs, and wounds. It's said that Queen Cleopatra of ancient Egypt maintained her soft, smooth skin with DM baths. Milk from at least 700 donkeys were used for her daily bath.

It's more widely available as freeze-dried powdered milk and an ingredient in some European-imported chocolate bars. In Italy, where it's especially popular, donkey milk is used in some



U Babu in his donkey farm

infant formulas and as a medical food.

The growing demand for DM soap in Jordan due to expectations that it brings a magic solution to skin problems has fuelled craze among the fashion conscious in this Arab nation lately. A litre of DM is used to produce 30 bars of DM soap after mixing it with olive oil, almond oil, coconut oil and shea butter.

Donkeys (*Equus asinus asinus*) are an excellent source of milk, as they produce a rich, creamy product with a high fat content. DM is also a good source of essential fatty acids, proteins, and minerals, making it a nutritious choice for a variety of products. The milk can be used to make cheese, yogurt, ice cream, and other dairy products, as well as traditional medicines.

Nutritionally, DM is very similar to human breast and cow's milk. It provides vitamins and minerals along with protein. The two milks are similar in terms of total protein content and amino acid profile. "In addition, both donkey and human milk are poor in casein and rich in lactose and share a similar unsaturated: saturated fatty acid ratio and cholesterol, sodium, potassium, and vitamin C content," states www.healthline.com.

Even the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation acknowledges that donkey milk has "particular nutritional benefits", with a protein profile that may make it more suitable for those allergic to cow's milk.

U Babu, a resident of Vannarpet, Tamil Nadu is the owner of the largest donkey farm, called Donkey Palace. He set it up with the assistance of Hisar-based ICAR's National Research Centre on Equines. Babu rears around 5000 donkeys and has around 75 franchise farms working for him.

The Donkey Palace's products include fresh DM, DM powder; donkey dung used as fertilizer, and distilled donkey urine for Siddha medicines and the pharma industry. Shri Babu's vision is to preserve indigenous donkey breeds, raise their status, donkey conservation, and to eliminate the pessimistic perceptions of donkeys in society.

Despite the challenges posed by the limited number of donkeys in Tamil Nadu, with each milking female capable of producing less than a litre of milk per day for six months, his determination and hard work have paid off, and he has established himself as a successful entrepreneur.

In a LinkedIn post, Ajay Kumar Gupta of NIIR Project Consultancy Services (NPCS) writes: "Today, there is a renewed interest in the practice, as people look for more sustainable ways to produce dairy products. Donkeys are hardy, long-living animals that can be raised in a variety of climates and conditions. They are also relatively low-maintenance, requiring minimal veterinary care and feed. For these reasons, donkey farming is an attractive alternative to traditional dairy production."

As per the 20th Livestock Census, the total population of donkeys in the country was 1.2 lakh in 2019, a decline of 61.23 percent over the previous Census. Their population is declining as machines have replaced donkeys in most areas of their utility and breeders are losing interest in their growth. If the donkey milk business takes off in other areas as well, it will stem the decline in their population as well. In Europe, donkey dairies are growing in popularity to produce an alternative milk source for human infants. However, India has a tiny market for donkey milk, concentrated in southern states.

In 2005, Aby Baby did something that took his family aback. Having quit his well-paid job at an IT firm in Bengaluru he returned to his home in Ramamangalam in Ernakulam district of Kerala to start a donkey farm. To materialise his vision of marketing DM, Aby travelled across south India and secured 32 donkeys by 2016. It took him 10 years to set up the farm. Currently his farm has 23 donkeys, of which 20 are jennies.

One who believes that DM is the biggest solution for all our skin problems, Aby established a small production unit near his house, where he started manufacturing a range of cosmetic products—firmness creams, facial creams, shampoo, body wash, to name a few. His brand of cosmetics, Dolphin IBA uses DM. All Dolphin IBA products have DM and rosemary in common.

