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Patriotism Redefined



Critique of Modi



Patels for OBCs



The media roundup



Weather freedom?



2015



Agni-V launch



Beef ban



Depleting groundwater



Plight of farmers

Rewind

Critiquing Modi

Now, Patels want the OBC tag!

Do we need moral policing?

KNOW INDIA BETTER

Ahmedabad & Gandhinagar:
a tale of twin cities

FACE TO FACE

Sharmila Biswas

MORPARIA'S PAGE



VOL.19/5



Sharmila Biswas



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*Baburao Krishnarao
Mestry (aka
Baburao Painter)*



*Kalamandalam
Satyabhama*



*Captain Anuj
Nayyar, MVC*

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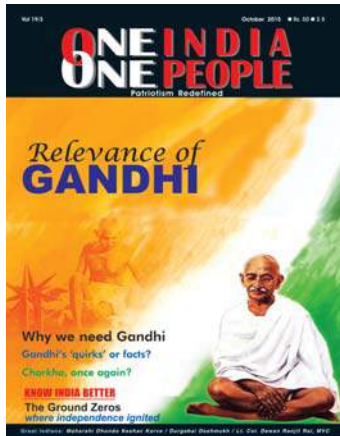
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"Well-conceived and well-written"



I read your October 2015 issue (Relevance of Gandhi) and Akul Tripathi's photo feature on Independence which is well-conceived and well-written. It is a good piece for the old to reminisce and for the new generation to learn and be inspired. I have had the good fortune of visiting some of those sights and

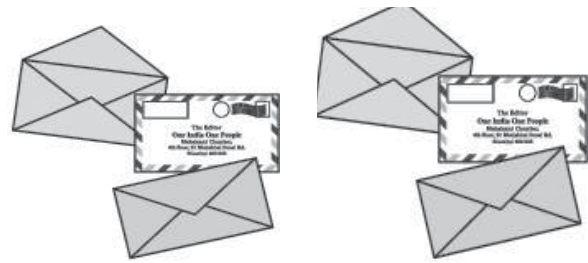
historic structures.

Keep up the good work!

– Professor B. Ramesh Babu, Hyderabad

"Gandhi was truly a man for all seasons"

The October 2015 issue was truly superb! The cover of the magazine deserves a special mention. You must be commended for defending Gandhiji when he should never



have needed to be defended in the first place! Is this a sign of new India where icons like him have to be defended and intolerance and religious schisms continue to grow? I wonder what the Mahatma would have thought of the current state of affairs. He definitely would have had a solution to the ills that plague the Indian society today. But for sure, his solution would never involve violence or aggression of any sort. It would have been passive resistance, and effective! Perhaps those who claim to be defenders of the society, would do well to learn from his techniques. A united and strong India is in all our best interests. The article on Gandhi's food was very interesting. What a great visionary he was! He was not before his times. I think we are way beyond ours. Let's learn from this man and try and incorporate healthy habits in our daily routine. Gandhi was truly a man for all seasons. Isn't it time we realised that?

– B.S. Saranya, Mumbai



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Humour 2015

As the year comes to a close, every citizen looks around for something which he had missed out during the year. He may or may not get it, but the effort should always be on, says V. Gangadhar.

WHEN my journalism career started, I spent the first year doing what came to be known as festival reporting. It was a never-ending routine. Festival reporting was simple - you just reported festivals which were in plenty in the Hindu calendar year. After some experience, I could do the work blindfolded. After all, how many readers would remember that the same news item on the same festival had appeared last year and this, and in all probability would be repeated next year!

Repetition is part of journalism. A lot of it tends to get repeated and it is not often that routine news needs to be challenged to be drastically changed and rewritten. Take 2015 AD. The city was keenly expecting its annual tryst with the monsoon. Reporters keep close track of the monsoon and the bolder ones made brave predictions. Yet, the monsoon is often elusive and seldom follows the dictates of the weather bureau.

Take for instance my 40th year of monsoon watching in 2014. The beginning was predictable and by end of June 30, the city had got a good drenching. So did the following months. By August end, the vital lakes which provided water to the city were overflowing. We sighed in relief, no water cuts in 2014. But slowly, the water supply worsened and by the beginning of September, around 30 per cent cuts were imposed. Besides cloud seeding, *pujas* and *homas* were held at - many places, but the skies did not open up. On the day of my flight to New York, finally, the miracle happened. Rain slammed the city from dawn and did not stop for 60 hours, wiping out the rain deficit, and echoing the sentiments of Aamir Khan's movie '3 Idiots,' 'ALL IS WELL'.

Was it time for a gentle reminder not to take things for granted? The 2015 monsoon was predicted as normal. By

the end of June, the lakes were almost full. The complacent population was happy, the farm lobby was exuberant. Well, no one bothered when July rainfall in the city was just a token. August is normally a bountiful monsoon month. The festivals came and went - Janmashtami, Ganesh Chaturthi - yet, no sign of rains. Already there was a 30 per cent water cut. Would it go up higher? Trains no longer served drinking water to thirsty passengers. People may not agree with me, but to me the Water Story was number one. The media tackled it from every angle including how Bollywood celebrities tackled it!

Politics was no doubt prominent - Bihar was on everyone's lips but the polls really made headlines in the city. The term 'Bihari' assumed new dimensions. That, plus several other major events rocked the city like the 588th postponement of Mumbai university examinations. Dengue which normally spared Mumbai, embraced the city in its arms, with the Sena-BJP taking full credit for ushering it into the city.

It was not just entertainment in Mumbai journalism. It is now highly academic with 'Litfests' happening every week at every nook and corner. Every media topic, particularly sex in its various forms, flourish in the literary scene. Ageless sex wonders like 'Germaine Greer' made



welcome appearances on the literary scene and nothing could stop our sex literature queen Madam Shobhaa De from rushing in for a bit of nostalgic chit chat. That was part of the annual cultural scene which titillated Mumbai. ■

The writer is a well-known satirist.

Politics was no doubt prominent - Bihar was on everyone's lips but the polls really made headlines in the city. The term 'Bihari' assumed new dimensions. That, plus several other major events rocked the city like the 588th postponement of Mumbai university examinations.

Critiquing Modi

*Many report cards have been written for the Modi government's performance, especially this year. But is it fair to judge so early? asks **B. Ramesh Babu**. He says the government needs to be given more time, while pointing out areas where it needs to tighten its belt.*

CALLING for a "report card", looking over it with a microscope and highlighting the "performance failure" of the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has become a national pastime. That he assumed office only 18 months ago, hardly long enough to make a fair assessment of the new leader and the party in power at the Centre, does not seem to deter the detractors.

The unprecedented mandate

Even his spectacular victory in the General Elections of 2014 did not win him the traditional honeymoon period that was allowed to other leaders. The electoral mandate he and the BJP won was unprecedented and overwhelming.

Modi and the new BJP naturally expected that the huge popular vote in their favour across the vast land and among all the segments of the population would be respected, and

the opposition parties would cooperate in taking forward the "development agenda" of the winning coalition.

On the contrary, trouble started in earnest from day one. The grand old party of Indian politics, which enjoyed power for most of the time since Independence, could not reconcile to its virtual decimation in the election. The dynasty believed that it was "natural" for it to rule the nation. Suddenly, it was unseated from the throne unceremoniously. At the emotional level, the dynasty's sorry predicament is understandable. The

party had lost in the national and state elections before and worked its way back to power sooner or later. But the parliamentary election of 2014 was a watershed and has radically transformed the political landscape of the nation. Modi's "development agenda" rapidly gained momentum and swept the party into power with a huge mandate. Caste, community, religion, seemed to be secondary, especially for the youth of the nation, who voted in support of their aspirations

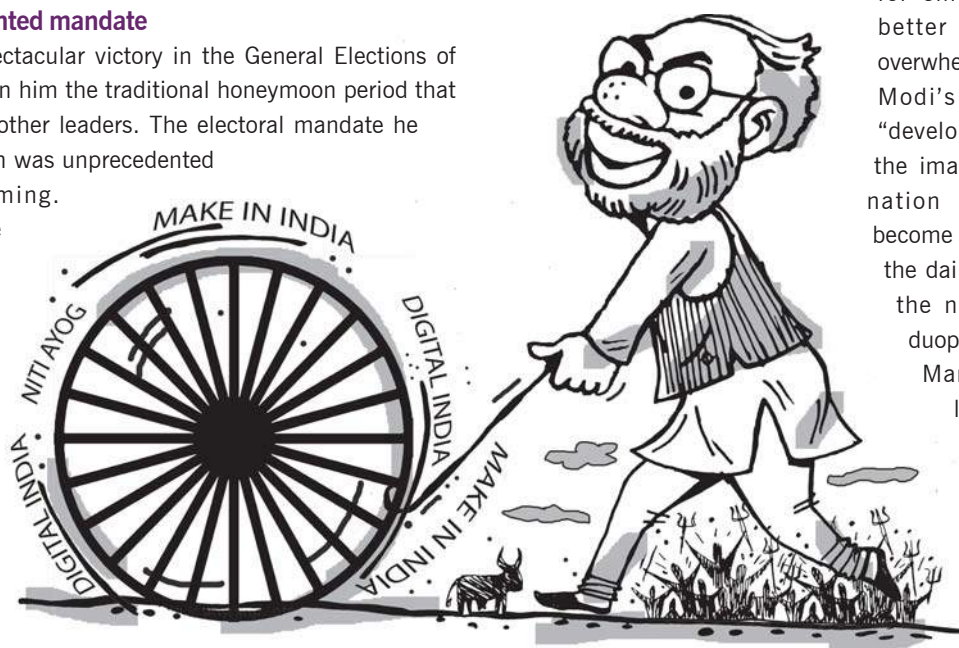
for employment and better future, in overwhelming numbers. Modi's promise of "development" caught the imagination of the nation which had become sick and tired of the daily scandals and the non-functioning duopoly of the Sonia-Manmohan Singh leadership.

Actually, UPA-I (United Progressive Alliance) was not as bad as UPA-II. But in politics (just as in life)

perceptions overwhelm realities! That is exactly what Modi is faced with today.

Stalling the Parliament

Obstructing the functioning of the legislatures by any and all means began after the initial fervour of patriotism cooled down, and the national consensus of the Nehru era yielded to partisanship, regionalism and politics based on caste, language and religion. "Home rule" was inevitably transformed into a



serious contest of “who will rule at home”. Without going into the history of the why and how of this inevitable transition (‘degeneration’ if you will), let me abruptly come to the present – an interim assessment of the performance of Modi and the BJP-led NDA government at the centre. This will have to be done at two levels: (a) leadership and (b) performance on the ground.

In retrospect, it would be fair to say that Narendra Modi personally and the BJP as the ruling party, proved inadequate to the challenge of leading the country forward on the much promised development agenda. It is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the majority party (in Lok Sabha) to make the Parliament work and get the necessary laws passed. On this front, a more magnanimous policy of reaching out to the opposition should have been the strategy adopted. At best it was the classic case of “too little, too late”. At worst, it was the case of the failure of the victorious to realise that electoral mandates are to be navigated through the maze of institutional and constitutional dispensation of checks and balances. It was crystal clear from the beginning that the BJP does not have the votes to win the approval of the Rajya Sabha, which is a must to get the necessary laws passed. In this context, Modi has a great deal to learn from the leadership styles of P.V. Narsimha Rao (who ran a minority government for a full five year term) and Atal Behari Vajpayee, his own party’s highly acceptable moderate leader. At the same time, the Congress party and Sonia Gandhi cannot escape blame for the meanest possible obstructionism adopted in the Lok Sabha. She was paying back the BJP in its own coin for stalling the Parliament under UPA-II. Such “tit for tat” tactics are understandable at their narrow and mean partisan level. But she personally, and her party leadership and the leaders of the other opposition parties, failed the people and the country miserably. Valuable time was lost in enacting key laws, including a few that were on the Congress Party’s own agenda prior to the 2014 elections, namely, the land acquisition bill and the GST (Goods and Services Tax) bill. Realising the difficulties in overcoming the impasse on the bills, BJP was willing and ready to accept amendments and go along with agreed compromises. But, Congress and the other parties were determined not to relent.

On the contrary, in a dramatic change of tactics, a concerted campaign was launched depicting Modi as anti-

farmer and anti-poor. As always, the reality is not so simple. Land is needed for development. One cannot build roads and infrastructure projects in the public sector in thin air. But popular perception is often more persuasive than the reality itself. Objectionable provisions – where farmers’ rights are curtailed or cultivable land is to be excluded from acquisition etc., could have been worked out in the interests of economic development and social welfare of the nation. Instead, the hitherto entrenched socialist, secular, progressive and left-oriented establishment’s inability and unwillingness to accept unprecedented electoral debacle became the dynamic negative factor. Its seemingly permanent banishment from power was even more unacceptable and humiliating to the dynasty.

Promise and performance

The gap between promise and performance is a universal phenomenon and an existential reality. That this gap is a lot wider and more persistent in our country throughout history needs no reiteration. Failure in implementation and grievous neglect of maintenance are integral to our national character. Quickly getting back to the promise-performance continuum, Modi’s development agenda comprises a whole lot of reforms (economic, administrative, judicial and labour); dozens of new schemes of health and welfare and rural, urban development projects; financial empowerment of citizens; technology and skill enhancement; special programmes for women, girls and children; and identifying and deleting a large number of obsolete, irrelevant and backward looking laws from the statute books. It is not possible in a brief article like this to plumb in depth the gap between promise and performance of the Modi Government. However, a few really spectacular achievements may be mentioned here: 190 million people have been brought into the nation’s banking system under Jan Dhan Yojana. A sum of ₹ 26,000 crores is currently

However, a few really spectacular achievements may be mentioned here: 190 million people have been brought into the nation’s banking system under Jan Dhan Yojana. A sum of ₹26,000 crores is currently held in these accounts. Under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, banks have given loans to the tune of ₹ 38,000 crores to small businesses.

held in these accounts. Under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, banks have given loans to the tune of ₹ 38,000 crores to small businesses. Even if we calculate that each loan created two jobs at the least, a solid foundation is laid for 12 million new jobs. Even a much larger investment in corporate sector will not create that many new jobs.

(Continued on page 18)

Is intolerance peaking?

The word 'intolerance' is a much-banded word in India today, and with reason, says C.V. Aravind. He analyses the year gone past, when so many intellectuals and thinkers came out in protest against repeated attacks on various freedoms and says that Prime Minister Modi will have to do better at reigning in the 'hotheads' of his party. But will his party agree?

THE spokespersons of the ruling BJP might go blue in their faces arguing that all the talk about rising intolerance is pure balderdash and that in reality a conspiracy is being hatched at various levels to discredit the government in general, and the Prime Minister (PM) in particular. For a party that has perfected the art of defending the indefensible as witnessed in its protracted inaction on the impropriety charges leveled against External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and the Rajasthan Chief Minister (CM) Vasundhara Raje in the Lalit Modi fiasco sometime back, this ostrich-like attitude is nothing new. But when the country's First Citizen, the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, thrice in quick succession asserts the need to defend and protect the country's plurality, diversity and tolerance, a feeling gains ground that something is really amiss in the country and that there are problems that have to be tackled on a war footing.

PM Narendra Modi did in fact take a cue from the President's first clarion call and exhorted the nation to take inspiration from his words and work towards the maintenance of peace and unity, but it was at best a fleeting reference, as his heart was more on the Bihar election campaign than on anything else. The party's heavyweight ministers including Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, however refuse to concede that a wave of intolerance is in fact sweeping the nation and that several incidents in the recent past have been suggestive of

an atmosphere where majoritarianism and authoritarianism have been rearing their ugly heads, and the stifling of dissent whichever quarter it emerges from, appears paramount.

The irrational attacks

A number of incidents in the recent past have rattled the conscience of the nation and topping it all have been the brutal murders of three rationalists, Narendra Dabholkar,

Govind Pansare and M.M. Kalburgi, all senior citizens who have obviously been killed as their writings and speeches over the years have been considered an affront to the Hindu religion. All three had been facing death threats for long and had also been given police protection from time to time, but



The Shiv Sena blackened the face of Sudheendra Kulkarni for the 'crime' of arranging the release of a book written by the former foreign minister of Pakistan, Khurshid Kasuri (right)

that did not prevent the sharpshooters from targeting them successfully when they were at their most vulnerable, and totally unprotected. The slow pace of the investigations in these cases and the failure so far to zero in on the culprits have only belied the hopes of the next of kin of these victims, that they will get justice anytime soon. While several theories have been floated about the involvement of fringe elements, there has been a general feeling that all the three crimes could be inter-connected and the same group could be involved in carrying out the assassinations. A number of other writers who too are rationalists like Professor Bhagwan of the Mysuru University in Karnataka have also been receiving death threats.

It would also be worthwhile to recollect that the late Jnanpith awardee Dr. U. R. Ananthamurthy too was hounded all his life for his vitriolic comments on Hindu customs and rituals and a motley group even celebrated the announcement of his death by distributing sweets. It is not as if these writers had suddenly crawled out from the woodwork. Such anti-religious propaganda has been witnessed for several decades now and leaders like E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar) had gone hammer and tongs against superstitious beliefs and had even floated a party, the Dravida Kazhagam to wage a crusade against religious practices including idol worship. The only difference now is that after the emergence of several fringe groups who stop at nothing and do not hesitate to strike with a great deal of vehemence at those whom they deem are the enemies of Hinduism, rationalists and a section of writers have had to run for cover as they are the prime targets of these outfits. Tolerance of all religions and respect for diverse views is now a thing of the past, and violence towards non-conformists and those who dare to question religious practices has become commonplace.

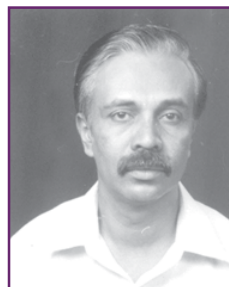
Very recently, N.R. Narayan Murthy, a highly respected technocrat and co-founder of the IT behemoth Infosys, had gone on record observing that minorities feel unsafe under the present dispensation. Considering the fact that a 50-year-old breadwinner of a family in Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, Mohamed Akhlaq, was brutally done to death by a mob on the suspicion that he had consumed beef, which by the way does not qualify as a crime under any law of the land, and also the continuous tirade against a particular minority community being carried out by loose cannons in the ruling party who use every opportunity to malign and question the bonafides of the community as a whole, Murthy certainly has a point and it is squarely up to the Prime Minister to allay these fears and to ensure every community that their interests will be protected, but such assurances have always been tardy in coming and his slogan *Sab ka saath, sab ka vikas* now has an empty ring to it. The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Raghuram Rajan, while delivering an address at his alma mater, IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), Delhi, has also spoken out against the prevailing scenario of intolerance, and has even observed that it would be everyone's patriotic duty to fight for tolerance. In a swift reaction to his observations, BJP MP (Member of Parliament) Subramanian Swamy commented that Rajan had made a mess at the RBI and should be sacked from his post. This again is a pointer to the fact that any dissenting view is hardly tolerated and this strengthens the belief that shooting the messenger is the main aim of the government, while turning a deaf ear to the message. The latest to join the chorus in pointing out the need for the government to put the fringe elements in their

place is the international rating agency, Moody's Analytics, which has in a veiled warning to the Prime Minister urged him to rein in his party men or risk losing credibility both at home and abroad.

The BJP's long term ally the Shiv Sena, which has always been known for its strong arm tactics, recently blackened the face of the onetime BJP ideologue, Sudheendra Kulkarni, who was once close to both Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, for his role in arranging the release of a book written by the former foreign minister of Pakistan, Khurshid Kasuri. Hardly repentant for the criminal act of its cadres, the Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray even felicitated the attackers, clearly underlining the party's intolerance in matters involving Pakistan, its pet hate even during the days of its founder, the late Bal Thackeray. The Sena too had a hand in the cancellation of a concert in Mumbai by the reputed Pakistani *ghazal* singer Ghulam Ali, organised to pay tribute to another celebrated *ghazal* singer, the late Jagjit Singh, thus depriving aficionados of the musician of an opportunity to hear him. Although the local leadership of the BJP has frowned on these antics, they have not been able to do anything concrete to prevent their recurrence, and the Sena can be expected to carry on with its violent ways as in the past.

The emergence of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as a highly potent force after Narendra Modi, a long time RSS *pracharak*, took over as the Prime Minister is being cited as one of the causes for the prevailing unrest, though the RSS bigwigs have been at pains to deny any involvement in any of the violent acts that have taken place in the recent past. This apart, the atmosphere has often been vitiated by the BJP leaders who have been adding fuel to the fire whenever there is a flare-up and Sakshi Maharaj, Sangeeth Som and Mahesh Sharma have been identified as serial offenders in this regard. The party President is supposed to have ticked them off, but they have denied that they have been reprimanded and if their statements are true, this again reflects on the BJP's unwillingness to rein in those who cross the *Lakshman rekha*, despite the party's credibility going for a toss.