Aby considers his venture to be a first initiative of its kind in the India and goes on to add that a few western countries are doing this.

A female donkey gives between 400ml to 1.2 litres of milk daily for about six to seven months after foaling. The milk comes at a cost and is sold in the Indian market for ₹ 5,000 to ₹ 6,000 per litre. A good breed donkey costs around ₹ 80,000 to ₹ one lakh. Even the products made of donkey milk are costly as the making cost is very high.

Having failed to get a permanent position as a teacher in a government-run school despite clearing several eligibility tests, Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC), Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) exam, Dhiren Solanki of Patan in Gujarat did something unheard of—he set up a donkey farm and has built a successful business of DM powder, which is exported at ₹ 63,000 per kg to Malaysia, China, and other countries.

In 2023, Dhiren bought 20 jennies (female donkeys) from a local trader in Patan. They included animals from the Halari, Desi, Kathiawadi and Rajasthani breeds. The cost per animal was ₹ 35,000 (around ₹ 7 lakh for 20 jennies). He created a farm on the vacant land behind his house and named it the TDS Donkey Farm.

Each female donkey at Dhiren's farm gives 600 ml to 700 ml milk per day. Following milking it is heated for 2 minutes to kill bacteria and then stored at minus 4 degrees Celsius. It stays good at this temperature for three months.

Though he supplies DM at ₹ 5,000 per litre to some people in Gujarat and South India on a need basis, over 90 percent of the output is used to make DM powder, which is exported. Dhiren outsources the milk to a local freeze-drying unit to convert into milk powder. According to Dhiren 16lts of DM yields a kg of milk powder which is sold at ₹s 63,000 per kg to exporters who further sell it to pharma and cosmetics companies. His monthly output is around 500 litres of milk, resulting in about 25 to 30 kg of DM powder.

In coming months Dhiren plans to increase the number of animals to 100 and begin a freeze-drying unit to make DM powder which is likely to cut processing costs and make his product more competitive.

Hiraman is a freelance writer and a weekend farmer.

FATHIMA BEEVI (1927-2023)

Trailblazer all the way!

Fathima Beevi was born on the 30 April 1927 in Pathanamthitta in Kerala to Amaveetil Meera Sahib and Khadeja Bibi. After finishing her schooling at Catholicate High School she graduated in Chemistry from the University College, Thiruvananthapuram. A flair for Law resulted in her securing a Law Degree from the Government College, Thiruvananthapuram. Thereafter she embarked on a career in law and enrolled as an advocate on 14 November 1950.

In those days, she had to encounter several glass ceilings which she shattered on her way to topping the bar exams in 1954, becoming a Munsiff in the Kerala Subordinate Judicial Services in 1958, and was promoted as Subordinate Judge in 1968. Later, she served as the District and Sessions Judge as well. She became a permanent judge of the High Court on 14 May 1984.

Fathima Beevi became the first woman to be elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court on 16 October 1989. She also became the first Muslim woman to be appointed to the higher judiciary in the country. Her stint in the Supreme Court witnessed her maintaining the dignity of the judiciary in every sense of the world. Soft spoken, she was an authority on various facets of the law and her judgements showed a deep understanding of the intricacies of legal jurisprudence.

After she superannuated as a SC judge, she also became the first Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission. Here again, her uprightness and integrity served her in good stead and her tenure was marked by an adherence to the principles of law and justice. The Kerala Government also appointed her as the Chairperson of the Commission for Backward Classes.

Fathima Beevi thereafter became the Governor of Tamil Nadu in 1997 and served in the gubernatorial post till 2001. Incidentally, she was the first woman Muslim governor of the state. During her gubernatorial tenure, she rejected the mercy petitions of the convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. She also courted controversy on several occasions as the governor and was enmeshed in the political rivalries between the DMK and the AIADMK, the two main parties in Tamil Nadu.

However, she always stuck to her guns and was hailed

for her fearlessness and her readiness to take bold decisions on critical issues of governance.

The eminent jurist was the recipient of several awards and they included the Padma Bhushan conferred posthumously on her by the government of India in 2024. She was honoured by the Kerala government with the Kerala Prabha Award in 2023, the second highest honour conferred by the state. A doctorate and the Mahila Jyothi Award also came her way.



Fathima Beevi passed away on 23 October 2023, at the Government Hospital in Kollam aged 96. Prime Minister Narendra Modi remarked that he was saddened by the passing away of Fathima Beevi who was a true trailblazer.

He also added that her remarkable journey broke several barriers and greatly inspired the women of the country. A documentary in Malayalam titled 'Neethipadayile Dheera Vanitha' (A brave woman in the path of justice) highlighted the several milestones achieved by her and her contributions in the field of law and justice.

Fathima Beevi will go down in history for rising from a very humble background to occupying a slot in the highest judiciary of the land.

The story of her life will serve as a beacon light to millions of women in India and abroad and will continue to inspire all those who seek to rise and shine in their respective vocations. She had to face several challenges in a highly patriarchal society in those times and she overcame each one of them to carve her own niche and etch her name in the history books.



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

FALI SAM NARIMAN (1929-2024)

The Constitution bulwark man

“There should be 'three-quarter's problem-solvers and one-quarter crusaders', in the higher judiciary” – Fali Nariman

Indian constitutional lawyer Fali Sam Nariman, during a seven decades career, revolutionised India's legal system. He protected corporate titans, stood up for human rights, motivated future generations to strive for a fair society and urged jurists to preserve the integrity of our Constitution.

Nariman, born in Rangoon, then Burma, attended Bishop Cotton School in Shimla. Later, after his family moved to Bombay, he graduated in 1950 with a degree in history and economics from St. Xavier's College and a LL.B. degree from the Government Law College.

In 1950, he began representing clients before the Bombay High Court. In 1971, following 22 years of practice, he was designated as a Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court and from May 1972 to June 1975 as Additional Solicitor General of India.

He however resigned in protest on 26 June 1975, the day Emergency was declared. For the next twenty years, Nariman led almost every important constitutional law case, even though he held no other government positions.

His greatest influence is seen in the 1993 Second Judges case; the 1998 Third Judges case and the 2015 Challenge to the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) - that formed and solidified the Collegium system of appointing judges.

The Gujarat government was represented by Nariman in the case of the Narmada rehabilitation, but he left soon after, following local persecution of Christians and Bible burnings. He represented J Jayalalitha, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, in a conviction case on 17 October 2014, and won her bail earlier denied.

In the Bhopal gas disaster case of 1984, which resulted in at least 3,800 deaths, Nariman defended Union Carbide. However subsequently regretting it, he played a key role in negotiating an out of court \$470 million settlement between the victims and the corporation.

He was opposed by K. Parasaran, the former Attorney General of India, in the Cauvery River Water Dispute case. There was verbal combat. A member of the Tribunal voiced grave doubts about the two friends' ability to ever get along. In response, Nariman retorted, "My Lords, this case has brought us even closer. This is eyeball to eyeball right now!"

He served as President of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration from 1994 onward, and also held honorary memberships in the International Commission of Jurists from 1988 to 2010 and the London Court of International Arbitration from 1988 to 1989. Nariman received the Padma Vibhushan (2007) and the Padma Bhushan (1991), as well as a Rajya Sabha nomination (1999-2005).

His remarkable legal knowledge and steadfast dedication to justice have made a lasting impact on Indian law, as evidenced by his autobiographical book, 'Before Memory Fades' (2012). His works are a gold mine of wisdom. He believed that a functional democracy required the unalienable right to disagree.