In the final analysis, it is almost certain that intolerance is peaking in different pockets of the country and the ruthlessness involved in silencing dissent and in curbing cultural and literary activities and curtailing freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, does not augur well for the future; and the sooner the ruling dispensation realises the gravity of the situation and comes to grips with the problem, the better. ■



The writer is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

Do we need moral policing?

*This year saw many cases of the police force indulging in 'moral policing'. Former Director-General of Police **Julio Ribeiro** decries this tendency and blames the political leaders for the sorry state of affairs. He also highlights the need to appoint honest police leaders, who can carry out the much-needed police reforms.*

WHEN I was a young IPS (Indian Police Service) officer serving in the districts, farmers used to wear *dhotis* and young girls *ghagra-cholis*. Today, you see very few *dhotis* being worn in the villages of Maharashtra, and the young girls have shifted to *salwar-kameez* in a major shuffle of dress codes! In urban centres, especially the metropolis of Mumbai, young men and women are attired differently from what they used to wear even 30 years ago. The Mumbaikar is accustomed to such changes. It does not affect his or her sensibilities. The police, like the people, should accept change as a normal development.

The ugly head of moral policing

It is surprising then that moral policing should have raised its ugly head in such a noticeable way as to attract media attention, and consequently, the attention of the people. It is not only how women dress that irritates these protectors of morality, but also how they choose to spend their leisure hours. Right wing outfits are prominent in such campaigns. But what should trouble liberal-minded gentry is the tendency of the police to join in such misconceived campaigns either on orders from their political masters, or because their own views on morals are narrow!

By mandate, the police have a deprivational role to play in any scheme of governance, and hence it can never become

popular. But despite this inherent disability, it is possible for policemen and police forces to be respected if they do not throw their weight around, and yet succeed in upholding the law.

Three instances that occurred recently in and around Mumbai should highlight the premise that the police can



make themselves more acceptable to the general public even while doing a thankless job. A local politician and some residents of Madh Island complained to the Zonal DCP (Deputy Commissioner of Police) about the fact that young couples were frequenting the lodges and "love hotels" that had sprouted in the area, and that this activity was disturbing their peace of mind. The special squad attached to the DCP's office then raided the hotels and rounded up the guests, which

included a number of young couples. They were fined and also threatened with being reported to their parents for their amorous activities.

It is nowhere in the mandate of the police force to regulate the morality of the citizens. Even if the women concerned were prostitutes, there is nothing in the law which prohibits them from entertaining customers in private as the offence of 'living on the earnings of prostitution' is used only against pimps and brothel keepers, but not against the girls. It is true that many of these hotels double up as love nests. This

happens all across the globe and laws do not prohibit it unless there is forcible abduction and other crime involved, for example, if the girl is under the age of 18, where her consent is of no consequence. The action of the police in Madh Island was construed as high-handed and illegal. Though local citizens had initiated the action, it was incumbent on the police to explain to the complainants that the law did not permit intrusion into the private lives of citizens.

The second incident in which a young girl was beaten up by women police constables doing *bandobast* duty at the Lalbaugcha Raja Ganapati *pandal* also brought an unnecessary bad name to the force. The television images of the girl being assaulted by police women aroused public anger much more than the images of the same girl kicking the police barricades and violently venting her frustration. To my mind, there were mitigating circumstances in this case because the women police on duty had been given a mandate by their superiors, which they were carrying out. Of course, use of force was not necessary to subdue a frustrated young woman using violence against an immovable object like a police barricade. There was no doubt at all that she had to be subdued, but that could have been done without assaulting her.

The third case was reported from Lonavala. A group of 45 law students, 25 male and 20 women, were rounded up from a private residence which they had hired for a party. Some students had consumed liquor without the necessary permits and loud music was disturbing the neighbourhood. Technically, the youth had contravened the prohibition law. But would the police have barged into private residences if the party was hosted by corporate giants, or even middle-class householders? I doubt if they would have done so. At least I have not heard of any such reported case. So why target some young people attempting to let their hair down?

These are three instances which caught public attention. TV brings these instances into our drawing rooms almost instantaneously. It solidifies our image of a brutal police force, which only knows to use force and display its authority. But the public must know that a lot of training has been given to police officers of different ranks, both during the recruitment stage and in service to sensitise

them to changing mores. Unfortunately, the culture of the force has been pre-ordained by the political culture which thrives on corruption and patronage.

The need for police reforms

The ideal solution would be to appoint men of honour, of competence and of integrity as police leaders, and then leave it to them to transform the force. Unfortunately, the prevalent political culture is to appoint leaders on the basis of religion or caste or of patronage, without bothering about competence or integrity. The tendency of politicians to play around with appointments and transfers for monetary or political considerations is causing havoc with the ethos of the force, and forcing the public to accept substandard service.

The people are entitled to a clean administration where the rule of law is upheld and justice is done at the very primary level of investigation of crime. That this is not happening is a sad commentary on the political climate in which politicians and policemen are in cahoots with each other to assert their own importance and power.

The entire gamut of police reforms rests mainly on this one concept. The man at the top and those at senior cutting edge levels must be people of integrity and competence, who should then be given operational freedom to manage their own men and resources. The political dispensation should monitor the performance of these leaders by keeping their own eyes and ears to the ground. They are the representatives of the people, elected by

them, and it is their obligation to ensure that the people get good service. But it is not the job of the politicians to run the force. By doing so, they are only distorting the performance levels and encouraging corruption which has now reached mammoth proportions. In particular, transfers

of subordinate ranks should never be in the hands of politicians. By usurping these powers from police leaders, they have caused all the problems that the people face on the streets today! ■



The writer is former Commissioner of Police, Mumbai.

The second incident in which a young girl was beaten up by women police constables doing *bandobast* duty at the Lalbaugcha Raja Ganapati *pandal* also brought an unnecessary bad name to the force. The television images of the girl being assaulted by police women aroused public anger much more than the images of the same girl kicking the police barricades and violently venting her frustration.

Now, Patels want the OBC tag!

One of this year's prominent images has been of a young Gujarati Hardik Patel leading his community in violent agitation for a slice of the reservation pie. How valid are these protests? And what is the ground reality of reservations in India? P.M. Kamath examines the issue.

HARDIK Patel, a young man of 22 years, a hitherto unknown name, shot into prominence not only in Gujarat and all over India, but throughout the US and the western world: He kept the reservation pot boiling for Gujarat state and the Centre, both under the BJP, at a time when it was fighting an election in Bihar state. He was asking for a quota for Patels within the OBC (Other Backward Caste) quota of 27%. This brings to a complete circle what began with former Prime Minister (PM) Vishwanath Pratap Singh's survival step that misfired for him in 1990! Hence, the questions under consideration in this article are: What drove Hardik Patel to launch such a movement? How is it going to affect the OBC reservation within the country? Will there be radical changes in the concept of reservation *per se* in the post-Hardik period?

Growing clamour for reservation

Originally, the architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, provided for reservation to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Tribes (ST) for a period of 10 years purely on the ground of their social backwardness; past oppression of the community and denial of humane treatment. The Congress and various factions of the Republican Party of India asked for the extension of reservation as the age old, socially discriminated sections could not get fully liberated in ten years. As a matter of fact, by the 1960s, leading leaders of SCs and STs had developed a vested interest in keeping: (a) the benefits of reservation limited to families and their extended families; and (b) the SCs and STs perpetually backward, so that they could use them as their vote-bank. Now it has become a holy cow. No one can get rid of it, at least in the near future!

Movement for OBC inclusion

The movement for reservation quota for the OBCs is an outcome of the post-independence compulsions of developing vote banks in parliamentary democratic politics. Lord Hutton who conducted the last census of castes in India in 1931 mentioned about upward mobility of the new castes/classes like car drivers. Will they call themselves as *Fiatwala* or *Ambassadorwala*? But the 1931 census did not mention the OBC. Is it other backward castes or classes? Who are in it? Is



Hardik Patel, the face of the Patel community's agitation for reservation

it decided by birth or is it by social conditions at a given time? What are the criteria to get included in it? Many such questions arise. But we may say that the OBC is a collective term used by the Government of India to classify castes which are socially and educationally disadvantaged.

In 1989, V. P. Singh, the then PM, stirred a social revolution by which he could consolidate and make his caste-based coalition, MAJGAR (Muslims, Ahirs, Jats, Gurjars, Adivasis and Rajputs) win him political power in the next election. He was facing internal threat from Devi Lal. The BJP whose external support was crucial for his survival in power was concerned with Singh's attempts to divide Hindus on caste lines. As a politician, Singh had his roots in the Congress Party, which has the reputation in the country for making winning caste-coalitions in different states, e.g., Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims (KHAM) in Gujarat. It is Singh who granted in 1990, 27% reservation for the OBCs to strengthen his caste-coalition. But he left people of his ilk like Mulayams, Lalus and Nitish Kumars to build winning coalitions dominated by the OBCs. Since then, all over India, OBCs have reaped educational benefits, acquired political power and risen in social hierarchy.

Since then, every community that is left out from the benefits has been demanding their inclusion under OBC. Thus in Rajasthan, Rajputs and in Haryana the Jats, succeeded in getting included to enjoy a sub-quota within the OBCs. In

Maharashtra, the Marathas along with Muslims were also given the benefits of reservation by the Prithviraj Chavan government. On an all-India basis, continuous efforts are being made to add Muslims in OBC. To avoid the legal hurdle of 'no religion-based reservation', a broader concept of 'minorities' was floated to include other religious minorities like Christians, Parsees, Buddhists etc.

Patels as OBCs?

After different dominant caste groups like Rajputs and Jats succeeded to get themselves included in states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana etc., in a sense it is natural for Patels in Gujarat to demand the benefits of reservation. As everyone knows, there is a Supreme Court ruling which prohibits governments from exceeding reservation beyond 50%, hence all dominant castes like Jats, Marathas and now Patels are demanding a sub-quota within the OBCs quota of 27%.

But what is interesting is the fact that at least on two occasions, the Congress governments in Gujarat had offered the benefits of reservations to Patels, which was rejected by them as they hated to be branded as 'backward'. Patels all over the world are an affluent community. In the US, 22,000 hotels as of 2012 are owned by Indians, 70 percent of these are controlled by Gujaratis, of which three quarters are held by the Patels. The OBCs cannot be said to have suffered caste-based discrimination and humiliation as in the case of untouchables in the Hindu society. But untouchability was not a characteristic of these so called backward classes/castes — they are backward because of their mediocrity, and not because any forward caste has kept them under chains!

The Patels' grievance is that a Patel candidate even with 90% marks cannot aspire to get a medical seat, while a SC/ST or OBC candidate can get through even with 45% marks! But if one becomes a doctor/ engineer with 45% marks, irrespective of whether he is SC/ST/OBC or from a forward community, he is likely to fail to make a name in his profession even if he is able to make a living. What the reservation has done today is to deny young aspirants from a non-reservation category, admissions they deserve in medical or engineering.

Time to review reservations

However, it is the OBCs turn now to become another holy cow. Several intellectuals have suggested that it is time to review the issue of reservation. They belong to all political backgrounds, and not necessarily to the BJP or the RSS. Thus, for instance, the Congress Party General Secretary, Janardhan Dwivedi had suggested while the Congress was in power at the Centre, to end all reservations and quotas except for the economically weaker sections by bringing all communities under its ambit. But this was contradicted by

Congress President, Sonia Gandhi when she said: "Congress is of the firm opinion that the system of reservation for SC, ST and OBCs must continue. This is essential to deal with the discrimination imposed by centuries of subjugation and oppression." This was also reiterated on behalf of the then government in February 2014 by Union Minister of State, Rajiv Shukla, when he stated in the Rajya Sabha that the "reservation for SC, ST and OBC will continue as per the Constitution."

Patels are thus recent converts to favour reservation policy as a panacea for social and educational discrimination, and also use of these instruments to rise in the socio-political-economic hierarchy in the society. Still, many say these are not the real motives of Hardik Patel in initiating the agitation to promote Patel's cause for reservation. There are many theories doing the rounds. First, it is politically instigated with the likely aim of diminishing the high popularity of the BJP under Narendra Modi leadership in the country generally, and in Gujarat particularly, as the current Chief Minister Anandiben Patel is from the BJP. Second, Patels have been generally against reservation. And Hardik Patel intends to oppose that line and has maintained the stance of, 'give us reservation or abolish reservations altogether'.

Conclusion

Though in the Bihar campaign, PM Modi had said that reservations will continue indefinitely, it is not inconceivable that in the future the BJP might think of gradually limiting the benefits of gains without pain to the OBCs, and keep reservation only for the SCs and STs. The government has valid grounds that these communities have really not gained benefits as originally envisaged.

If that is not done, OBCs' drive for easy crumbs would make them seek reservations in the private sector, multinational companies, and academic institutions run by minorities.

What is the ultimate outcome of Hardik Patel's movement to secure the benefits of reservation to Patels within the OBCs, only time will tell. But Hardik Patel will find a place of honour in the pantheon of leaders who fought for OBC reservation. *Hardikbhai, Hardik Badhai!* ■



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State of the media: Modi and that social thing

The Modi government in Delhi has changed the rules of the media game, much to the consternation of the capital's traditional media, says E. Jayakrishnan. Modi's extensive use of the social media and refusal to give unrestricted access to Delhi's journalists unlike the previous governments, has made him a target of adverse campaigns. Ultimately, will the media choose to focus on the larger picture?

It's been a momentous year for the Indian news media. Buffeted as it is by the winds of change - from the advent of the Modi *sarkar*, the remarkable growth of the social media, and the fierce competition for TRPs. And, the stresses and fractures are showing.

The harbinger of change

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has in a sense changed the rules of the game. Before the anointment of Modi in the capital's durbar, the unwritten, and even unsaid, rules of engagement between the rulers and the ruled in Lutyen's Delhi has been to put it politely, "incestuous" (as the Radia tapes so graphically and audibly revealed).

The "national" press has long been inured to think of themselves as the final arbiters of the national agenda, and even national destiny. A succession of weak governments, largely emasculated by the 'compulsions' of coalition politics, and the consequent erosion of political authority (with notable exceptions), has only steeled this ambition of the news media to set the template for national priorities, as they saw it.

This cosy partnership has been fractured from time. For instance, during the Emergency, or the anti-corruption movement of Anna, or even to a certain extent during the various scams that upended the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government, especially in its second innings. But until, and between these events, the dalliance between the news media and the *sarkar* has been largely genteel, based on a system of patronages and give-and-take. Unless you transgressed these uncoded norms of reasonable *sarkari* behaviour, it was good to tango.

Then Modi happened. And, it has thrown the media into a tizzy. Why?

Two things immediately came with the Modi territory.

Modi rode into town as a strong Prime Minister on the back of one of the largest mandates in post-Independence history, bucking a thirty-year trend. Plus, he was a leader who did not owe his rise in the political firmament either to the media, the benediction of coalition partners, or regional satraps. He came on the strength of his claim - the blessings of the people of India expressed through the EVM machine - the most unadulterated form of claim to political authority that has yet been conceived by human imagination.

Modi, the man, who sections of the Delhi establishment and the Delhi media believed had been seemingly wrestled down to the boondocks of Gujarat, where his rustic and even "communal" idea of India seemingly belonged, was suddenly amongst them.

And, lo and behold, he even had his own agenda and ideas - ideas of India that were not exactly in sync with the prevailing, and the 'chosen', one.

Then the unthinkable happened. Modi compounded the "transgression" of his presence at Race Course Road with another unpardonable one. The resort to social media as the preferred choice for his government's

communication - messaging and appealing to the citizens vaulting over the editorial lenses, and indeed knives, of the mainstream media.

He also brought in his wake the turning-off of the tap of unfettered access to the corridors of power in New Delhi to the media, which hitherto had been given a free run. The

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Modi-idea being that the government would determine the terms of engagement with the media, and not the other way round. A novel, but cataclysmic, development for the Delhi press corps!

This came even as the traditional media was already beginning to be upended by the growing prowess of the social media, where ‘conversations’ about news-breaks begin even before the news outlets had even started to smell the tea, let alone read the tea leaves.

The media reacted to these twin aggressions in two distinct ways. While it seemingly welcomed the ascendancy of social media as a *fait accompli*, with regard to Modi, it can be argued, that it reacted with petulance, and outrage.

It is up for debate whether the angst against the prime minister was due to the ‘man’ (media not having forgiven him for apparently emerging unscathed from Gujarat); or that he chose to prescribe a ‘Modi rekha’ on access to the Delhi scribes.

It is this writer’s case that while the former reason for the fall out between Modi and the media substantially stands, the disaffection with Modi has more to do with the latter. The apparent diatribe at Modi, by certain influential sections of the media, is to show the prime minister, and the powers that be, who’s boss.

The message being that any dispensation at New Delhi, however handsomely endowed with a mandate, cannot ‘do it’ in the capital without cohabiting, coopting the national/mainstream media. More so, if the incumbent has certain “ideas” and a certain ‘attitude’.

If you try that stuff, goes the wisdom, you will end up with the results of Delhi and Bihar! Will Modi play ball and reach out or will he go on with his merry ways is something that is up in the air and which only time, and the voters, will tell.

The medium is the message

Be that as it may, there is larger message for the media in the Modi episode. Increasingly, as the Internet penetration increases in India (we are set to become the second largest country of Internet users surpassing the US and next to China in a month from now), the propensity of the elected to increase the use of the social media to communicate with their constituencies is only set to increase.

Already, POTUS (President of the United States) has led the way. The State of the Union Address of the American President is usually the annual gold-standard event of a presidency. On New York Times reported on January 15, 2015 that just before his speech, President Barack Obama’s social media team “rather than jealously guard the policy proposals the president will announce in the speech — lest they leak — the White House has already rolled them out on social media. That strategy scooped the press and generated millions

of retweets well before the newspaper articles and television reports were even produced.”

This is akin, in a sense, to the Indian Union budget being unveiled on Twitter and Facebook, before it is released to the Indian press. An event just about unthinkable now, but not an impossibility even in the near future.

So, the press has to go beyond what it considers the ‘attitude’ of Modi. For, his exertions on the social media, bypassing the traditional media, is a fact of life. Not something that can be wished away.

The press may believe it has won some battles against Modi and the news media (like Bihar!) but that victory is likely to be pyrrhic unless it gets its priorities right. As much as turning the searchlight on efforts to fracture social cohesion is important, the Fourth Estate has to set its sights on issues that matter as much if not more — namely, the efficacy of the proclaimed development agenda of the government. This is simply because these have far reaching consequences for the destiny of India and its citizens, than mere coverage of hot heads on TV.

The Modi government is different from its predecessors in so far as it concentrates on projects rather than policy. In pursuance of this, it has announced a plethora of schemes — Make in India, Swachha Bharat, Digital India, Jan Dhan, to name a few, and even the just announced FDI policy — there haven’t been too many instances by the media of examining the efficacy of these efforts, nothing to cull out the truth from the hype.

In the face of the onslaught from the social media and the emerging multiplicity of news sources (including the readers!), the best way for the traditional media to hold its own is through burrowing deeper, and spreading the news net wider, and bringing fresh perspectives of the long-impact issues facing the nation.

The “nation does want to know”, but not necessarily only about the foibles of Sheena Bora, where a frenzied press not only tried to get ahead of the police, but also the facts. The traditional media has to dig deeper and wider! Covering rants and raves, talking heads, and shrill TV debates, can only go so far. There is a whole world out there to discover and report on. Time for muddy boots and raking cursors!■



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More precious than gold

It is said that future wars will be fought over water or rather, over its scarcity. This year, same as last two years, saw a shocking series of farmer suicides in states like Maharashtra, Telangana and Jharkhand over crop failure, owing to insufficient rains and inadequate irrigation. Unless we act fast and start saving rain water and recharging our groundwater, we are in for very tough times, warns Dr. M.A. Haque.

"Water is not free, as we usually think. It will be a huge problem that could lead us to another war."

—Pope Francis

FOR the last many years, Indian farmers have been facing an array of problems including uncertain monsoon and deficient rains. Certain regions in Maharashtra, UP (Uttar Pradesh), MP (Madhya Pradesh), Rajasthan etc., have faced regular rain deficiencies, while others have faced intermittent deficiencies leading to crop failures. Small farmers have been the worst affected. Many of them migrated to urban centres in search of some income or to become daily wage earners. But the worst consequence was that many of them committed suicide. Maharashtra has been the worst affected. Over 10,000 farmers committed suicide between 2011 and 2013. During the first

three months of 2015, the Marathwada region alone had reported over 200 suicides. In April 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture acknowledged that farmer suicides during the past three years stood at 3,313. An NGO (Non-Government Organisation) estimated that from May 2014 to May 2015, 1,306 farmers committed suicide in Maharashtra alone. In addition, there were substantial numbers of suicides in other states including Telangana, Jharkhand etc., triggered by crop damage and failures. One important reason was non-availability of water for irrigation.

Indian monsoon prevails for about four months from June

to September. On an average, about 75% of precipitation falls during those few weeks. Much before that, farmers start looking towards the sky and the Meteorology Department starts releasing bulletins. In recent years, the Indian Meteorology Department's predictions have improved through use of advanced techniques and equipments. That helps but in only a limited manner. With a weak monsoon, prior information does not really help. For irrigation, farmers need water. With insufficient or late monsoon, the surface water bodies become empty due to overutilisation. Even the underground reservoir,

which is considered immense, starts depleting. Under the circumstances, crop failure becomes inevitable, especially for smaller farmers.

Water, water everywhere, but not a drop of use?

In schools it is taught that about 70% of the earth's surface is water. There are oceans and seas full of

water. That is why earth is also called the Blue Planet. But the quantity is not unlimited. It has been almost the same since very long. Water we consume today is probably the same which was on earth when the dinosaurs roamed. It only changes its form. At times it is liquid and at other times it may become snow, ice or vapour. While talking about water on earth, we generally ignore a very important point. Out of the total water on earth, about 97.5% is saline. Only about 2.5% is "fresh water" (not saline), which can be directly consumed by us and most of the land organisms. Fresh water does contain some salts. Their presence is essential for the



A helpless farmer at his arid land in the rain-deprived Vidharbha region of Maharashtra

health of the organisms consuming it. If we drink pure water, we may suffer from deficiency of certain elements which we get with water. That explains why good quality drinking water is commonly labeled as “Mineral Water”. Important issue is that most land organisms cannot utilise the sea water. Only marine organisms can live with saline water.

Even more important is that around 68.9% of fresh water is in glaciers and about 30.8% is groundwater. Only about 0.3% is in rivers, lakes, ponds, streams and a few other sources on which we generally depend for our requirements. These water bodies receive fresh water in the form of rain, mist, hail or snow, and they are replenished. Thus the water which can be readily utilised by us and other land organisms is very small. Even industrial activities need fresh water for certain operations. That is the reason that globally, fresh water sources are stressed. Almost 1/3rd of the earth's population is not getting sufficient drinking water. By 2050, about 2/3rd of humanity will face water scarcity. Climate change will further aggravate the situation with uncertain rains, faster evaporation. People living in the developing nations are and will remain the worst sufferers. The Indian situation is quite alarming.

Indian agriculture and its water needs

Agriculture accounts for only about 17% of GDP. But the National Commission for Integrated Water Resources Development (NCIWRD) says that about 83% of available water in the country is used for irrigation. Rest 17% meets the demand for domestic, industrial and other sectors. In Asia, India has the largest arable land, about 39% of Asia's total. Only USA has more arable land than India. This is a boon, but also a matter of concern. Water consumption is immense. Important reason is that large quantities of precious water are wasted. Over-irrigation is commonly practiced by the farmers. Also, there are seepages and leakages. But agriculture cannot be ignored. For over 58% of the rural households, agriculture is the principal means of livelihood. In the coming years, India will have to boost agricultural production for the growing population. Consequently, the demand for water will also increase.

Indian irrigation system includes networks of canals from rivers; groundwater based systems; tanks and other water bodies. Groundwater is most important, about 39 million ha (hectares) of cultivated land is irrigated by groundwater and about 22 million ha by canals. Thus, about 2/3rd area remains monsoon-dependent and monsoon is quite uncertain. In the recent past, the uncertainty has increased. In the late 1990s India faced crippling drought, large areas suffered rain failure regularly. Several state governments took initiatives. AP (Andhra Pradesh) launched the *Neeru Meeru*; MP had the

Ek Panch Ek Talaab; in Gujarat thousands of check dams were planned; Tamil Nadu started rainwater harvesting to ensure water availability. But the infrastructure created were either not completed or were poorly designed. Also, maintenance was lacking. Such initiatives could have drought-proofed the country. Under MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) too, similar activities were planned. Also, the National Rainfed Area Authority was set up and the Watershed Management Programme was revamped. But inefficient implementation resulted in little achievement.

Precipitation and its utilisation

In our country, most of the rain (about 75%) occur in the few weeks during the monsoon (June through September). During the rest of the year, there is little precipitation. Average rainfall in the country is about 1170mm with wide variations, certain areas getting only 100mm, while at other places it is as high as 10,000mm. Total precipitation is about 4000 billion m³. Unfortunately, only 48% of rainfall ends up in the rivers. Due to lack of storage and crumbling infrastructure, only 18% remains utilisable. This is too little. With such uneven rainfall we should have concentrated towards better capture and storage infrastructure. But the reality is opposite. We are constantly destroying historical ponds, lakes, other wetlands, even rivers and streams. In the lust to obtain more land, water bodies are encroached upon and often completely filled. This is much more obvious in cities and metros. The reason is the high land cost. Land mafia, builders etc., are constantly searching for areas to encroach. Local officials collude for money. The modus operandi is to dump garbage, waste etc., to kill the water bodies. Then construction is undertaken. Recently, the Allahabad High Court has ordered demolition of three buildings in NOIDA built on encroached areas, including one pond. In Delhi, large numbers of historical ponds and lakes have vanished or are on the verge. Sometime back, 60 people died in a building collapse in Chennai. Later it was discovered that the building was built on Porur lake land. The area where the author lives, had several ponds till recently. Most of them are now gone. Similar examples are there in almost all urban areas. This apathy for water bodies adds to water scarcity. Water bodies provide water readily. Also, they recharge underground reservoirs and help in controlling floods.

The reality of groundwater

Groundwater is the major source of drinking water, also for agriculture and industries. It is estimated that the total

static groundwater in India is about 10,812 bcm. The average groundwater recharge rate of India's river basins is about 260m³/day. India has about 432 bcm groundwater which is replenished annually through rain and river drainage. Out of that, about 395 bcm is utilisable. About 82% is used for agricultural activities, and 18% remains for industries and household supply. With growing demand, groundwater is increasingly being pumped from lower levels and at a much faster pace than its replenishment. There are approximately 20 million wells in India whose owners do not have to pay for water. It is estimated that we pump out about 190 km³ groundwater each year. Refilling is only 120 km³. Shortfall is of 70 km³. In most places, the water tables are depleting. In Delhi it is going down by about 0.4m a year. In Gurgaon, the level sank by 14.16m during 2005 to 2014. Then the High Court passed an order disallowing large scale construction except using treated waste water. Ground water depletion results in drying of wells and pumps. Worst affected are the small farmers who cannot afford powerful pumps. Water even at a competitive cost is not available.

The way forward

There is a strong case for rethinking on this front. If the situation is not rectified, we will have serious deficiency and

conflicts for water. Water bodies must be protected and improved, new ones should be created, especially in drought affected areas. Then there has to be economisation of water use. Drip irrigation, sprinklers etc., need to be popularised. Industries and urban areas should reuse and recycle waste water efficiently. Rain water harvesting should be very seriously and fully implemented. Forests and green areas play a very important role in conserving rain water and in recharging groundwater. Deforestation and destruction of green areas must stop. One factor which is hardly considered is the wastage of agricultural produce and food. Such wastages mean wastages of various resources, including water. In 2013 alone, post harvest loss of fruits and vegetables was to the order of ₹ 2 lakh crore. Precious water is also lost that way. We need to remember that one banana means 16 litres of water have been utilised; similarly, five tomatoes means 200 litres of

water; 20g of leftover food in the plate means 60 litres of water and so on. Help yourself by becoming responsible, and help India's farmers too. ■



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Critiquing Modi

(Continued from page 7)

According to a survey released by the Ministry of Labour, 2.75 lakh jobs were created in eight key sectors between July and December 2014 – a 118% year-on-year increase from 2013, when just over 1.2 lakh jobs were created. 'Make in India' is gathering momentum, but delay and failure on the economic reforms front is the main hurdle against domestic corporate investment, as well as the in-flow of foreign investment. Even the unorganised registered no significant rise in creation of new jobs. Indian manufacturing is yet to rise to the occasion. Curbing inflation is another big plus for the Modi government. Pace of inflation has slowed from 8.3% to 4.9%. However, food inflation has gone up steeply and prices of onions and pulses are the biggest worry at present. Corrective measures like vigilance raids on hoarders, substantial increase in imports and public distribution at reduced prices have moderated their prices. The full impact of these measures on the market is yet to be felt. Minimum pension has been increased to ₹ 1,000 per month. However, to be fair to the opponents and independent critics, it must

be admitted that the gap between promise and performance is wide. If Modi and the top leadership fail to get their legislative agenda through the next session of Parliament and the urgently needed economic reforms are not put in place quickly, "performance-failure" will grow into a serious challenge for this government.

Personally, I am optimistic that the Modi government and the BJP will make substantial progress on this front. While 16 months are gone, he has 44 months more. Modi should come down from his high horse and build a consensus on the needed legislations. If he is wise enough to muster a breakthrough in the Parliament, likely, the BJP-led NDA can look forward to be in power for a long time to come. The humiliating defeat in the Bihar elections could prove to be a silver lining in the dark clouds ahead. He and the party have



to also win in the "climate of intolerance" war being cleverly foisted on the Centre by Congress and other interested segments. This is not as difficult as it seems. But, that calls for another article! ■

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As rewind, so forward...

*It's easy to be a doomsdayer and view the events of this year through a blinkered vision. **Akul Tripathi** urges us to see also the light amidst the darkest events and says nothing is beyond optimism and hope. Can we look forward to the new year with an incredible lightness of being?*

MANY, many moons ago, when I was studying journalism, it was a *diktat* from the head of department to read several newspapers on a daily basis; on which would be impromptu quizzes that would count towards the final grades. After all, if I was to be a journalist, having to read newspapers was an almost foregone conclusion – one absolutely had to do it.

I was not happy at all. I affirmed that it was the imposition of having to read all the news, whether on subjects of interest or not that bothered me. Then one day, my grandmother saw me sulking away behind a pile of newspapers and asked me what was bothering me. I immediately replied that I did not like reading all the news. She pried and probed and asked why not? Irritated, I answered, “It is depressing – it’s all about crime, terrorism, death, war and unhappiness. Nothing good seems to be happening in the world.” She took a long pause and replied - “In the midst of all the terrible things, you should look for the angels and the silver linings. Look for them. They are always there. Even in the news”.

I nodded to end the conversation and get on with the torturous chore. But over time, I realised that the words kind of stuck and small pieces of news that would offset the large tragedies - either to prevent ones from repeating or to bring relief to the sufferings from those that had happened, kept popping up in my field of reference. The few inches of them, even in small print, would strike out to me like headlines in bold and italic.

Suddenly, the newspapers didn’t seem that depressing.

Neatly tied and categorised?

It is now the last month of the year, and every organisation, especially of the media will devote inches and hours to doing a recap of the year - trying to tie things up, trying to categorise them into files and systems of administration in a manner, that for a couple of months one will think that the new year is actually the beginning of a new life. Some will remind us of the major events that happened in a sort of a countdown presentation, while others will warn us of things that have passed and should be forgotten. Others will leave trails of

how bad the year was and we are glad for it to be over and we should move forward with new vigour. It happened last year, and the year before, and will happen again next year. We will experience the same emotions with similar events, year on year with only names and other specifics changing.

So, instead of being subject to ludicrous compilations of a system that treats time in a linear manner as opposed to its true cyclical nature, let’s look for some of the silver linings and angels that shone through the year - not as an attempt to end a year, but to understand that events will happen - horrible and tragic ones - ones we cannot eliminate. However, instead of vilifying them, we can choose to find the angels and light, which without those large looming shadows of forlorn scenarios and bleak outcomes, would perhaps never have been discovered.

Today we are living in a country where a democratically elected government which won a globally resonating victory by a margin that has no parallel in our history – is facing unprecedented scrutiny amidst almost unreasonable expectations. Perhaps it is retribution to impossible promises made to a frustrated electorate. There are sycophants and naysayers in the fray. There are those convinced of a golden sparrow scenario and others who worry that the country is being auctioned away. Some believe that a tea vendor as the prime minister is the epitome of democracy, and others who have heralded the beginning of the end of democracy and free speech.

The silver linings

What is good in this polarised, divisive world, you ask? In all the history of an independent India, never has politics been discussed as passionately at tea stalls of the labourers and the dining halls of the new age nobles. Never have politics and politicians been asked to perform, expected to yield fruit, held accountable for their decisions and had to face responsibility for their actions simultaneously on the streets, in the Parliament, across media and in fact, within seconds on the social media. The country has in the last year swung from being one that cursorily went about its bare minimum

requirements to qualify as the world's largest democracy, to be one that discusses its needs, its outcomes and its ingredients with a forgotten passion.

Yes, it could be said that it is all haphazard and opportunistic, unidimensional in approach and lacking focus. It is even on the shoulders of a brute force and crude language. That will evolve with time. But 2015 will be the year when over a billion puppets of a complex system were for the first time in the modern nation's young history, infused with the passion to understand and take part in the affairs of their land.

The International Yoga Day was another move that had everything from Hindutva to propitiation of superstition and religious agenda attached to it. In the hullabaloo that it was consumed in, most overlooked that it was declared so by the United Nations General Assembly and was a global celebration of a way of life and discipline that was invented in India and is still integral to Indian lifestyle, and nudges every practitioner towards a holistic approach towards life. Amidst all the 'days' that are celebrated every year - a conscious effort towards improving health and quality of living - is by far the most sensible declaration by the United Nations in a long, long time.

Our western border with Pakistan and relationship with the country has always been on tenterhooks and in the news almost daily. With Pakistan in the West, China in the North and East and a constant power battle between India and China with regard to Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, the situation with our neighbours is not one that often gives reason to smile. In such a scenario, it was a pleasure to see that the confusion with a neighbour that is surrounded by India on all sides - Bangladesh - was considerably reduced by the swapping of 162 enclaves, giving citizenship to 51,000 people who have been living in limbo since Partition.

Continuing on the neighbourly front, the geographic and political borders of India never quite allowed for overland connectivity to the rest of the world - not with any degree of bureaucratic and political ease, at least. Putting such difficulty behind, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway (also known as the Asian Highway 1) has suddenly made driving to South East Asia a reality and a very encouraging step for citizens to rekindle ties with neighbouring countries that have shared history and culture for several thousands of years.

The rewards and trials of the blitzkrieg global handshakes that the current government seems to have as an integral policy, will be realised only in time. However, in that spirit, the overwhelming response to the Third India Africa Forum Summit held in the Indian capital where a continent congregated on Indian soil was indeed heartwarming, and in mere days a capital of trust and goodwill built that no business or diplomatic mission could have achieved.

Within India, countering various health and sanitation woes

that have plagued the country, the findings of a study conducted by the UN agency for children, UNICEF and the Indian government, Rapid Survey on Children (RSOC), have been heartening with some national trends indicating that the proportion of underweight children has fallen from 42.5% a decade ago, to just under 30% now. There have been similar improvements on stunting, wasting and other measures of malnutrition. The national immunisation rate has risen and the rate of open defecation is down from 55% of households to 45%.

Also, on the domestic front, the partition of Andhra Pradesh and the carving out of Telangana had some serious support and opposition. The situation was tense and there was uncertainty in the air. However, the laying of the foundation stone of the capital of Amaravathi - named after the historic site - at Uddandarayunipalem village of Guntur district, saw the peaceful attendance of chief ministers of both states in an atmosphere that looked to the future, instead of squabbling over the past.

Also, quietly in the midst of many muddles, the DRDO (Defense Research and Developmental Organisation) conducted the third successful testing of the Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile, further successful testing of the air-to-air Astra missiles and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched the fifth in a series of seven planned satellites, as part of an autonomous regional satellite navigation system.

Concluding, as one must, with sports, it was the year of the Cricket World Cup and though India dropped out of the race at the semi-final stage, it was indeed heartening to see the fans of the then reigning world champions behave like it and instead of throwing brick-bats, applauding their young team's spirit and perseverance. It is indeed a far cry from breaking their homes and protesting outside their houses.

Perhaps this spirit of sportsmanship will find its way into other arenas of life - both private and professional?

I never did become a journalist, but my grandma's advice still echoes as I read newspapers, it allows me watch TV news and still smile. The angels and the silver linings convince me that there can be a future better than what we blinded by fear, are too afraid to create for ourselves.

This list may stand concluded. But it is not the end. As the numerals change, know that it is just for some bureaucratic respite. Things will be much the same come January 1, 2016. There is no reset button for life. So for what it's worth, may this moment be the beginning of a new world-view where amidst the din of demonising forces, may you still hear the whispers of angels. ■



The writer is a media professional and freelance writer.

“The story of Aparkaya unfolds through singing of the weavers. They compare the rigid threads of the loom with Vedavati, and the emerging cloth - soft yet resilient, with Sita, her incarnation”



One wonders what keeps a dancer-teacher-choreographer and researcher like **Sharmila Biswas** relatively absent from the platform of public performance? She has been experimenting with her chosen classical style of Odissi by merging it with the specialised textile weaving culture of Odisha, and the results are amazing and haunt the audience much after the performance is over. She has introduced the mythical stories of Sita and Vedavati into her

performance with a brilliantly synchronised and trained chorus and live music. **Shoma A. Chatterji** hears it from the beautiful and talented Sharmila Biswas.

What does Aparkaya stand for?

Aparkaya is the art of interpretation of the weaver of textiles of Odisha. To me, it is an interpretation of life itself. It covers the delicate, almost fragile-like beauty of the kinetic fabric that is woven, that can challenge the intricate, jewel-like colours of the silk brocade of the *Banarasi*, the silken textile of a *Jamdani* sari, the energy of a *Santhali* fabric and the gorgeous sheen of a *Dhakai* muslin, now extinct. The story of *Aparkaya* unfolds through the singing of the weavers. I had begun to read *Tapaswini* by Gangadhar Meher, a renowned poet of Odisha who belonged to a weaver's family. *Tapaswini* is his interpretation of Sita in *Uttar Ramayan*. I found it charming, earthy, touching and straight from the heart. For reference, I simultaneously started studying the *Valmiki Ramayan*.

How did you discover the story of Vedavati few of us had heard of before we saw your performance?

Vedavati was Sita's first incarnation. She was reborn as Sita

to avenge her defilement by Ravana. For me, it remains a work in progress, because I am still struggling with the concept and its expression through dance that should be articulate enough to reach my audience, my musicians, my students and my chorus dancers. Both Vedavati and Sita in this performance are different in nature from what we know them as, and also from my own nature. So, this has been the most challenging work for me as dancer, choreographer, researcher and teacher.

You have said Aparkaya is a love story. Can you please elaborate?

It is the strange love story that sustains through ages between the loom and the cloth. The story of *Aparkaya* unfolds through singing of the weavers. They compare the rigid threads of the loom with Vedavati, and the emerging cloth - soft yet resilient, with Sita, her incarnation. The two lives flow together, Sita – alive and Vedavati – dead to the world, but alive indeed in her



The weavers and the weaving process of Odisha have inspired *Aparkaya*

passion for revenge. Eventually, Vedavati finds her liberation in her understanding of Sita.

We would like to know more about Vedavati and her presence in the Ramayana.

Vedavati is the daughter of Kushadwaja, the grand-daughter of Vrihaspati and is born from the utterance of the Vedas. She is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Gangadhar Meher describes Vedavati as a dusky but beautiful woman who wears tiger skin and is totally committed to knowledge so that she can live up to the aspirations of Vishnu. But Ravana defiles her. Taking it as an insult to her purity, she steps into a fire with the strong resolve of being reborn to bring death and destruction upon Ravana. I have tried to construct the image of Vedavati from this sketchy description. My version of Vedavati is shaped as a middle-aged woman detached from the world, obsessed with her twin desires of attaining Vishnu on the one hand, and avenging her insult by destroying Ravana on the other. But the truth that suggests itself is that Ravana is said to have touched only a strand of her hair and yet she is almost like a woman possessed, swinging between a maniacal and a depressive state which makes her step into the fire. But in the era she belonged to, touching a strand of hair could be interpreted as 'defilement' for any woman committed to another man.

What about your personal conception and realisation of Sita? Is she different from the Sita we know from the Ramayana?

The Sita I have conceived to place in juxtaposition with Vedavati

The Sita I have conceived to place in juxtaposition with Vedavati is the daughter of Nature, and is unaware of qualities such as good or bad or right and wrong.

is the daughter of Nature, and is unaware of qualities such as good or bad or right and wrong. She laughs easily, weeps at the drop of a hat and gives in easily too. She is an ordinary woman, impulsive but with a good soul, who is aware of how to deal with her husband in every situation so that her life is fulfilled and harmonious. She treads a path that is a fine blend of *bhakti* and *shringar*. She is not educated but has solid common sense and sensitivity towards propriety. She knows that Lord Rama has no qualms about the purity of her body not in her control. My field work into the interior villages of Odisha for this work has familiarised me with women like this Sita, filled with common sense, propriety and sensitivity to their husbands' needs. They have taught me about the laws of nature which has filled me with happiness and peace.

You seem to be fascinated by every step of the weaving process. Can you elucidate?

The concept note of my performance spells this out. I have observed the process and stage where cotton is turned into cloth. Light, soft cotton floats in the air. Twisted and stretched

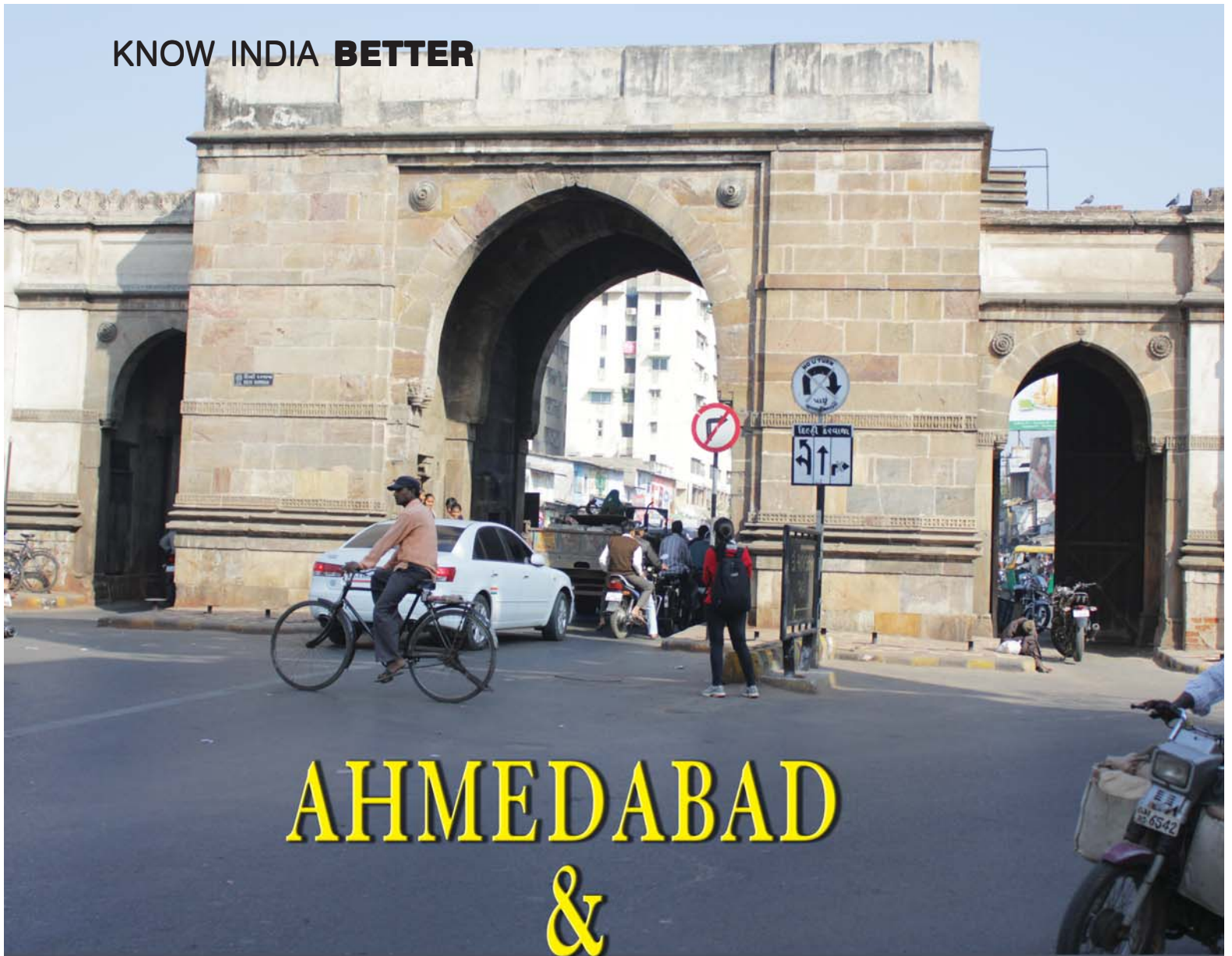
out into threads and held firmly on either side of a wooden frame, it begins to change in form and texture and design. The tautness breaks some threads while others come from across, above, below, through and through to evolve into lengths of cloth. When the weaving is complete, some wear them around their heads as turbans. Some drape them around the body. They give us warmth in winter, and in summer we use them to hide from the sun. They can be used to wipe the body dry or to take dirt and dust off soiled feet.

What is so special about these Odisha textiles?

The textiles are accessible, replaceable and forgettable. But when someone picks up a length of cloth and takes a closer look, one will notice the small and intricate designs, the clever use of colour and the smell of earth. There is a rhythm in their movements as they work on their looms. Rigid threads are woven into pliable cloth. They have inherited these stories from their forefathers to be passed on from one generation to the next, each generation adding its own experience, enriching the lives of the inheritors. They compare the rigid threads with Vedavati and the cloth that is woven from the threads with Sita. This forms the core of *Aparkaya* and for every performance, I add something new.

(Continued on page 39)

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AHMEDABAD & GANDHINAGAR

a tale of twin cities

The twin cities of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar in Gujarat are in a way, a study in contrasts. While Gandhinagar is a new city, and was accorded its exalted status more recently, Ahmedabad has been the pride and joy of a succession of dynasties and rulers since the 14th century. It has seen the rise and fall of many rulers and the architecture and buildings of Ahmedabad reflect that dynamism and the resultant exquisite artistry. Today, the twin cities stand together as proud symbols of an era gone by, and a future which holds many promises.

Text & Photos: Dr. M.A. Haque



The tranquil Sabarmati River

AHMEDABAD

AHMEDABAD is an important city of Gujarat. Formerly, the city was the capital of Gujarat. When the twin city of Gandhinagar was developed, Ahmedabad lost that status. Historically, this city which is situated on the banks of the Sabarmati River, has witnessed intermittent upheavals and many changes in the past. Various dynasties, right from the Sultanate dynasty and Mughal dynasty, to the Maratha and the British, ruled the city. That is why the history of Ahmedabad is so rich.

The history

If we go further back, we find that during the 13th century, the ruler Pethasinh of Pethapur, ruled over the town of Shertha. After the demise of Pethasinh, the Sultanate of Patan used that area as a battle ground. The commonly called Ahmedabad dynasty, which in history generally appears as Muzaffarid dynasty, ruled over Gujarat from 1391 to 1583. During that period, Ahmedabad was established. It is also claimed that the location of the present Ahmedabad is same as where the city of Karnavati existed. Karnavati was founded by Karna Solanki between 1063 and 1093 AD on the banks of the Sabarmati River. Later, the city lost its glory and identity. It was then re-established by Ahmed Shah I.

The Muzaffarid dynasty was established by Zafar Khan Muzaffar (later called Muzaffar Shah I) in 1391. He was

the Governor of Gujarat under the Delhi Sultanate ruled by Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad bin Tughluq IV. Zafar Khan's father, Sadharan, was a Rajput who had embraced Islam and changed his name to Wajih-ul-Mulk. Zafar Khan Muzaffar had defeated Farhat-ul-Mulk near Anhilwada Patan and made the city his capital. Earlier to that, Farhat-ul-Mulk was made Governor of Gujarat in 1377 by Firoz Shah Tughlaq. Later, it was decided to replace him and Sikandar Khan was appointed as Governor of Gujarat by the Delhi ruler. But Farhat-ul-Mulk did not allow him to take his place. He defeated and killed Sikandar Khan.

Encouraged by the sacking of Delhi by Timur in 1398, Zafar Khan Muzaffar declared himself independent in 1407 and used the opportunity to establish himself as the ruler of an independent Gujarat. Thus a new empire (Gujarat Sultanate) was established. The next ruler of the empire was his grandson, Ahmad Shah I. He established the city of Ahmedabad in 1411 on the banks of the Sabarmati River. He also made Ahmedabad the capital of his empire. The city was developed in a grand style and it was called Shahr-i-Mu'azzam (the great city). During the Muzaffarid rule, Ahmedabad became one of the largest and wealthiest cities in the world.

The rule of Mahmud Begada

The Sultanate reached its zenith during the rule of



Mausoleum of Ahmed Khattu Gang Baksh, the spiritual guide of Ahmad Shah I, the founder of Ahmedabad city

Mahmud Shah I Begada, the most prominent ruler of the Gujarat Sultanate. His name was Abu'l Fath Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Shah I. He was popularly named as Mahmud Begada. Through his conquests, he expanded the Gujarat Sultanate to its maximum. He also conquered Malwa, and remained on throne for 43 years from May 1458 to November 1511. He founded a city called Mahemdabad (Memdavad) which is in Kheda district. Mahemdabad has some historical structures. One is Bhammariyo Kuvo (Kuvo means well), Chanda-Surajno Mahal (palace) and Roza-Rozi (mausoleum). People believe that Bhammariyo Kuvo is connected with Ahmedabad, Pavagadh and Junagadh through secret passages. The town is a popular tourist destination.

The Gujarat Sultanate began to decline by the 16th century. The Portuguese snatched Diu in 1509 after the Battle of Diu. Mughal Emperor Humayun attacked Gujarat in 1535. But he could not take Gujarat. Akbar took control of Gujarat in 1573 and made Gujarat a province. The last ruler was Muzaffar Shah III. He was imprisoned in Agra. In 1583, he escaped from prison. He could muster help from some well-wishers and regained Gujarat. But he was defeated by Akbar's General, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. During the Mughal period, Ahmedabad became Gujarat's leading centre of textiles. It is also claimed that Emperor Jehangir had visited Ahmedabad in 1617 and found the city dirty! He called the city 'Gardabad',

'City of dust'. But his son, Shah Jahan spent many years in Ahmedabad. He got the Moti Shahi Mahal constructed there. In 1753, the Mughal rule ended and the city went under the Maratha generals, Raghunath Rao and Damaji Gaekwad. The decline of the city was triggered due to a power struggle between the two.

The city went under the British East India Company in 1818. In 1824, a military cantonment was established there. A major event of the 19th century was that a railway line was laid connecting Ahmedabad with Bombay in 1864. The railway link gave a boost to the city as a leading centre of manufacture and trade.

During the freedom struggle of India, Gujarat produced many leaders, most important being Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel. India's Independence movement took its root in Gujarat in 1915. After Independence, Bombay state was split into two - Gujarat and Maharashtra, in 1960. Ahmedabad became Gujarat's capital. Later, a new city called Gandhinagar was developed as capital of the state.

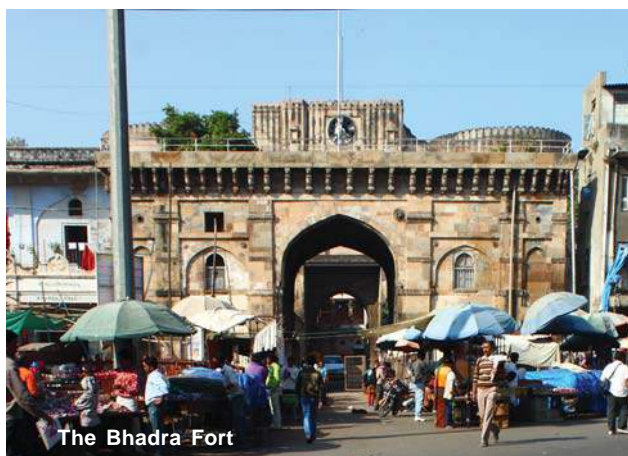
The city of Ahmedabad has a rich history. The same is reflected in the large numbers of historical monuments. The architecture of the buildings and monuments show a beautiful blend of Islamic and Hindu styles. The reason is that most of the monuments are from the 15th century.



Graves of rulers in the Sarkhej Roza complex

Bhadra Fort

Among various historical monuments in Ahmedabad, the Bhadra Fort is well-known. The fort, built by Ahmad Shah I in 1411, is in the walled city area of Ahmedabad. The fort was developed as a township with palaces, mosques, open spaces etc. The fort had several gates, one of them was the Bhadra Gate. There is a belief that the fort was named after a temple of Bhadra Kali, a form of Laxmi. Also, some people claim that the fort was established during the Maratha rule, but history does not support the claim. During the past centuries, the fort remained neglected and suffered degradation. In 2014, the Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) renovated the fort and developed the area as a cultural centre.



The Bhadra Fort

A plaque near the fort tells visitors about the Bhadra Gate. The massive gate was built in or around 1411 by Sultan Ahmad Shah I as the principal entrance to the palace from the eastern side. The palace was named Bhadra after the ancient Rajput fort of the same name at Anhilwada-Patan.

Dada Hari Vav

Ahmedabad area regularly faced water shortage. During summer the area experienced high temperatures. To solve the problem, they built step wells. The wells provided water and also a cool, comfortable environment even during peak summer. Dada Hari Vav is one such well. 'Vav' means well. The Vav was built during the period of Mehmud Begda in 1501. Dada Hari Vav is a beautifully designed step well close to the tomb of Dada Hari. The Vav was frequented by travellers for cold water and for relaxation, especially during the hot summer.

Sarkhej Roza

At some distance from Ahmedabad, towards Gandhinagar, there is a large complex called Sarkhej Roza. The place was the home of a famous Muslim spiritual leader, Sultan Ahmed Shah, spiritual guide of Ahmad Shah I, the ruler who founded Ahmedabad city. He was also called Ahmed Khattu Gang Baksh. The area has several monuments, which date back to the time when Mughals ruled Ahmedabad. But the area became famous during the Gujarat Sultanate.



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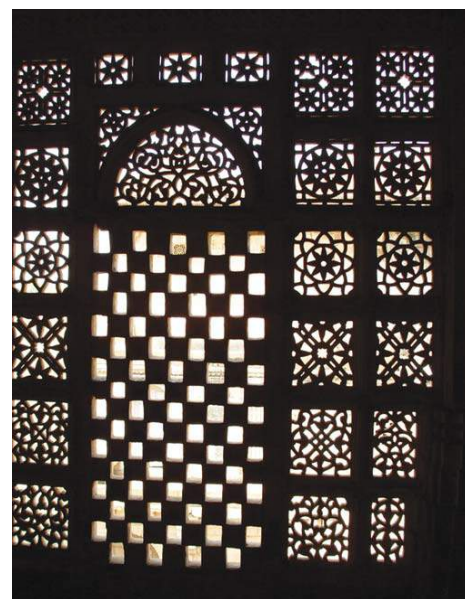
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The tank near Sarkhej Roza, which is almost dry



Stone work at Sarkhej Roza

The area contains palaces, tombs, mosques, tanks and pavilions. The buildings surround a huge tank with steps to get easy access to water. The tank now remains almost dry most of the times of the year as the passages for water have been blocked by construction around the complex. Also, the area is facing encroachments from different sides.

The buildings at Sarkhej represent royal lifestyles of the time, as well as the religious and social life. The complex was

used by the rulers as a country retreat. The tanks and pavilions formed the social link with people. The complex also houses tombs of the ruler Mahmud Begada and his queen. The architecture of Sarkhej Roza complex is beautiful, with lovely stone window carvings. Sunlight filtering through the intricate stone carvings generates a unique view. The complex has a small library with a good collection of religious and historical books and manuscripts. Large numbers of visitors throng the area, some for the tombs, others for the library, and still others to appreciate the architectural marvels.



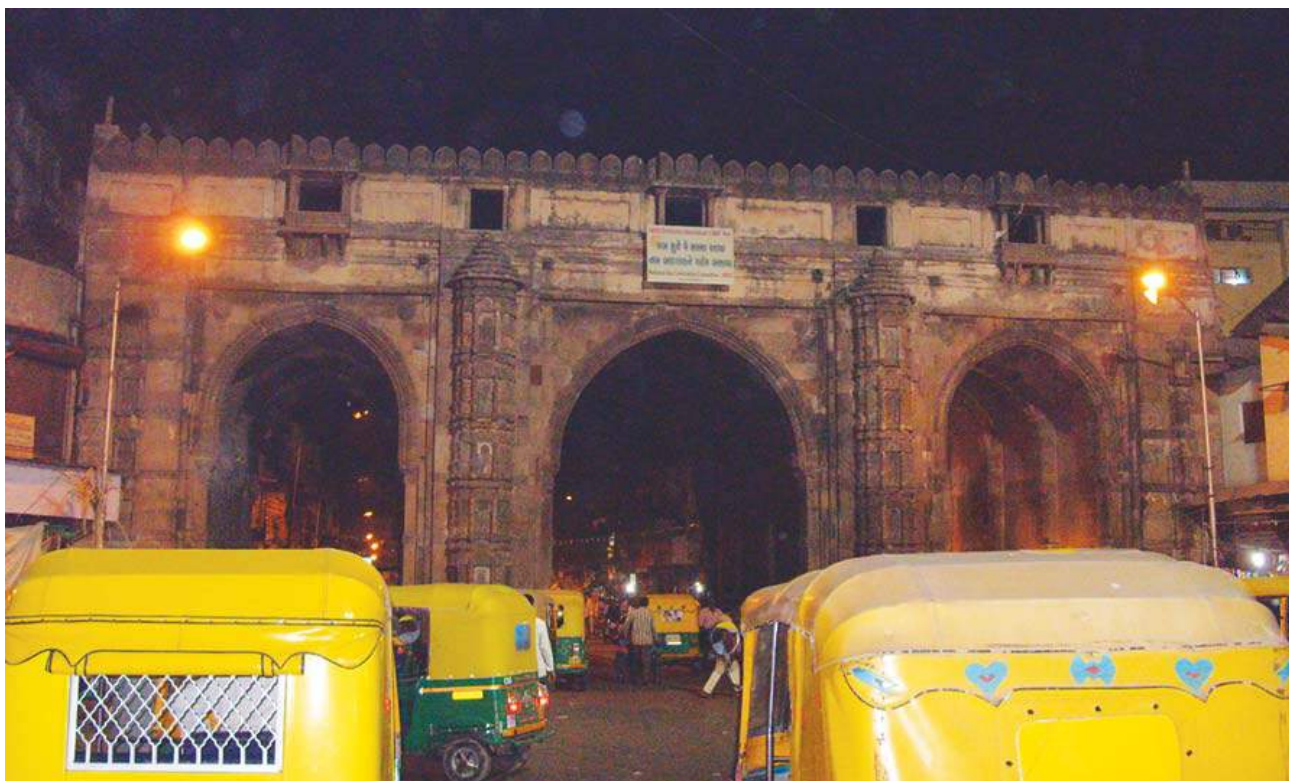
Old manuscripts of Qur'an at the Sarkhej Roza library

Jhulta Minar

Ahmedabad is famous for its set of minarets made of stone. The minarets are part of the mosque Siddi Bashir. The minarets are commonly called Jhulta Minar. The minarets sway if a light push is given to the upper arc of the mosque. For visitors to Ahmedabad, the minarets are a place of fun and an example of a unique architecture and also a science puzzle. It has not been possible so far to decipher the mechanism which sways the minarets.

Teen Darwaza

Teen Darwaza is another architectural marvel of Ahmedabad, consisting of elegant arched gates, the oldest gateways of the city. The structure lies adjacent to the Bhadra Fort. It was built by Sultan Ahmed Shah, founder of Ahmedabad, and completed in 1415. Initially, it was built to serve as an entrance to the Bhadra Fort. Mughal Emperor Jahangir used to come to this place with his wife Noor Jahan. They used to watch from there the procession that started from the gateway and went to the Jama Masjid.



The Teen Darwaza, an example of fine Islamic architecture

The architecture of Teen Darwaza is unique with fine Islamic architecture. The walls and pillars are beautiful with intricate carvings. The windows are of semi-circular shape with fine mesh work. The central window portrays the tree of life with five palm trees covered with snakes. This depiction now serves as the emblem of the Gujarat Government.

Sabarmati Ashram

The ashram is a very important building complex in Ahmedabad city on the bank of River Sabarmati. After returning from South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi established his first ashram in the Kochrab area of Ahmedabad on 25th May 1915. On 17th June 1917, the ashram was shifted to an open area on the



Hridaya Kunj inside the Sabarmati Ashram, which was Gandhiji's home for thirteen years



The shop in Sabarmati Ashram, where one can buy books and Gandhi memorabilia

banks of the River Sabarmati. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to start farming, animal husbandry, cow breeding, *khadi* production and other activities, to provide income and a living to common people. Hence, he selected the barren area. According to mythology, the place was the site of the ashram of Dadhichi *rishi* (a sage) who had donated his bones for a righteous war.

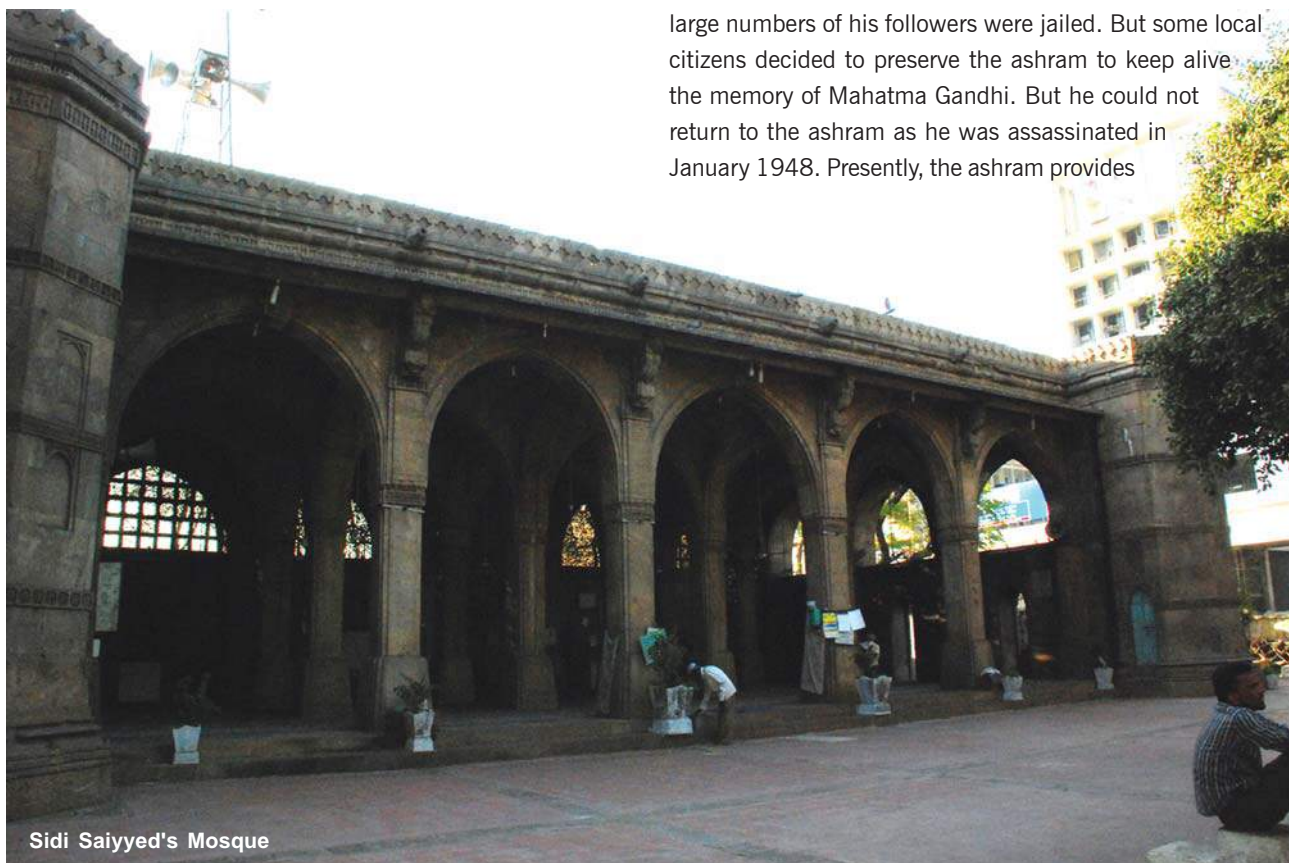
The Sabarmati Ashram is also known as Harijan Ashram. Mahatma Gandhi stayed there from 1917 to 1930. The ashram served as one of the main centres of the freedom



Mahatma Gandhi's spartan room in Hridaya Kunj at Sabarmati Ashram

struggle. That is why it is also called Satyagraha Ashram. It was from the Sabarmati Ashram on 12th March 1930, that Mahatma Gandhi started the famous Dandi March with his companions to protest against the British Salt Law.

At the ashram, Mahatma Gandhi started a school that gave priority to manual labour, agriculture, and literacy, which he considered essential for self-sufficiency. During the freedom struggle, the government seized the property. Mahatma Gandhi decided to disband the ashram and it became deserted as large numbers of his followers were jailed. But some local citizens decided to preserve the ashram to keep alive the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. But he could not return to the ashram as he was assassinated in January 1948. Presently, the ashram provides



Sidi Saiyyed's Mosque



The back of Sidi Saiyyed's Mosque, with the *jaali* work



A closer look at the *jaali* work (mesh work)

detailed information about Mahatma Gandhi, his life, activities, companions and followers etc. The house where Mahatma Gandhi lived, called Hridaya Kunj, shows the simple life Gandhi led. The room where he used to work on the spinning wheel (*charkha*) is preserved with its *charkha*. Also, other belongings of Gandhi can be seen at Hridaya Kunj and in other sections of the ashram. The Vinoba Kutir and Mira Kutir are also part of the ashram. The ashram library is quite rich. There is a training centre too, where people learn various crafts.

Sidi Saiyyed's Mosque

This is a small but very famous mosque in Ahmedabad. The mosque was built in 1573 by Sidi Saiyyed, who was a slave of Sultan Ahmed Shah. The architecture of the mosque is unique, consisting of arches. Very well known is the stone latticework done on the windows, which are almost semicircular. The latticework is commonly called *jaalis* (mesh work). It is believed that it took six years to get the *jaalis* completed through the continuous effort of 45 stone artistes. The mosque is considered to be the last major piece of architecture made by the rulers of the Gujarat Sultanate. The mosque is still in use and prayers are offered five times a day.

One of the *jaalis* is considered a symbol of love and friendship. When dignitaries visit the mosque, a small replica of the *jaali* is presented. When Queen Elizabeth visited Ahmedabad with Jawaharlal Nehru, a replica was presented to her. Visitors can purchase small replicas of the *jaali* from nearby souvenir shops. The same *jaali* has been used to create the logo of the prestigious Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

Calico Textiles Museum

The Calico Museum is another well-known place in Ahmedabad. The museum was established by Gautam Sarabhai



A part of the mosque with its fine art work on stone

and his sister Gira Sarabhai in 1949. It is considered to be one of the best museums of textiles, globally. One can see a large collection of fabrics from different corners of India. The collection kept in the museum includes religious clothes, to those which were used by rulers on different occasions. For example, there are dresses used by Moghul rulers and also the ones used by



The Calico Textiles Museum

the regional and provincial rulers. In addition to textiles and dresses, there are various other items in the museum such as those used for temple decoration and furniture.

There are various other monuments and buildings in Ahmedabad. Recently, the banks of River Sabarmati have been developed and decorated beautifully with gardens, lights, walkways etc. Earlier, the river used to dry up in summer. But now, the water from the Narmada River reaches Sabarmati and the river remains full through the year, although some experts consider the arrangement un-sustainable.

Navaratri, Makar Sankranti and Diwali are major festivals celebrated in Ahmedabad. On the occasion of Makar Sankranti there is the famous kite flying. The markets and streets come alive, and kites in different colours and sizes are sold and other

festivities are organised. Navaratri is another important festival, where *garba* dance is arranged at many places all over the city with the young and old dressed in ethnic clothes participating in large numbers. People prepare for *garba* competitions for weeks.

Ahmedabad was the centre of the cotton industry during the Sultanate and continued to be so even later. In the 19th century, the city became an industrial hub. The first mill was established by Rancholal Chotalal in 1859. There was a time when there were 80 mills in the city. However, in recent years, many of them have closed. Also, Ahmedabad has been famous for gold jewellery, copper, brass items and wooden articles. Cloth embroiderers of Ahmedabad are well known for bead and mirror works.

The hare and the dog

There is an interesting story about the history of Ahmedabad. The story is that once Sultan Ahmed Shah noticed that a little hare was chasing a big wild dog on the bank of the Sabarmati River. To understand the significance of the unusual incident, he inquired from a spiritual leader. The learned person explained that the land was unique and people of the area had rare qualities. Ahmed Shah was very impressed and he decided to make that place the capital of Gujarat Empire. Thus, the city was established and he named the city Ahmedabad.

Getting there

Ahmedabad is connected by air with Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Patna, Srinagar, Vadodara and Bangalore. Ahmedabad is also connected through international flights. Ahmedabad is conveniently connected by fast trains with Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Agra, Bhopal, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Porbandar. Also, road connections are good and there are regular luxury buses from different cities to Ahmedabad. Taxis are available in plenty. The best period to visit Ahmedabad is winter, between November and March. Summers are hot.



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- **जोखीम संरक्षण:** खालीलपैकी जे अधिक असेल ते आणि लॉयल्टी अॅडिशन (जर असेल तर)
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 - b. वार्षिक हप्त्याच्या 10 पट; किंवा
 - c. मृत्यूच्या तारखेपर्यंत भरलेल्या सर्व हप्त्यांचे 105%
- **मुदतपूर्ती लाभ:** मूल विमा रक्कम अधिक लॉयल्टी अॅडिशन (जर असेल तर)
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IRDA जनतेला स्पष्ट कळवीत आहेत की • IRDA किंवा तिचे अधिकारी हे कोणत्याही प्रकारच्या विम्याची किंवा वित्तीय उत्पादनांची विक्री किंवा प्रीमियमची गुंतवणूक अशा कामांमध्ये सहभाग घेत नाहीत. • IRDA कोणताही बोनस जाहीर करत नाहीत. अशा प्रकारचे कॉल येणाऱ्या लोकांना अशी विनंती करण्यात येते की त्यांनी फोन कॉल, नंबर अशा तपशीलांसह पोलिसांकडे तक्रार नोंदवावी.

विमा ही आपणाची विषयवस्तू आहे.
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नियम आणि अटीच्या तपशीलवार माहितीसाठी विक्री संबंधित पुस्तिका काळजीपूर्वक वाचा.

जीवनाच्या सोबतही,
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भारतीय आयुर्विमा महामंडळ
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GANDHINAGAR

The famous Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar

GANDHINAGAR, the new capital of Gujarat, is about 32 km from Ahmedabad, on the western side of Sabarmati. The city is linked with Ahmedabad by a wide road, with almost straight alignment. Earlier, Gujarat's capital was Ahmedabad. But the city was congested and Gandhinagar presented a striking contrast with broad avenues, full of greenery. In 1960, Ahmedabad was made the capital of Gujarat state. The new capital city was planned and named after Mahatma Gandhi as Gandhinagar. Construction work began in 1965 and the secretariat started functioning there in 1970.

It is India's second properly planned city after Chandigarh. Planning for Gandhinagar was done by architect H.K. Mewada, and his assistant Prakash M. Apte. Mewada and Apte had worked with the famous French architect, Le Corbusier, who designed the city of Chandigarh. They utilised their experience in planning Gandhinagar. The city streets are numbered, with cross streets named after the Gujarati alphabet letters. Various streets cross every one kilometre. The crossings have traffic circles which help in controlling the traffic speed.

In the centre of the city in Sector 10, there are the state

legislature building and government offices. Vithalbhai Patel Bhavan, a magnificent building completed in 1982 houses the Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha). Adjoining the Assembly, there are two multi-storeyed buildings housing government offices. There are 30 sectors in the city. Every sector has been planned in a way that it is self-sufficient with shopping and community centers, schools, health centres, government quarters and private houses. There are large parks, recreational areas and wide boulevards with trees.

Akshardham Temple

Although Gandhinagar is a new city, it has a few tourist attractions. Most famous is the Akshardham Temple of the Swaminarayan sect. The temple is spread over a large area. The main temple is an elaborately carved building constructed with pink sandstone. It is claimed that 6,000 tonnes of stone was utilised for the temple. The entire building has beautiful carvings and it is surrounded by manicured lawns, large numbers of trees and several beautiful fountains. It is said that about 1,000 artisans worked there for years to complete the structure. The temple runs a laser show which is quite attractive and well-planned.



Model of a dinosaur and; (inset) fossils of dinosaur eggs at the Indroda Park

Indroda Park

Indroda Dinosaur and Fossil Park is another place of interest in Gandhinagar. It is spread over 400 hectares on the banks of the Sabarmati River. The park is famous for dinosaur models and dinosaur fossils, and also includes a zoo, a large botanical garden, an amphitheatre, an interpretation center and camping facilities. Skeletons of marine mammals and other animals are kept there. The botanical garden is quite rich with large varieties of plants.

The Wilderness Park has birds, reptiles, and also blue bulls, langurs, peafowls etc.

The Indroda Park is called India's Jurassic Park, as it has a large collection of eggs, bones etc., of dinosaurs. Also, there are large numbers of life size models of different types of dinosaurs. There is such a focus on dinosaurs because Gujarat areas, especially Rahioli in Kheda district, have widespread distribution of dinosaur fossils, suggesting extensive presence of dinosaurs in this area in the past.



The entrance to Adalaj step well



Inside the rooms and verandah of the Adalaj step well



Wooden blocks for cloth printing at the Craftsmen's Village

Adalaj step well

Adalaj Vav or step well is located between Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, a little away from the main road. The well provided water to travellers and pilgrims in the past. The well has four levels. Water was available there all through the year. The inside rooms and verandahs worked as air-conditioned spaces during the harsh summer. The well was built in 1499 by the ruler Mahmud Begada for Queen Rani Roopba, wife of Veer Singh of Vaghela dynasty. Though construction was started by Veer Singh, he was killed in a war soon after. Subsequently, Mahmud Begada completed the task. Built in Indo-Islamic style, the stone structure has intricate carvings.

Craftsmen's Village

Close to Gandhinagar, on the banks of Sabarmati, there is a village, Pethapur. The village is known for colourful *bandhani* saris. Wooden blocks for cloth printing were produced there with intricate designs and exported to different places in India and abroad. Cloth printing is done in different places even now, using the wooden blocks made there.

The beautiful garden named Sarita Udyan in Sector 9 is another place visited by many, especially on weekends.



Pottery items in an exhibition at Pethapur village

Getting there



People generally reach Gandhinagar via Ahmedabad, although Gandhinagar has its own rail link. People coming by road can reach Gandhinagar directly too. ■

The writer is Director-Scientific (retd.) in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi.

Our Last Six Issues

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इस उत्सवी मौसम को "जश्न" में बदलें और आकर्षक छूट का लाभ उठाएं. आइए, हमारे झंझटमुक्त ऋणों से ढेर सारी शॉपिंग की योजना बनाइए. आपके त्यौहार को यादगार बनाने का निश्चित ही एक बेहतरीन तरीका.

31 दिसम्बर 2015 तक वैध.



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हमारे ऋण ऑफर एवं सेवाओं के बारे में और अधिक जानकारी के लिए हमारी नजदीकी शाखा से सम्पर्क करें.

I am Special. so are you !

Imagine just how boring life would be
If Mother Nature believed in UNIFORMITY?!

All living beings the same in colour and shape
The ant and the ape!
A leopard and a bear!!
A watermelon and a pear!!!
The leaves on every tree...
The fish in every sea...
And hey, maybe even you... and me!!!

Eeeeeeks!!! Wouldn't life be a shame
If everything looked...felt...smelt...
Exactly ...the SAME!!

Thank God, we all have our own shapes and sizes
With different looks, talents... surprises
Each with a special strength...or a weakness
I guess that's what gives us our uniqueness!

I've got friends who are fat and friends who are tall
Friends who are skinny and some who are small

Friends who wear glasses or use a wheelchair
And those with braces or funny things in their hair!!!

Some who are brainy, ahead of the rest
Scoring superbly in every test
Some are winners in other ways
In music...dancing...painting...or on sports days...

Then, there are others who might not win any prizes
But watch out, they too are full of surprises
That's because each of us is one of a kind
Specially created...specially designed...

We each have a purpose, each have a role
Each with a dream, each with a goal
We each are different, special... rare
Each an answer to a special prayer...

So love who you are, in life have an aim
Be happy to be special not boringly same
Be who you are ...Do what you do
We are all really special...coz I am I. And you are YOU!!!!

(This poem was written for Trinayani by Vanessa Ohri. Trinayani is a registered NGO working towards generating awareness on Cross Disability Issues and creating equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Do visit the website - www.trinayani.org - to watch the "I am Special, so are you" film.)



FACE TO FACE *with Sharmila Biswas*

(Continued from page 22)

How has your own learning been enhanced through *Aparkaya*?

I had started interacting with the members of Weavers' Service Centre, Bhubaneswar. Through their guidance, I could get in touch with the weavers of Nuapatna, and Mayurbhanj in Odisha. In Odisha, the weft is called *tani* which are lines of threads without design. The warp is the *bharani*, meaning filling up. Warp has the design. Weavers compare life with *tani* and life's experiences with *bharani*.

You also make a reference to the horse. Please explain.

The most important *puja* of the weavers is *Ghora navami*. *Ghora* or horse symbolises speed, in their context, power and productivity. In Nuapatna, I saw for the first time the technical details of the loom, the beautifully shaped instruments the weavers use, and the way they move as they work with the threads and the cloth. For them, the designs are not merely shapes and colours, they are almost animate. The weavers communicate through them.

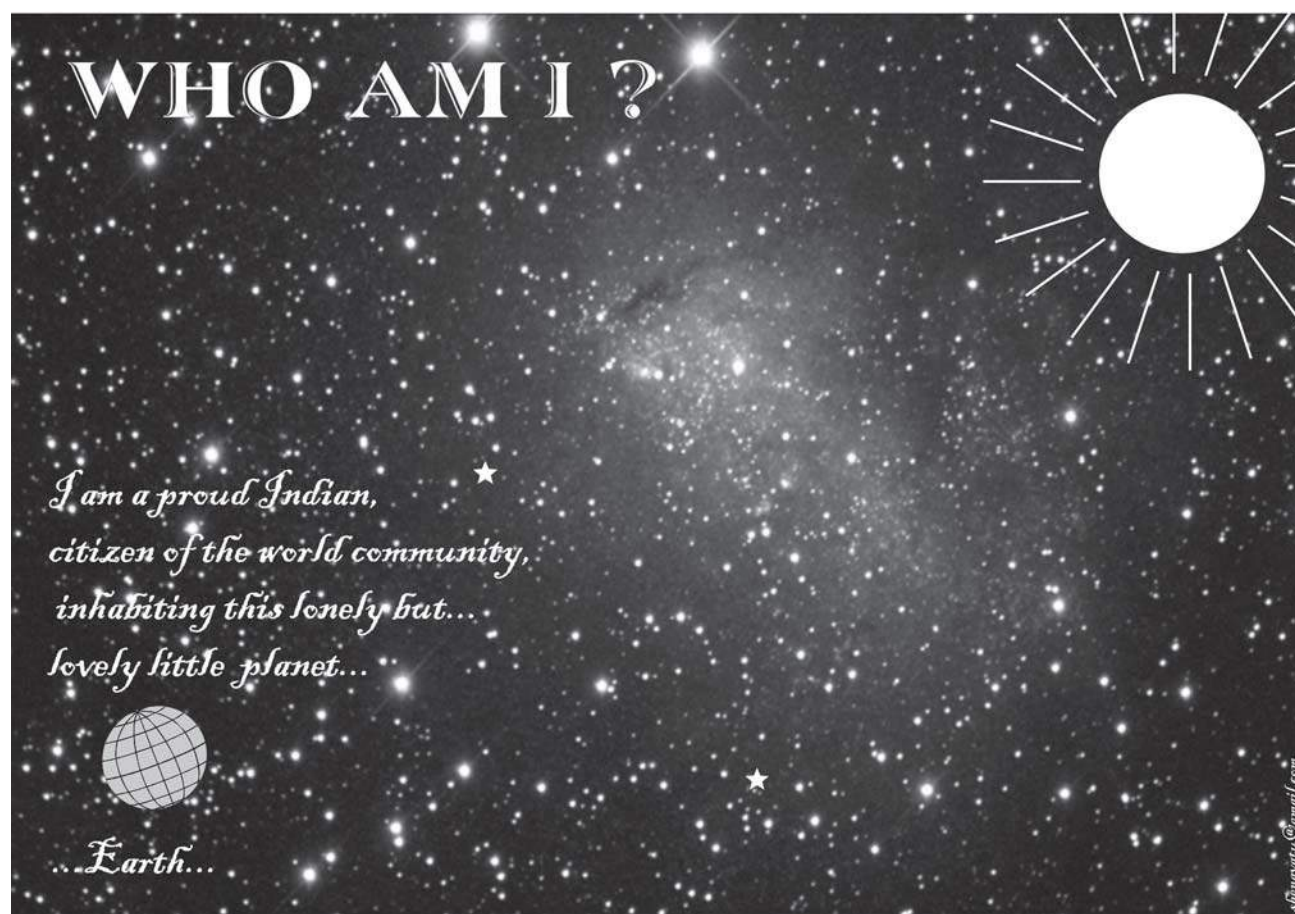
How did the weaving of the weavers attract you to create a dance performance based on this?

During my field research into the weavers' villages in Odisha



A performance of *Aparkaya*

and from my interactions with them, I realised that these weavers not only weave pliable pieces of cloth, but they also weave stories. You can extract and incorporate the movements of the warp and the woof into dance movements within the performance. *Aparkaya* is a performance that also makes fluid, aesthetic and creative use of textiles along with the dance, which adds not only a different dimension to the performance, but also adds vibrancy and colour to it. ■



Getting older, and better

Care of the elderly, especially of those with asthma or chronic lung disease, is a much-neglected area of medicine. There are also unnecessary taboos which further complicate their lives. Dr. Sujeet Rajan discusses the issues critical for good geriatric care and explains the urgent need for organised palliative care in India.

SNEHLATA Chopra is 88 years old, has chronic asthma, acid-reflux, is a bit overweight, has an occasional irregular cardiac rhythm, cancer of the breast in the past, glaucoma in both eyes, and anxiety. She manages to move around her home without support, and occasionally steps out in a chauffeur-driven car for an outing. Two maids employed at home (one for cooking, and one for cleaning the house) have been instructed by her daughter to always keep an eye on her. She is very careful about all her medication, extremely sensitive to any changes in doses, and expresses concern whenever I prescribe anything new – believes she will react to it adversely.

I refrain from doing so.

But I requested her to use a walking stick last week while walking inside her (fairly large) living room, negotiating a couple of sofa sets and other furniture. She looked at me as though I was out of my mind. Smiling at her daughter, she said I wish there was a solution to my problems of reflux and breathlessness.

I persisted on the walking stick.

Her daughter changed the topic. “We have enough servants in the house, Dr. Rajan. Don’t ‘stress’ mummy on that now”.

I realised it was now futile. The walking stick was actually a stress for the mother. I didn’t want to add to her already ever-increasing stresses.

Why is the walking stick taboo?

While walking at home last week, Mrs. Chopra had a fall, fracturing her hip. She is likely to be laid up for at least the next 3 to 6 months. She is miserable. So is her family. There is also a 30% chance she will never be able to walk again.

Her daughter text messaged me last week, “Hi Dr, am still in hospital with mummy, hope she gets better soon, but there are so many problems now with her, cannot bear to see her suffer”.

Such situations are not uncommon in India, where using a walking stick seems to be a taboo for many elderly people. One lady (with chronic lung disease) discharged from the hospital two months ago, and advised by me to walk regularly with a physiotherapist’s help, returned for follow-up a week later on a wheel-chair. When I asked her what made her do that, she replied “I was too tired to walk today, but I walk regularly with the physiotherapist’s support at home”. I asked her why not use a walking stick? She smiled at her son who had accompanied her. Her son sheepishly replied that his mother was too embarrassed to use one. I immediately retorted that she had come to the clinic in a wheel-chair. Wasn’t that worse? He looked at his mother and duplicated what I said in Gujarati (which I am not fluent with). She mumbled something back. He looked at me with a half-smile and

said “That’s ok with her”.

Atul Gawande in his masterpiece book, *Being Mortal*, has highlighted how doctors have completely failed in looking after elderly patients well, or may I add, *well enough*. We seem to be using technology well to prolong lives and increase longevity, but fail to understand situations where it’s not technology, but common sense and simple solutions that will give many of our elderly a much better *quality* of life, in their final years.

Keeping an elderly sick patient (with end-stage lung disease) comfortable

A 74-year-old lady, Sheela Vora, with chronic end-stage lung disease on home oxygen for the past two years presented to our hospital emergency service. Her husband was counselled by the earlier doctor she had seen that should she get worse, he would not advise invasive ventilation. (Invasive ventilation refers to putting a tube down the patient’s throat into the windpipe, and attaching that tube to a ventilator. It is very uncomfortable for a conscious patient, making it almost impossible to talk, or eat food the normal way).

Our hospital emergency response team seeing her extremely uncomfortable and gasping for breath, placed the tube into her windpipe immediately and transferred her to ICU (Intensive Care Unit) for ventilation. Her husband just kept

saying, "Please make her comfortable. She has been suffering so much..." He (and his wife) were at the mercy of the hospital emergency response team.

When I saw her a few hours later in the ICU, I asked him why he brought her to us for invasive ventilation. She was very sick at home on oxygen, she was unlikely to survive this episode with any reasonable quality of life, and the family was middle-class – this ICU stay was going to cost a bomb.

What the husband then said was pertinent – "Our doctor whom we trust had surely told us not to ever put Sheela on a ventilator when she gets worse"..... but then his voice trailed off. "But he didn't tell us *what exactly we need to do, should she get worse.....so we brought her here*".

Urgently needed - palliative care!

I know of just one palliative care specialist currently practising in Mumbai city, and we can't wait for more. As a physician community we need to get our act together on better palliative care, especially for our elderly sick patients.

Palliative care seems (for many) to be synonymous with cancer, but it is far from that. In a small district in Kerala called Mallappuram, some of the finest palliative care initiatives can be seen, done quietly and efficiently by a strong local community effort. In their definition, palliative care is all about keeping the patient comfortable. It could be just providing food to a patient with advanced disease who is unable to purchase it on his own, or providing an air-bed to a chronically bed-ridden patient to prevent bedsores and subsequent infection.

Keep yourself well as you age

Whether its walking sticks, palliative care or just understanding the problems of chronic lung disease, there are many other ways to improve the quality of life when you are old:

Media perception of chronic lung disease

In 2003, I was privileged to speak to, and hear Bartolome Celli, a respiratory physician in Boston, speak on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to doctors in Mumbai. Bart is originally from Venezuela, and is a lively person full of energy and wit. A press conference was organised before he delivered his talk on COPD. Here's how it went:

Journalist – "Professor Celli, what is COPD?"

Professor Celli – "Young man, do you know what SARS stands for?" (the Hong Kong epidemic of SARS was just underway having killed close to 300 people)

Journalists (almost in chorus) – "Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome"

Professor Celli – "Well done. Is anyone here aware about how many people have died of SARS?"

All 5 journalists knew the exact figure (plus or minus 3).

Professor Celli – "Wonderful guys, your knowledge on SARS is phenomenal to say the least. You know something – COPD kills about 50,000 Americans every year, and possibly 500,000 Indians every year. And you guys don't even know what it stands for! *You are the guys possibly responsible for these COPD deaths. We're just wasting our time here. Let's end this interview*". Bart told me later that this was the story of chronic lung disease – poor awareness by patients, poor management by doctors, poor communication with resultant disastrous physical, emotional and financial consequences for the patient and society at large.

To give some more examples:

- We can't stop the ageing of the human body and mind, but we can most certainly make it more manageable. Good foot care is extremely important in elderly people. Unclipped toe nails, swelling and poor hygiene can all promote foot infections – increase the risk of a fall.
 - Speak to your doctor about avoiding medication (like a diuretic for blood pressure) that is likely to cause dehydration.
 - Eat slowly. If you are very old, you will tend to occasionally choke more easily on food. Swallow with the head slightly bent downwards. It helps to reduce aspiration.
 - Aspiration is a common cause of pneumonia in very elderly patients. If you are very old, (and especially if you tend to have reflux problems), sleep with the head end of the bed slightly elevated, ideally to 30 degrees. Eat light and early dinners.
 - Vaccinate yourself after the age of 65 years against pneumonia.
- Remember, after 65, your body's immunity takes a dip, and your risk of getting hospitalised or dying of pneumonia increases multiple-fold.
- Importantly, also speak to your doctor about getting vaccinated against influenza every year. In Mumbai the peak flu season is from May to August, so the best time to take the flu shot (either injection in the arm, or by nasal spray) is in April. In Delhi which follows a continental climate, September may be more appropriate.
 - If you have access to a herpes zoster vaccine (not yet available in India), I would strongly recommend speaking to your doctor about that vaccine as well (post age 50).
 - Be as physically active as possible – if necessary, with a walking stick – studies have shown increased physical activity to correlate with an improved and longer quality of life. Increased physical activity also reduces acid reflux.

(Continued on page 49)

The thinking disabled

We may have laws to help the disabled in our country, but how effectively are they implemented on ground? With most government offices lacking even the basic ramp for disabled access, there seems to be a paucity of practical and empathetic thinking.

Dr. T.D. Rajan analyses the situation and tells us how life can be made just a bit easier for the disabled.

ONCE again, December 3 will arrive and there will be several press releases and media coverage about World Disability Day. World over, several events will take place and India is not the one to be left behind. According to the last census, the number of disabled in the country is about 2.1% of the population, although unofficial estimates say the number is much higher.

Among the five types of disabilities on which data has been collected, visual disability at 48.5% emerges as the top category. Others in sequence are: In movement (27.9%), mental (10.3%), speech (7.5%), and in hearing (5.8%).

The PWD Act of 1995

A lot has been written about the welfare of the disabled in India and several measures have been introduced both by the state as well as the central government from time to time. A large number of legislations have been introduced and several attempts have been made to ensure that the disabled are brought into the mainstream. The Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act was enacted in the year 1995 and Commissioners of Disability have been appointed in all States with specific work assigned to them to get the system started. A number of provisions have been meticulously laid out in the Act. For some time it was thought that the disabled will soon get the much awaited relief. Yet, 20 years down the line, it appears that these efforts have not

yielded tangible results.

The reality on the ground for an average disabled person is far from what our policy makers realise. Enacting laws for the welfare of this segment is just a minor event for the government. Getting any of the reliefs mentioned is a tiresome task for the person concerned, as well as his family.

Three major issues relating to the welfare of the disabled have been mentioned here, among a host of others, in order to illustrate how things actually work at the ground level.

Accessibility to government buildings

The elderly and disabled persons may need to visit government offices to enquire about various services intended for their welfare. Registration of property, making official applications, attending court matters etc., are situations where the disabled person cannot depute another person to get his/her job done. It is only at such times one realises that access to several government departments is difficult if the disabled person is not assisted by someone else.

The PWD Act 1995 in Chapter VIII with regards to non-discrimination of the disabled clearly mentions that ramps should be provided in public buildings. Although the Act was legislated 20 years ago, even today many handicapped people find it difficult to enter government offices.

One can very well understand that



The new RTO office at Andheri in Mumbai has no access for the disabled, a sign of government apathy

government offices constructed several decades before the Act came into existence, may take some time to make these modifications. However, even officials in-charge of newly constructed buildings have turned a blind eye to these provisions. To cite a specific example, the Regional Transport Office (RTO) at Andheri inaugurated their new "state-of-the art" building complex in 2013 (18 years after PWD Act) with much fanfare, but it appears that they forgot all about Chapter VIII!

When a disabled person tries to visit this office for getting his specially modified vehicle certified, he has to negotiate a flight of slippery, granite stairs with no hand-railings for support. Perhaps it is because the RTO office does not believe that the disabled can drive! When a disabled person cannot enter the building comfortably, how does he approach the officer concerned

to enquire about the procedure to procure a modified car for his independence?

Getting a prosthesis

For a physically disabled person, a caliper or a leather back support helps him/her to become mobile. Young men and women suffering from a physical disability requiring these appliances for support and stability, visit government hospitals which provide these free or at a nominal charge. In Mumbai, the central government agency – the All India Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Haji Ali – is relatively well equipped with staff and material. However, the centre is located in South Mumbai, whereas the major chunks of socio-economically lower and middle-income groups have shifted to the northwestern and eastern suburbs. Imagine people who cannot walk, board buses and trains, have to travel 20-40 km to reach this place!

The civic-run Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College at Sion in central Mumbai has a department of orthotics which is well staffed. According to patients visiting the department over the past few years, there is a perennial shortage of material and they are often turned away to private institutions to get their calipers or other appliances made. According to patients, the staff who appear to be genuinely helpful, claim helplessness due to bureaucratic delays in getting supplies.

This is yet another instance of bad management by the very government that enacts laws but forgets to implement it efficiently. The salary paid to the staff and the cost of maintaining premises which serves no use to the public, is a drain on the exchequer.

The government and the municipal corporation which is flush with funds for

all other purposes, find it difficult to provide for rehabilitating its unfortunate citizens. If this is the state of affairs in *urbs prima in Indis*, then God help the people in other places!

Getting a modified vehicle

Two-wheelers are the cheapest mode of transport for the physically disabled. As the disabled driver cannot balance it, a side-car needs to be fixed from some private workshop. In the past, the traffic authorities were registering such vehicles, which are not being done lately, putting a lot of genuine people to grave discomfort.

Fortunately for the physically disabled persons now, cars are being modified to enable them to drive and become independent. Depending on the nature and severity of the disability, extra fittings are available for manipulating the accelerator, brake and clutch as well as for easy steering. These fittings were, until 2004, available in factory-fitted cars manufactured by Maruti-Suzuki only and could be ordered by submitting the requisite documents. Once the vehicle was obtained, it was marked 'Invalid Carriage' in the dealer's records, enabling easy registration with the RTO.

Today, with Maruti-Suzuki stopping production of this segment, the entire exercise has become very difficult for one who needs it. Now, regular cars have to be purchased from the market and RTO permission has to be sought for modifying it. Then the car has to be given to private agencies to get the fittings installed, and finally it has to be taken for ratification to the RTO. All these procedures have become extremely cumbersome, time-consuming and painstaking, with the officers concerned showing scant interest in the difficulties of the applicant.

During the process, it is observed that the inspectors themselves are not aware of the procedure, sending the hapless applicant on a wild goose chase!

Conclusion

Like all other laws in our country, we suffer from an 'implementation paralysis'. Law remains on paper, whereas the person in-charge of implementing it is either unaware or disinterested. In order to remedy this situation, the Commissioner of Disabilities in each district should conduct sensitisation programmes to empathise with the needs of the disabled. They should be trained to go out of their way to help the applicant. Organisations working in the field of disability should be regularly tapped and involved with the officials to work out better ways of ensuring that the clauses mentioned in the PWD Act becomes meaningful to the people for whom it is meant.

It is important for both the policy makers in high offices as well as for the bureaucrats to realise that it is better to provide better facilities to the handicapped and make him socially and financially independent, rather than give him financial sops and make him/her lean on others.

Finally, each and every individual, not just the government officials, should buck up and take these issues seriously, for, potentially, anyone could meet with an accident and end up with some disability! ■

The writer is a senior skin and sexually transmitted diseases specialist, practising in Mumbai. He advises pharmaceutical companies on drug branding, promotion and marketing. He is a writer on social topics



in the print and electronic media, as well as in pharmaceutical magazines. Dr. Rajan is also an hon. consultant to ONGC, Larsen & Toubro and Air India.

Climate change in Paris

A besieged Paris will host the climate change conference on the cusp of December. Will the countries – developed and developing – work together to help this planet and its inhabitants, instead of playing the blame game? Dr. Chandani Bhattacharjee hopes so.

THE countdown to the Conference Of Parties (COP) 21, 2015, will begin in a city reeling after the massive terrorist attack, which culminated in the declaration of a state of emergency shortly afterwards. Paris will be host to COP21, a meet organised at the behest of a world suffering from the undue accumulation of greenhouse gases, and grappling under the impact of climate change. The meet is a fallout of the Rio Earth Summit (1992) which resulted in the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the 11th Session of the Meeting of Parties, Kyoto Protocol, 1997. The Convention has membership of 195 nations who will participate in the Paris Convention, also called the 'Paris Climate Change Conference'.

The aim of this gathering of nations is largely to assess the climate change directions followed in the respective nations and the onus taken to deliver global emission reduction. The larger aim in the Paris Convention is to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C.

France's dilemma

The current geopolitical dilemma in which France finds itself may be far from encouraging. Known as one of the few European countries to have participated in the Syrian war, France perhaps is being targeted for its strong anti-fundamentalist stand and is hence vulnerable. There are also possible dissenting voices which would be

heard at the conference from parties fighting climate justice, nongovernment organisations voicing aberrations in the policy, and civil society dissatisfied with the outcome of the united global efforts.

Terrorism apart, therefore, the conference needs to brace itself for many a differing opinion on the achievement of emission standards expected from participating countries. The distinct divide between the achievements of the Annex 1 countries and the others have already been the core point of dissent among the developed and the developing nations in the last few global meets including Rio 20+. Climate change has been a fancy in all discussions at the local, national and international levels for over a couple of decades. In the midst of all the global efforts, the world has moved into climatic severity, consistent rising temperatures, possibilities of submergence of landmasses along the sea lines and islands due to sea level changes, melting ice sheets and shrinkage of the polar ice at the Arctic and the Antarctic, severe summers and failing winters, relentless cloudbursts and snowfalls, and overall changes to the flora and fauna of regions. Indirectly too, diseases have migrated with the tropical ailments moving to the cooler temperate areas as the carrier vectors have begun to move into the cooler areas. The question is, where does this end? Will these climate change impacts stop the moment united efforts are taken, or will this need a systematic, long drawn corrective measures to be

taken by the countries serious about emission reductions?

Not just an academic discussion

The idea of climate change needs to move away from just an academic discussion to include measures and controls which are free of polarising political ideologies, dogmatic scientific jargons and superficial claims of achievements, which countries tend to make at the annual COP meets. The reality of climate change, which is largely a natural earth phenomena of climatic alterations, have become accentuated due to destructive anthropogenic actions.

Responsible civil societies may just become the cornerstone in efforts to mitigate climate change impacts on the world. A conservative estimate pegs the world to be spending almost a billion dollars a day to combat climate change (based on a study by the Climate Policy Initiative). As the data sheets get prepared by participating countries and debates are prepared to be fought in conference halls, the outcome that we will arrive at, will decide the future of six billion people. ■

The writer is an academican, environmentalist and a naturalist. She is currently working as an Assistant Professor at H.R. College of Commerce and Economics, Mumbai. Her core areas of research include water pollution, solid waste management and environmental ethics.



Positive strokes

*The Indian art market which crashed following a global recession in 2008, is showing signs of revival with support from art connoisseurs. **Prakash Bal Joshi** surveys the art scene today.*

THE bubble around the Indian art market burst way back in 2008 along with the crash of the world economy. It was really a big blow to the Indian art market, which was witnessing a rise in valuation year after year since the time the Indian economy began liberalising.

The boom before the bust

Experts are now wondering whether the boom in the Indian art market was good and did it do any service to the art scene, or did it just upset and fail to evolve a more enlightened and stable art market? How much did it help artists who were exposed to trends in international art scenes due to the availability of new technology? The kind of valuation their works got during this boom time was never expected. The trend certainly helped a few artists to reap a rich harvest, but in the larger terms, such a trend did not help the art scene. During the boom time, several

new galleries mushroomed in art hubs in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad adding few more emerging markets like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kochi, Jaipur and Chennai.

Apart from a few influential high end buyers of art in India, new entities from the corporate world as well as government establishments also entered the art scene supporting contemporary art. A few auction houses also opened up and a few mutual funds dedicated to art were also floated. Some of them unfortunately fared badly due to fluctuations in the art market and lack of continued support from the corporate world. What damaged the stability of the art market in India was the skewed way in which valuation of a few contemporary art got from the over enthusiastic buyers. Art works by a few which were priced moderately at ₹ 2-3 lakhs up to 2002, suddenly got a spurt, and by the time the bubble peaked around 2008, the price tags these



A painting by the iconic Amrita Sher-Gil

works carried was to the tune of ₹ 20 to ₹ 25 lakhs. The trend also attracted people who were not serious about their art, but wanted to take advantage of the rising trend, open new galleries, promote select artists and expose them to the international market. Once the bubble burst by the end of 2008, there was lack of support for new initiatives for a further push, not only in terms of price, but even opportunities for exhibiting new works.

Initially, the trend was very decisive, it hampered the growth of the art market in India, pulled down the prices, drained the market of art buyers, some of the galleries vanished from the scene, all those who were there for taking benefit of the growth were driven out, those who were not serious and committed to their creative works also walked out. Those who were there even before the boom period, continued to do their work silently, waiting for better days to arrive.



A recent painting by the writer under the series "Mindscape," exhibited at the Jehangir Art Gallery in October 2015



The Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, offers affordable space for artists to exhibit, but has a long waiting period

Lack of public art galleries in cities

The shock received in 2008 was not an isolated incident, but it also affected the art world all over and brought down valuation, as well as size and hype of international art biennials, which were also reduced considerably. The situation has improved since then. The China art market share has increased tremendously as compared to USA and European art markets. But somehow, the Indian market is taking its own time to improve. Except for a few established artists, middle level as well as emerging artists find it very difficult to expand their reach and exposure in art hubs. Unfortunately, despite six decades of freedom, we do not have a stable museum system. The number of public galleries in the country is not at all adequate to take care of the growing fraternity of artists in the country. There are so many art schools in the country producing artists year after year, but not many public spaces where they can exhibit their creations. The Mumbai-based Jehangir Art Gallery offers

affordable space for artists of all categories, but one has to wait for five to six years for their turn to exhibit art works. So many smart cities are coming up, so many cities are undergoing urbanisation for upgradation of civic infrastructure, but unfortunately, there is no thought for public spaces for art. Just putting some art works at the airports is not enough, art has to become part of urban life.

Rajendra, editor of "Indian Contemporary Art Journal" and organiser of India Art Festival in Mumbai feels that it may take some time to reach the levels of art pricing in 2008. But that does not mean that there is no upward growth in India art market. There may not be any frenzy in art buying, but considered art buying with due diligence is happening. This is a healthy sign and will help the art market in the long run.

There is selective buying happening silently, supporting contemporary Indian art where established as well as emerging artists are being considered by individuals as well as the corporate world. The number of auctions has also been increasing. Pundole Art Gallery, one of Mumbai's prominent art galleries has been conducting auctions along with Saffron's occasional auctions. International auction houses like Christie's also conduct high-profile auctions in Mumbai. There is no paucity of high spending buyers in India, but there is lack of art infrastructure to take the Indian art market to the next level.

Good response abroad

The kind of response Indian masters are getting in international auctions is also quite encouraging. Indian artists have also started participating in a big way in art events in emerging art hubs in gulf countries, including Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Three works by Amrita Sher-Gil, considered to be a pioneer of modern Indian art have been sold in international auctions for \$2.5m. V. S. Gaitonde, whose abstracts have attracted international auction houses, is also doing wonders at such art events. Recently, one of his works was sold for ₹ 45 crores. Amrita's work has been declared as national treasure and cannot be taken out of India. Since there is not much art work available outside India, whatever is available is fetching high value.

The universal language of abstraction is also not new to India. Using traditional abstract forms of expression on canvas, Indian art has acquired international recognition. As a result, Indian masters are being appreciated by major art auction houses, curators and art lovers all over the world. Other prominent Indian artists like Jogen Chowdhry, Bhupen Khakhar, F.N. Souza, are dominating art auctions world over. It is not only multi-million tag which is being talked about in Indian art abroad, but consistency with which Indian art is dominating discussions and debates about art in any forum. The total auction market size of Indian art has jumped from \$5 million in 2003 to nearly \$ 200 million in the art market.

The support base of Indian art has been growing in the last decade. Apart from some business houses, government agencies, and rich royal families, discerning Indian middle class which also benefited from the economic growth in the last decade, has been supporting Indian art in a big way. The Indian art market is slowly looking up

with a new set of emerging artists and art collectors. ■



The writer is a Mumbai-based journalist and artist.

What have you resolved for 2016?

A step at a time, leads to giant strides, says G. Venkatesh, as he urges everyone to make even a single lifestyle change and stick to it, for the benefit of Mother Earth, our only home. He suggests many options on the cusp of year 2016.

NEW Year Resolutions. Are they, by and large, mere talk which will never be walked consistently for 365 (or 366) days of the year? No harm however in proposing some, readers may wish to pick from and add on to those they may already have decided upon. He and she, here and there...small drops will end up making a big lake, if not an ocean. And a noticeably large lake is often the small step which begins a long journey (to quote Mao Tse Tung).

Resolutions 2016

- How about trying to consciously reduce your water consumption daily. It is not as daunting as it seems after all. For instance, is it very difficult to remember not to throw the little extra drinking water remaining in your glass down the drain (which I have seen many Indians do), but rather pour it into potted plants you may have in your balcony or garden, or simply add it to the soil and replenish the ground water beneath? Be aware. A little bit of paranoia in the beginning is okay. Water-saving habits would become second nature, eventually.
- How about feeding birds (a handful of rice or wheat; and a bowl of cold water) daily. You could add on to this good deed, by feeding one or two stray dogs everyday as well. Remember that we are their tenants on Mother Earth!
- How about making it a point to walk at least 15 kilometres every week. Seems long, but then small steps do add up. Try resisting the urge to get your car out of your garage or to crank your two-wheeler, when you know you could actually walk it down to get the needful tasks done. You may own a vehicle, but it does not necessarily mean that you need to

use it everytime. Riding two-wheelers and driving cars may have become a norm, but you can reverse it. Be a trendsetter. Your health will improve; and you will also contribute your mite to climate change concerns that are worrying people all around.

- How about donating a little money every month (even ₹ 100-200 would do), to some genuine charitable cause – could be environmental upkeep or education of poor children, for instance.
- How about waking up every morning and spending 5 minutes praying for peace and harmony on the surface of the earth. You could appeal to the Supreme Power you believe in – God, Allah, Waheguru, Lord Ram or simply something unknown and unseen which you believe rules over all of us. Science and technology after all, have their limitations.
- How about being fully aware of what you need and what you want; and try to fulfill the needs and minimise the wants? Try to be resource-light, as much as possible, whenever possible.
- Use both sides of every sheet of paper you use at home, school, college or office. Having done that, ensure that you deposit the used paper at your local raddiwala, ensuring thereby that it will reach a paper mill and be recycled. Well-used, responsibly-recycled, and also some money gained, to boot! This money could be channeled to a charitable cause.
- How about enabling the spread of knowledge by gifting a good book on science to a school kid in your neighbourhood every three months.
- How about consciously reducing your consumption of meat gradually. Health and environment will both benefit.
- How about gradually giving up your

smoking habit (in case you are a smoker)...not just for your health which will improve, but you will not have to feel responsible for being the cause of passive-smoking-related disorders you trigger in family members, friends and even total strangers. Money not directed to the cigarette manufacturers could very well be channeled into buying a book!

Too many, too soon? Enough to put you off? Well, take your pick. Even one of these will do. By the end of the year, that would have become a part of you, a defining feature of your personality. Then take another one for 2017, a third one for 2018 and so on....ensuring that what has become second nature at the end of every year, remains so. The cumulative good effect on the individual, family, society, town, state, country and the world eventually, will be discernible at the end of the decade! It is easy actually to clearly decipher the socio-economic-environmental benefits of a clutch of these resolutions. However, let these not languish on paper. You should be courageous enough to judge yourself on your success in resolving and following suit. Quite like the first few deliveries faced by even the best of batsmen, anything new can be challenging indeed. You get set eventually, and build on the foundation you set for yourself. The team benefits. Here, it is Team Homo Sapien, and the playground is Mother Earth! ■



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The world at her feet

The toe ring is an essential accessory of married women in many cultures in India. But today it's getting as popular with unmarried girls, and even men! Shoma A. Chatterji examines the appeal this ring holds and the health benefits attributed to it.

*Dayyare dayyare chadh gayo paapi
bicchua
Hai hai mai mar gayee koi utaro
bicchua*

THESE are the first two lines that pay a music-and-dance tribute to the toe ring commonly known as the *bicchua* in Hindi. The song is from Bimal Roy's biggest commercial hit *Madhumati* and the dance was performed by none other than one of the best classical dancers who graced the Hindi screen – Vyjayanthimala. The lyrics however, are a misnomer as the second line – “Someone please take off my *bicchua* before I die,” is wrong, because no one can take off the toe ring from a girl's toes once she has worn it. The other cinematic liberty taken with custom is that only married women could wear the *bicchua* at least during the time presented in the film. The third surprise is that you do not quite get to see the dancer wearing the *bicchua* because her feet are always away from the camera frame.

All this suggests how a simple bodily ornament can be used as an agency of mass entertainment that has posterity value, as the song is very famous till today, and so is the dance number accompanied by a beautiful chorus. The *bicchua* in the song is used as a metaphor or a symbol of femininity within the Indian milieu for the gypsy girl who sings and dances to the lines. This is perhaps the only Indian film that pays a celluloid tribute to the Indian woman in a different form.



A still from the film *Madhumati*, which featured the song *Dayyare dayyare*

The tale of the toe ring

There are many kinds of jewelry in the world in general, and in India in particular. Each one is made to beautify a part of the female body. This covers the head with the crown, forehead and hair parting with the *bindiya* or *tikli*, the ears with *jhumkas*, *studs* and *kaan* – covering the entire ear, the nose with nose rings, *nathnis* and nose studs, nostrils, armlets for the arms, *ratanchoor* for the fingers, the back of the palms and the wrists, etc. Indian women have been wearing toe-rings for hundreds of years. Originally, Hindu women of certain states would wear a large silver ring on the big toe of the left foot as one more symbol of marriage. They are not transferable. In other words, the married woman cannot remove the toe-ring from her toe and give it to another woman

while her husband is alive. Rajasthanis are rigid about this custom till this day.

Today, it is more of a fashion statement worn even in the West and among Indian young girls and women, on any toe over any form of dress, and it does not matter whether they are married, single or divorced. Styles and patterns have changed with respect to materials used, designs worn, kind of look and so on. But it is very much a part of contemporary Indian fashion, principally in urban, modern India.

Some literary sources trace back the use of the toe ring by women to Vedic times, say, around 500 BC. Sanskrit texts detail that toe rings fall within the ambit of the 16 traditional ornaments every woman needs to adorn herself with. Women from Rajasthan, U.P. and some parts of the south still consider the

toe ring as a mandatory accessory for a married woman. Toe rings have specific names depending on the ethnicity of the wearer: they are called *bicheeya* (pronounced bee-chee-ya) or *bicchua* in Hindi, *metti* in Tamil and *mettelu* in Telugu. Some sources indicate that in some cultures, men wear rings on their big toes as symbols of strength.

Mettelu and *Metti* are usually made of silver and are worn in pairs (unlike the trend in Western countries, where they are worn singly or in unmatched pairs,) on the second toe of both feet. Traditionally they are ornate, though more contemporary designs are now being developed to cater to the modern bride. Some *bicchua* sets may have pairs for four of the five toes, excluding the little pinky. *Bicchua*s may not be made of gold because gold holds a revered status and may not be worn below the waist by Hindus, but this is not followed very strictly and toe rings made of gold and diamonds are commonly seen.

Toe rings are increasingly becoming a part of men's fashion as well. Technically, a toe ring is a ring made out of metals or non-metals that is worn on a toe. Commonly it is worn on the second toe. Traditionally, it was supposed to have been worn on the big toe. These rings are seldom closed circles, but open hoops so that they can easily be removed.

Getting older, and better

(Continued from page 41)

- Ask a professional to see how he can make your home more safe from falls. Grab bars in the bathrooms and in lifts, go a long way. Even if you take adequate calcium and all kinds of medication for osteoporosis, remember if you fall, you are still very likely to fracture.
- If you are very old, check if someone can look up on you once in a while

The toe ring promotes health?

The toe ring is also said to bring health benefits. One school of thought believes that the toe rings press on certain nerves that link to the reproductive system and also maintain the healthy balance of the system. Another theory stems from the ancient Indian belief that one's *prana* or life force must be held in balance and all paths of one's *prana* run down to the toes. Some also say that a particular nerve in the second toe connects the uterus and passes through the heart. The constant friction this leads to while walking revitalises the reproductive organs in women. The common practice is that toe rings are made out of silver, never mind the design or the shape. Why silver of all metals? Because silver is a good conductor which absorbs energy from the polar energies of the earth and passes this on to the body, which refreshes the entire body and physical system of the woman who wears it.

In most Western countries, toe rings are a relatively new fashion accessory. They often ornament barefoot sandals, anklets, or flip flops. According to Hindus, gold should never be worn below the waist because gold is considered to have holy significance and is looked at with reverence. With time, people have done away with the taboo of wearing gold below the waist and cheerfully wear gold toe rings that look very pretty. These toe rings

are available in different styles and designs. With the gradually evolving fashion designs, painted glass toe rings are also available in the market. For those who favour toe rings that are more subdued, plain round rings are available in a variety of colors and metals. Toe rings can also come engraved with your name, or with various symbols. Toe rings are a part of every girl's summer attire, in different colors, styles and ornamental designs. Contemporary designs are now being developed to cater to the modern bride. Nowadays, toe rings are being developed or manufactured even in plastic and glass and other mundane metals like copper for its healing qualities. The trend of wearing them in pairs is fading away. Various newer fashionable designs for toe rings have come up for bridal wearing, and are available in sets of four or two or as desired. ■

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



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

– rather than employ a full-time nurse. It can go a long way in having a companion and someone you can talk to, and also having some connection to the outside world.

- If you are anxious, depressed or angry, get a psychologist or psychiatry consult. You may not need many drugs, and sometimes just talking about your fears and concerns can help.
- Always ask your doctor questions. Make a note of them in advance

to save time. Remember, as an old patient, it may take you more time to get into the doctor's clinic, and also leave the room. Inform the secretary in advance that you may need this extra time, and your appointment will be far



more valuable to you. ■

The writer is a Respiratory Physician at Bombay and Bhatia Hospitals in Mumbai.

The Ankiya-naat and Bhaona

Not many are aware of the the dance-drama form called Ankiya-naat and Bhaona of Assam. **Dr. Kanak Rele** demystifies this theatre form and tells us its genesis, evolution and current avatar.

THE state of Assam has played a very important role in the development of the dramatic tradition in the Northeast. The tradition that has emerged in this area from the 15th-17th centuries AD is the result of the all-pervading Vaishnava bhakti movement that swept not only this area but the entire country.

The message of Shankardeva

The history of the theatre in Assam can be termed as the history of Vaishnava theatre revolving around the institution of 'Sattras' (monasteries). This history is irrevocably amalgamated with the towering personality of Shankardeva who was responsible for transforming Assamese society in many ways. He became a monk and travelled extensively all over the country and imbibed the teachings and cultures of other regions, and finally returned to Assam to give a new message of Vaishnavism. This was the message that carried a singular protest against the superstitious and dogma-riddled sects engaged in Shakti worship. He was indeed a social reformer who pioneered cultural renaissance in Assam.

The Sattras were the vehicle of his movement, which became the venue and centre of religious, social and artistic activities. One of his most noteworthy artistic contributions is the dance-drama known as Ankiya-naat, its actual performance being called Bhaona, taking the tradition of classical Sanskrit theatre as his inspiration. His reasoning is very easy to understand –



An Ankiya-naat performance

there can be and should be a dramatic presentation that would please the common people but at the same time, could become a skillful medium for the propagation of his new Vaishnava faith based on Bhakti.

Shankardeva formulated different modes of displaying Bhakti towards the attainment of Liberation (*moksha*). He chose God's *leela* (divine sport) as the vehicle for listening, singing, chanting and enacting the goal of attaining the Absolute Brahman. Shankardeva composed a good number of Ankiya-naats which were replete with dance, music and dialogue to provide decent enjoyment to common people coming from different stratas of the society. He very successfully achieved his ultimate goal of invoking devotion towards God in the minds of simple people. The central theme of all the plays of

Shankardeva was always the glory and exploits of Lord Vishnu or Lord Krishna. A little digression to understand what is Sattras is necessary here. The Sattras are a manifestation of the Bhakti movement in Assam. It is conceived as a religious assembly or a monastic settlement. The concept of Sattras, as envisaged by Shankardeva appears to have its source in the Bhagavatapurana. But it must be remembered that the Sattras, rather than becoming a religious centre, became an all pervasive cultural happening.

The full-fledged Sattras

A full-fledged Sattras comprises a *naamaghar*, a *manikoota*, and *haatis*. The *naamaghar* is the congregational prayer hall and the *manikoota* is the sanctum or the *simhasana* (throne) of the Sattras at the extreme end of the *naamaghar*. The *haatis* are the living

quarters for the monks.

The *naamaghara* provides the venue for the theatrical performance; it is often called the Bhaona *ghara*. The *Sattri-adhikaaris* belong to both the Brahmin and non-Brahmin castes. The *naamaghara* is a rectangular structure with collapsible walls of bamboo. The floor-space is clearly demarcated for the orchestra, the actors, and the audience. The lighting is beautifully provided by sticking earthen lamps to the trunks of Kadali trees. Dramatic effects are provided by mobile torches.

There are two groups of musicians – one sitting on the right and the other on the left or one behind the other. They are called *gaaya* and *baayana* respectively. The groups enter the stage to the accompaniment of fire-works. The musicians enter behind a white screen called *Arkapor*, and take their respective positions to indicate the performance would now begin. Next come the *vaahini* and the *gurughata ghosha dhemaali* which set the artistic mood. The *sutradhar* enters (usually accompanied with dance); his entry is very rightly called *paatra-pravesha*.

The drama proper is one long sustained spectacle, wherein the *sutradhar* conducts and directs the play which is an amalgam of prose passages, recited verse, sung poetry and the dramatic element. There is a good amount of dancing involved wherein the circular dancing round Krishna is predominant and the musical content is really rich.

The dance technique is very well-



The Ankiya-naat stage setting

defined as in the case of classical dances with a judicious blend of *nritya* (non-representational dancing) and *nritya* (dancing, wherein words and sentiments are conveyed through physical movements).

After Shankardeva came another illustrious savant named Madhavadeva. Shankardeva's dramas were cast in multi-media and multi-dialect approach, whereas the plays of Madhavadeva are operatic in character and are more lyrical than dramatic. According to respected scholars, the *gaayana* (singing) and *baayana* (orchestra) add to the glamour of the presentation where the discerning members in the audience enjoy both, the spoken words as well as the dancing. And above all, the dramas are singular celebration of Krishna's name.

The vital role of music

These dramas are popularly called *Ankiya-naat*. The Bhaona performances can be called *naatakas* or more appropriately (in the contemporary parlance) dance-dramas, in which not only the spoken words but also music and dance have very important roles to play.

Assamese music has a special flavour and incorporates certain relevant features of Hindustani musical system. At the same time, there exists a distinct Assamese tradition which blends beautifully to result in a very distinct musical effect - the *bargeetas*. The *bargeetas* are all set to specified *raagas* and *taal*s. In the musical instruments there is the drum (*khol*) and, most importantly, the little cymbals (*manjeera*). There is also the *mridanga* (drum) made up of clay. Other percussion instruments are the *dundubhi*, *bheri*, *gomukha*, *pataaha* etc. There is also the use of stringed instruments like a simplified *veena* which resembles *ektara*.

The dance technique has an affinity with some styles from outside Assam.



A Bhaona performance

One can discern the influence of other Vaishnava dance practices employed in the temple. Also, there is intermingling of the elements of community folk and tribal dancing abounding in the region. Traditionally, the dancers are grouped into three different types of *bhangis* – *Sootra bhangi*, *Krishna bhangi* and *Gopi bhangi*. In certain passages one can find the sinuous rounded movements reminiscent of Manipuri dancing.

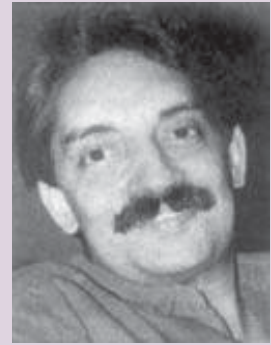
The costume, the models and stage props are used as décor and are typically Assamese with connections with Manipur, Vraj and some other parts of India. The most typical and elegant costume is that of the *sutradhar* who is dressed in immaculate white. He wears a long full skirt coming down to the ankles, a full-sleeved jacket which comes down to the waist. A broad band is tied to the waist over the lower and upper garments. Different *Sattras* use different types of *pagaris* (turbans). The costumes for Krishna and Balarama are very impressive and also suggestive in colours. The costumes of men enacting women's roles are carefully planned so as to create an acceptable illusion. ■



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Going, going... gone!

The rate of extinction of species on earth has never been as rapid as today. The irony is, we who have triggered this, will also be the worst hit. The time to act is now!



Bittu Sahgal
Editor, Sanctuary magazine

EARLY one morning, while paddling silently across the Nagar (snake) river in Karnataka, I looked up to find four huge, grey forms step gingerly out of the thick, green jungle. “*Haathi, haathi*”, whispered the boatman. It was cold and a wispy mist rose up like steam from the river. The elephants seemed almost ghost-like. I really marvel at how graceful, silent and quick elephants are, even in tangled jungles. There was a young bull among the four animals, his tusks less than a metre in length and no thicker than my arm. “I love you,” I said in my head to these magnificent beasts, “And how I wish I could promise that no harm will come to you.”

Sadly, I realised, elephants have a dim future ahead of them in India. Large tuskers are regularly killed for the value of their ivory and the great herds now have less and less place to roam, as their jungle homes are quickly being cut down, or partitioned off for farms, tea estates, railway lines, etc. Elephants are extremely useful animals. They scatter fruit seeds and thus help new trees to come up. Their huge bodies create ‘game trails’ which are used by deer and wild boar to migrate from one place to another. Their dung fertilises the soil. They also make waterholes by digging into the ground for water when the rains are late. More than most other animals, elephants need space, and more than most other animals, their available space is being squeezed. According to some naturalists, it’s only a matter of time before the great Asian elephant becomes extinct. What a loss that would be for India and the world!

India has an enormous variety of wild plants and animals. Sadly, its list of endangered species is also quite large. Why? Why is it that animals, which have survived on earth for millions of years, have suddenly started to vanish? As expected, the answer lies with man. As a species, we have become too aggressive. To make our lives temporarily comfortable we casually elbow out the countless small and large life forms which have, in fact, been responsible for the

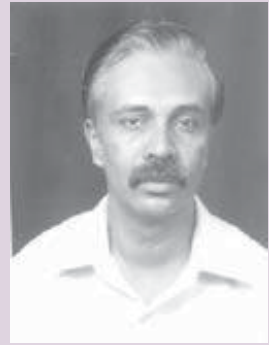
good health of our planet, all this while. Extinction however, has been a part of Nature’s plan from the moment life began on earth. The problem is, we have greatly speeded up the extinction process. Just before man, scientists suggest that extinctions used to take place every four years or so. Today, a plant or animal species is becoming extinct every day!

“But,” ask some people, “In a country where people are dying why do we need to save animals? So what if the lion or tiger becomes extinct? Will it really make a difference to human life?” In a word, “Yes.” Human life will suffer. It’s not that any one species is more important than another; it’s just that we must fight the growing trend towards mass extinction and this can only be done by trying to prevent any species from dying out.

Long, long ago, if and when any species died, its ‘job’ was slowly taken over by some other life form. Every creature had time to adjust, and such gaps were inevitably filled. Life was easy paced. In today’s hectic world, the extinction of any species leaves a blank in Nature’s web, like a broken strand. And before it gets repaired, another species becomes extinct. What worries us is that when too many threads break, the whole web will come crashing down around us. If certain bees become extinct, for instance, the flowers they pollinate could become extinct too. And, if certain grasses are destroyed in Manipur, the brow-antlered deer will become extinct, as it can survive nowhere else. If tigers become extinct, deer will multiply greatly. They will almost surely overgraze the forests, eventually exhausting their own food stocks. Thus, the extinction of the tiger could lead to the extinction of deer. And, in the process, the destruction of the forest is certain. Here is where the human race begins to suffer. Forests help moderate our climate. They help to produce rain and also to stop rivers from flooding. Without forests our fields would soon be ruined, and then not all the gold or jewels in the world will be able to satisfy the hungry stomachs of our people. ■

A novel phenomenon

Writers returning their awards in protest against the prevailing 'intolerance', seemingly condoned by the ruling party, has turned into a virtual avalanche with more than forty writers joining the fray. Will the message reach the powers that be?



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WRITERS as a community are not intimidated easily. They have the courage of their convictions and the determination to fight tooth and nail while defending their right of expression guaranteed as a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution. Some of them go the extra mile and take on the establishment and also wage a relentless crusade against superstitions and religious practices, which they deem are outmoded and irrelevant in the present day. Those with rationalist leanings often write against idol worship and in the process offend the sentiments of the believers who take instant umbrage and demonstrate against what they consider blasphemous writing.

Earlier, these protests used to fizzle out soon and the writers would resume their work. But the situation is totally different today and rationalists and writers who step out of line and maintain a virulent anti-religious stance in their writings find themselves vulnerable to attacks on life and limb from fringe elements and hired assassins. Three brutal slayings - that of rationalist Narendra Dabholkar in Kolhapur, Communist leader Govind Pansare in Pune and educationist and eminent Kannada litterateur M. M. Kalburgi in Dharwad and the death threats held out to several other writers have put it beyond the shadow of doubt that fascist forces are at work, and that these attacks are only likely to spread.

The cold blooded murder of 77-year-old Kalburgi, a prolific writer and educationist who had served as the Vice Chancellor of Hampi University in Karnataka and whose body of work included tomes that attacked superstition and idol worship, has however set off a chain reaction and writers and authors all over the country have come out strongly against the violence being unleashed on writers. Kalburgi was a Sahitya Academy winning author and had also served on the Board of the Karnataka Sahitya Academy and writers protesting against the long drawn silence of the Academy in condemning the murder have begun to return their Sahitya Academy Awards.

In the year 1984, the late journalist and author Khushwant Singh had returned his Padma Bhushan award protesting the government's operation codenamed Operation Bluestar launched to flush out militants who had holed up in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. But the present protest where nearly 40 writers have returned their awards is a new phenomenon that has no precedent in independent India. It has to be appreciated that these protesting authors are not returning awards given to them by sundry clubs or associations. The Kendriya Sahitya Academy Award is akin to the 'Golden Grail' for writers and is given only to the most meritorious and deserving, whose oeuvre can be classified as the best in creative writing.

The Sahitya Academy, the sleeping giant, finally woke up and passed a resolution condemning the murder of Kalburgi and the others, but it remains helpless in the matter of ensuring safety for writers who continue to be under grave threat from forces who appear to have a set agenda. The attitude of the powers that be towards the writers who have returned their awards continues to be cynical, at times downright offensive and clearly lacking any kind of empathy. While the Union Finance and Information and Broadcasting Minister Arun Jaitley has described them as orchestrators of a manufactured rebellion and as rabid anti-BJP elements, RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) spokesman Rakesh Sinha has dismissed them as frustrated communist writers. The Honourable Minister of State for Culture, Government of India, Mahesh Sharma too has come out with a suggestion that if the writers find the climate hostile they could stop writing. Far from assuaging their feelings and doing whatever is possible to safeguard them from attacks from those opposed to their line of thinking, the Government in its attempt to play down the situation is only ending up making matters worse and is only further hurting the feelings of creative minds whose contributions to enriching the world of Indian literature is immense. ■



FESTIVAL

IN Europe, the Christmas meal is a huge spread in which the main dish is stuffed roast turkey, goose or duck, along with mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce, followed by a rich Christmas pudding.

In England, mince pies are part of the feast, while in the U.S. it is pumpkin pie. In Australia, it's the height of summer, so people prefer seafood that is light on the stomach. Filipinos prefer roasted pig and chicken instead of turkey, accompanied by plenty of rice, which is a staple food.

The Christmas pudding (also called plum pudding) is of course the most eagerly awaited dessert at the end of the meal. The pudding is made weeks before the big day and is a mixture of flour, dried fruits, nuts and *suet* or lard. It is usually dark in colour and contains alcohol in the form of rum or brandy. Everyone in the house gives it a stir (the day the pudding is made is called 'Stir Up Sunday') and makes a wish. Sometimes silver coins and rings are added to the pudding. The person who finds a coin or a ring while eating is considered lucky! The pudding is steamed for 6-9 hours and then covered with a cloth and hung up to enhance the flavour. Before it is served, brandy is poured around the pudding and set on fire!

In India, Christmas is celebrated with fervour in Goa, Kerala and some northeastern states like Mizoram and Nagaland. Goa's Christmas cuisine includes meat dishes like *sorpotel*

and *vindaloo*, both made from pork, a variety of fish preparations and a lot of coconut-based sweets: *bebinca*, a multi-layered pudding made with oodles of ghee, *sans rival*, a kind of coconut cake, small sweets called *dodol* and *neurios* (something like the Maharashtrian *karanji*).

Kerala's Syrian Christians celebrate with mutton *biryani* and chicken curry served with mashed tapioca and accompanied by feather light *aapams*. Seafood follows and the meal is rounded off with *kheer* garnished with nuts and raisins.



AMAZING LIVING WORLD

The Amazing Fruit Fly



The fruit fly is a fly which feeds on fruits. It lays its eggs inside a fruit. The larvae that hatch out tunnel their way through the fruit. The most colourful fruit fly is the peacock fly, so called because of its beautiful, colourful wings. It has the habit of strutting on fruits.

Scientists have found that fruit flies and humans have similar sleeping patterns. They sleep at night and are active during the day. Elderly (33 days old and more) fruit flies have erratic sleeping habits unlike the young, and a fruitfly deprived of sleep, must nap longer to recover.

Researchers are now trying to find out if these flies dream like humans.



SPOTLIGHT

Goodbye Viru, Zak!

Two of India's outstanding cricketers bid adieu to the game.

VIRENDER Sehwaḡ, who redefined the craft of opening Test innings in his inimitable style and Zaheer Khan, one of India's most successful fast bowlers, recently announced their retirement from international cricket. This brings down curtains on two remarkable careers that began around the same time (Zaheer in 2000 and Sehwaḡ in 2001), flourished in the next ten years and culminated rather unceremoniously. The duo - both 37-year-olds - were out of Team India for over a year and couldn't get to play their swansongs to sign off in style.

Sehwaḡ's unconventional, aggressive batting style made him the spectators' delight. There was never a dull moment when he was batting. A hard-hitter of the ball, runs would come in torrents off his bat, enabling him to etch his name on many a record. Sehwaḡ's ability to hit the ball



was so spectacular that he was often compared with the great Viv Richards. Sehwaḡ is the only Indian to score a triple century - and he did it twice! His triple century (319 against South

Africa) is also the fastest in Test history - 300 off only 278 balls! He is one of only two players to score a double hundred in ODI and a triple hundred in Tests, the other being Chris Gayle, the West Indies opener.

Sehwaḡ was also known for his fearless, uncluttered batting approach, showing complete disregard for the bowler or sometimes even the match situation. After all, how many batsmen would step out and hit a six when batting on 294!

Zaheer Khan made his debut



in 2000 against New Zealand and quickly cemented his position in the team. He spearheaded India's pace attack through some of its greatest moments, including the dream run in the 2011 World Cup. Zaheer was the leading wicket-taker in the tournament with 21 wickets.

Zaheer's career was interrupted several times by injuries. But he kept mending his body and remodelling his action, making a stronger comeback each time. A left-arm pacer, Zaheer was feared for his uncanny ability to reverse swing the old ball. In a career spanning

92 Test matches and 200 ODIs, Zaheer Khan picked 311 and 282 wickets, respectively. As an India fast bowler, he is the second highest wicket-taker after the legendary Kapil Dev.

ART BEAT

A Singing Tribe

Patuas are travelling minstrels of rural West Bengal. They go from village to village singing stories depicted on painted scrolls called *pats*. Their art has passed down from generation to generation.



The Patuas were originally Hindus who converted to Islam. So they observe both Muslim and Hindu customs and traditions and even celebrate Hindu festivals. Their scrolls depicting Hindu themes entertain audiences which include people of all religions. *Pats* were originally made on cloth. Today, they are simply made by sewing together sheets of handmade paper and painted with poster colours. A strip of bamboo is stuck on each end to help in rolling the scroll. The *pats* are usually .0.9 - 4.5m long and 10 - 35cm wide. The pictures are drawn in a series of sequential panels. While narrating the story, the Patua rolls down the scroll as he proceeds from scene to scene. The Patuas are a great source of audio-visual education and entertainment in villages. They work on diverse themes — religion, mythology, morality, nature, politics, society etc. They can create awareness about important issues like family planning, dowry and AIDS.

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BABURAO KRISHNARAO MESTRY (AKA BABURAO PAINTER)

A man of many arts (1890-1954)

Baburao Painter, film director, painter and sculptor, nicknamed 'Father of Indian Film Art', was also known by the sobriquet 'Painter', as he was a well known scenic painter with several theatre companies.

Born Baburao Krishnarao Mestry on 3 June 1890 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, he taught himself to paint, and sculpt in academic art school style. Between 1910 and 1916, together with his artist cousin Anandrao, he was a leading painter of stage backdrops for Sangeet Natak troupes and those of Kirloskar Natak Mandali, Govindrao Tembe and Bal Gandharva, as well as Gujarati Parsi theatre.

Post the release of Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra*, the duo became avid filmgoers and with a movie projector, proceeded to exhibit films, studying the art of movies in the process.

In 1919, Baburao founded the Maharashtra Film Company, which went on to launch careers of many filmmakers, technicians and artistes. With movie acting, especially *tamashas* looked down upon in conservative societies like Kolhapur, the studio itself was a living quarter for quite a few, including leading ladies.

Baburao's first feature film was *Sairandri* (1920), which got heavily censored for its graphic depiction of slaying of Keechak by Bhima. The intense realism horrified the audience, with women screaming, assuming it was real, and the scenes were deleted. However, the movie got positive commercial and critical acclaim. He acted in *Kalyan Khajina* (1924) and in *Sinhagad* (1923), among others.

Painter's films dealt with realistic subjects with mostly patriotic or mythological themes. While his master piece *Savkari Pash* (1925) was inspired by the plight of illiterate farmers and their exploitation by money lenders; *Lokshahir Ram Joshi* (1947) was based on the life of an 18th century poet and lavani singer popular in the time of the Peshwas. The patriotic tone of *Sinhagad* appealed to Lokmanya Tilak so much that he conferred the title of "Cinema Kesari" on Painter. The film did very well and the government went on to levy entertainment tax on it. *Savkari Pash*, however flopped, as the audience, long fed on mythological fantasy and historical love

was just not prepared for so strong a dose of realism. Baburao returned to the tried and tested costume dramas.

A man of many talents – he wrote his own screenplays and was also the first Indian filmmaker to adopt the method Eisenstein (the Soviet Russian film director and film theorist, a pioneer in the theory and practice of montage) had described as 'stenographic'.

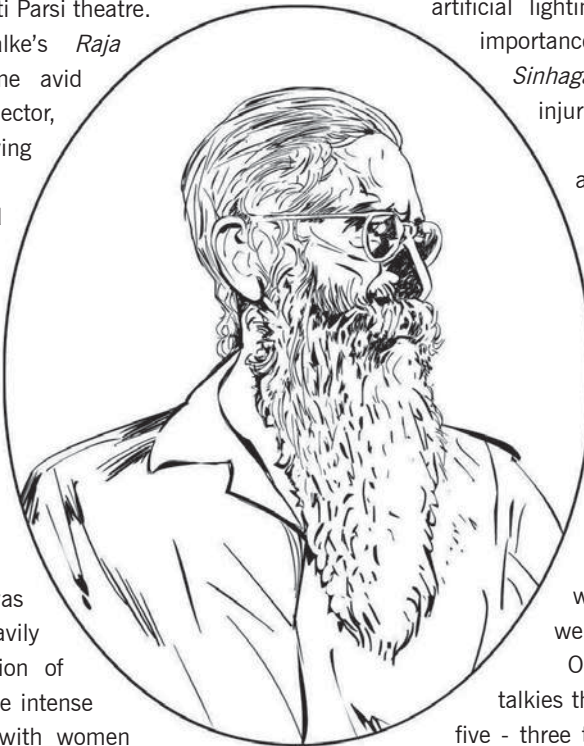
He sketched the costumes, movements, and characters; changed the concept of set designing from painted curtains to solid multi-dimensional lived in spaces and introduced artificial lighting apart from understanding the importance of publicity. While filming for *Sinhagad*, Baburao fell off a horse, the injuries causing a lifelong speech defect.

He introduced sophisticated art-direction techniques, as well as innovations in lighting and cinematography. He also painted tasteful, eye-catching posters of his films. Painter however, was not excited about the advent of sound in 1931, as he fervently felt that the talkies would destroy the visual culture so painfully evolved over the years, and believed that cinema should go beyond language. Yet, moving with the times, he made talkies as well.

Out of the 18 silent films and nine talkies that Painter made, surprisingly, only five - three talkies *Pratibha* (1937), *Lokshahir Ram Joshi* and *Matwala Shahir* (1947), and two silent films *Murliwala* (1927) and *Sati Savitri* (1927) are available today at the National Film Archives of India, Pune. Says Ashok, his grandson, "In those days, filmmakers used nitric films, which caught fire easily. A number of his prints were destroyed like that. Besides, whenever anyone would ask for prints of his films, my grandfather would never refuse. Those never came back".

In conclusion, Baburao on his 125th birth anniversary will always be remembered for the many innovations and for his portraits and sketches of actresses and illustrations in Marathi books and magazine covers. He died on 16 January 1954 in Kolhapur, at the age of 63. ■

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



KALAMANDALAM SATYABHAMA

The matriarch of classical dance (1937-2015)

ONE of the finest exponents of the dance form of Mohiniyattam, Kalamandalam Satyabhama who passed away recently, won renown more as a teacher and choreographer, after taking the momentous decision to step away from the limelight as a performer at a young age of 24, at a time when her dancing career was all set to go places. As a young girl she developed a fascination for dance and came under the tutelage of famous trainers like Kalamandalam Chinnammu Amma after enrolling herself as a student of the prestigious Kalamandalam founded by the famous poet Mahakavi Vallathol Narayana Menon, who conferred on her a scholarship to further her studies, as she hailed from a modest background.

The extensive coaching at the institution enabled her to master the various disciplines in dance including Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam and Kathakali, but it was Mohiniyattam, perhaps the only dance form performed exclusively by women, that attracted her the most and to the propagation of which she devoted her entire lifetime. It was from the famous dancer Thottassery Chinnammu Amma that she picked up the rudiments of the art including the *adavus*, *cholkattu* and *jathis*, and this initial training was to stand her in good stead in refining her own prowess in the art. Later, she gained more perfection in Mohiniyattam when another celebrated dance teacher Kalamandalam Kalyani Kutty Amma took her under her wing, and this enabled her to further hone her talents.

It was at Kalamandalam that Satyabhama met and married the Kathakali *guru* the late Padmanabhan Nair. Among her dance recitals, her performance at the Silver Jubilee function of the Kalamandalam in 1955 at the age of 18 was the one that won her the maximum laurels from connoisseurs of the art. Incidentally, the function was presided over by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who too had words of fulsome praise for the young artiste.

As a teacher, Satyabhama courted a bit of controversy when she set about refining the art form and this ruffled the feathers of those who favoured the status quo, but Satyabhama

remained unfazed and went about purifying the dance form by weeding out the external influences and also revamping the curriculum. Her innovations in the art form later came to be perceived as the Kalamandalam style of Mohiniyattam and this *nouveau* style found many takers.

She also paid considerable attention to the costumes worn by the dancers and effected several alterations that revolved around the colour, pattern and accessories. The famous danseuse was one of the most respected teachers in Kalamandalam and in the several decades that she

spent there, she rose to the eminent position of Principal of Kalamandalam and served the institution till 1992. Till the very end, she retained her passion for dance and trained hundreds of students many of whom later went on to carve their own niche. She encapsulated her vast knowledge in a book titled 'History, Techniques and Performance', and the highlight of the book included 35 Mohiniyattam compositions that covered almost the entire gamut of the discipline. The book which was critically acclaimed has been serving as a referral for all students.

Apart from the Padma Shri awarded by the central government last year, Satyabhama has been the recipient of several national and state honours, all extolling her contribution to Mohiniyattam. Significant among these were the Sangeet Nataka Academy Award, which was awarded to her both by the Centre and the State and the Nruthiya Natya Puraskaram conferred on her by the Government of Kerala and the Swati Thirunal Puraskaram. Hailed as the matriarch of classical dance, this unassuming and self-effacing artiste will remain an inspiration to all dancers not only those belonging to her own generation, but future generations as well. Two of her four daughters have taken after their mother and have become exponents of Mohiniyattam, thus carrying on the legacy of their illustrious parents both of whom were wedded to classical dance. ■

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

CAPTAIN ANUJ NAYYAR, MVC

A valiant and true hero (1975-1999)

ANUJ Nayyar was born on 28 August 1975 in Delhi. His father, S.K. Nayyar, was a visiting Professor at the Delhi School of Economics and his mother, Meena Nayyar, worked as Librarian at the South Campus of the University of Delhi. Anuj studied at the Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi. He was a bright student and was good in sports too. He joined the National Defence Academy (NDA) and was commissioned into 17 Jat battalion in June 1997.

In 1999, the Pakistani military personnel had intruded into the Kargil area. The Indian Army used to vacate these posts during winter and the Pakistanis took advantage of it. The intruders were spotted by two shepherds in Batalik on 3 May and they reported it to the local Army authorities. A patrol under Captain Saurabh Kalia, sent to investigate, did not return. Accurate shelling by Pakistan led to the destruction of the ammunition depot at Kargil on 9 May. It was established that the intrusion was over an area of about 150 km and 20 km deep. A large force was moved to Kargil to evict the intruders. 17 Jat battalion moved from western Kashmir Valley to Kargil on 26 May. Dras was cleared by 4 July and it was now the turn of Mushkoh Valley. The enemy had well dug in positions on all the dominating heights of Mushkoh Valley and the most prominent peak 4875, also called Pimple II, gave the enemy a clear view of 30 km of the Srinagar-Leh highway. It was located on the west side of Tiger Hill. The first task allotted to the unit was to clear Point 4540 which was completed by 30 May. They were then ordered to capture Feature Pimple II on Point 4875.

Battalion 17 Jat decided to go ahead with the attack on 6 July without waiting for air support. The Commanding Officer decided to attack on two axis in two phases. All movement had to be at night. Ammunition, water and rations were carried forward over a period of four nights by 234 soldiers. Pimple I, part of the objective, was captured on 3 July and

attack on Pimple II was launched on 6 July, with Anuj's platoon leading. The company commander, Major Ritesh Sharma, was injured in the initial shelling by the enemy and Anuj assumed command of the company. Anuj's group consisting of seven soldiers located four enemy bunkers. The group was constantly under enemy fire and Anuj hit the ground. His men thought that he had been hit but it was not so. He crawled forward and destroyed the enemy by lobbing a grenade. He killed nine enemy soldiers and assisted by Sepoy Surinder Singh destroyed three enemy bunkers.

Surinder was hit and killed on the third bunker. While attacking the last bunker, an enemy rocket-propelled grenade fell directly on Anuj. Disregarding his injuries, he continued to lead his men to clear the last bunker. He succumbed to his injuries only after clearing Point 4875. His indomitable courage and leadership resulted in clearing the target. All the six soldiers in his group were killed. It was one of the toughest battles of the campaign and 17 Jat had suffered the highest casualties of any unit in the Kargil War. The unit had lost two officers, one JCO and 34 soldiers. They had fought to the last man.

Anuj's body was brought home the next day with full State honours. The tears in the eyes of his mother overflowed and her sobs rent the air. She was clutching Anuj's photograph and trying to console the equally upset fiancée of Anuj. The two had been engaged for a year and were planning to get married in September. The body was later taken to the Cantonment and cremated with full military honours.

Anuj's heroics were widely publicised in the print media and in the film *Kargil* produced by J.P. Dutta. Several books and tele-films were made to depict Anuj's contribution to the Army. Anuj was posthumously awarded the MVC which was received by his mother on 15 August 1999. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)

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





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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

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