He possessed proficiency for distilling the essence of a legal matter from the labyrinth of documents and slow-moving briefs. His objective submissions and emphasis on reliefs made him stand out. Though impatient and a strict taskmaster with juniors, he was the hardest on himself. Never engaging in any grandstanding, he hated Whatsapp and didn't even own a smartphone. A cricket lover he would frequently watch a good match in the evenings. He worked late into the night to complete his written comment in a matter pending on the Constitution Bench. Having several health problems, including heart problems, he passed away in New Delhi on 21 February 2024.



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

CAPTAIN MNR SAMANT, MAHA VIR CHAKRA (1930- 2019)

The hero of Bangladesh liberation

Mohan Narayan Rao Samant (popularly known as M.N.R. Samant) was born on 19 October 1930. Studied in Wilson College, Mumbai, and was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1952 in the submarine branch. He successfully commissioned India's third submarine INS Karanj in 1969 and was a well-reputed officer of Indian Navy.

In 1971, the then Naval Chief Admiral S.M. Nanda got the green signal from then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for the Indian Navy to participate in the 1971 Indo-Pak war. It was the first time since Independence that the Navy was used and it performed brilliantly.

During the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh, Mohan Samant was Officer-in-charge of a covert naval unit under the Directorate of Naval Intelligence based in Calcutta. He, as Commandant of the training establishment, was tasked with training Mukti Bahini volunteers as naval commandos in Plassey near Bhagirathi River.

Between April and November 1971, this covert naval unit trained 432 Bengali youth and launched them to destroy merchant shipping which sustained the Pakistan Army in the run-up to the 1971 War.

Samant along with his team remained involved in training the Mukti Bahini volunteers who were transformed into high quality naval commandos. They were trained in handling of weapons, mines, sustained period of swimming, carrying mines on their bellies and planting those on the body of the ships at night.

These naval commandos successfully attacked and destroyed Pakistan forces' vessels, logistic vessels, ferries, port facilities, bridges, etc., and created havoc in the logistic line of enemy forces. Damage or complete destruction was inflicted on about 60,000 tonnes of shipping during 'Operation Jackpot' executed by 176 soldiers under the leadership of Samant.

He accompanied the naval commandos in operations, leading them from the front, taking personal risk in the dangerous missions. It is estimated that nearly 1,00,000 tons of Pakistani arms, ammunition, logistic supplies, etc. were

disabled by these naval commandos.

In a war operation, Commander Mohan Samant was the senior officer of force consisting of four craft, which carried out most daring and successful attacks on the enemy in Mongla and Khulna ports. Manoeuvring his squadron through a hazardous and unfamiliar route, he routed the enemy in Mongla inflicting heavy losses.

A bitter fight ensued at Khulna and the force was subjected to incessant air attacks. Two boats belonging to the Mukti Bahini operating with the force were sunk. In utter disregard of his personal safety, the officer not only managed to pick up a large number of the survivors but also persisted with fierce attacks on the enemy with devastating results. Samant subsequently became the first temporary Chief of Naval Staff of the newly created Bangladesh Navy. He remained chief till early 1972 when he was succeeded by Nurul Huq.

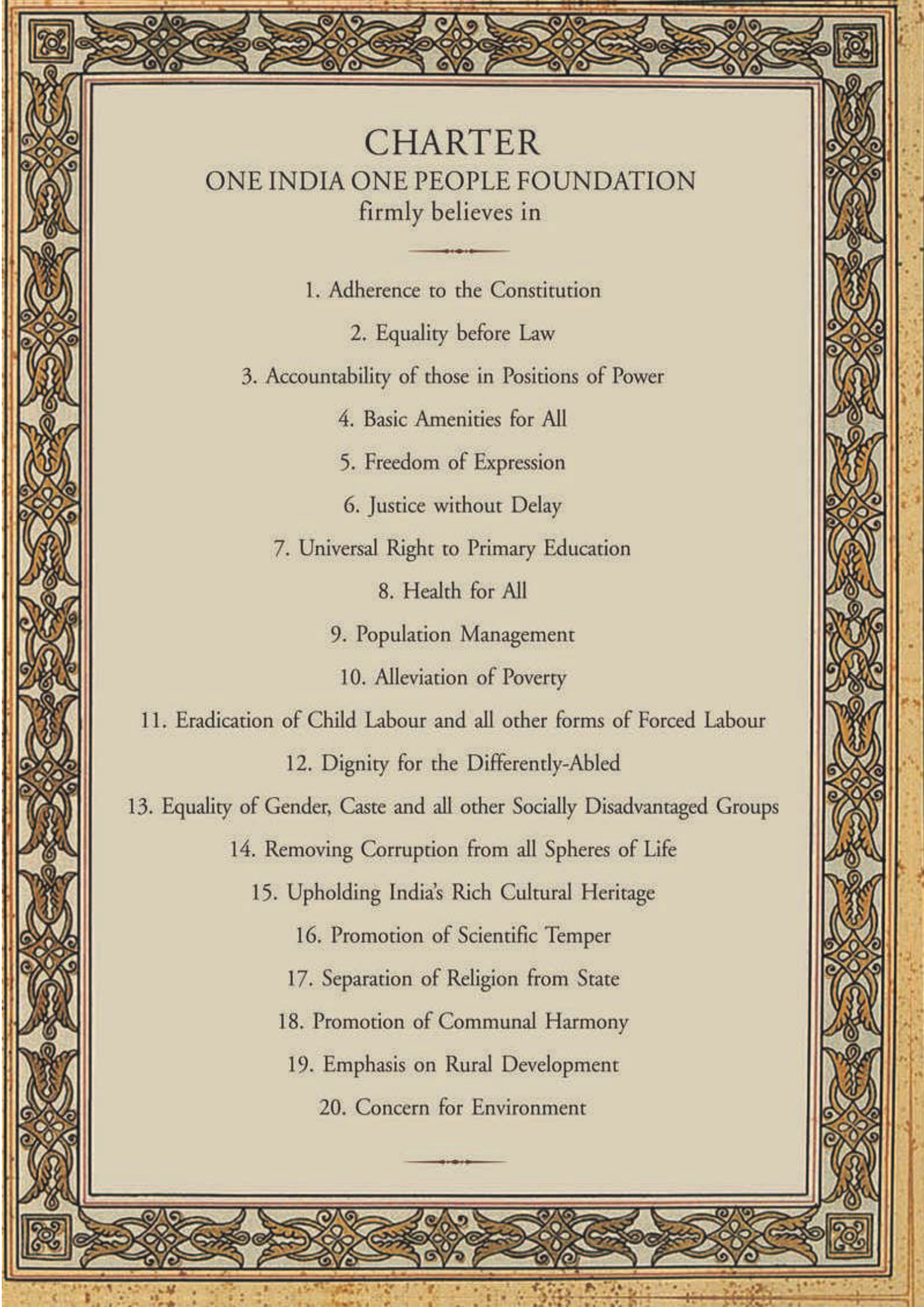
For his exceptional courage and capability, he was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) by the Government of India. Later, he was promoted to Captain. For his great contribution in the Bangladesh Liberation War, Captain M.N.R Samant (MVC) was awarded with Friends of Liberation War Honour by the Government of Bangladesh on 24 March 2013.

Captain Samant collaborated on a book about the 1971 operations with Sandeep Unnithan, a journalist, titled 'Operation X - the untold story of India's covert naval war in East Pakistan in 1971'. It was released by Admiral V.S. Shekhawat, former Chief of the Naval Staff and a decorated 1971 war veteran. Unfortunately, Samant passed away before its release.

On 20 March 2019, this great son of India and Bangladesh breathed his last aged 89 in Mumbai. He had infused hope to all under his command and to his associates during war and later during peace. Captain Samant is survived by his wife and daughters.



Contributed by Renu Prakash from the data bank of Late Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma.



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
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WHO AM I?



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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



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 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE