

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined



India's bravehearts

FACE TO FACE

Narayan Mahadevan

Manisha Kotke
and Vaishnavi Sawant

KNOW INDIA BETTER

India's enchanting pottery

The reclining lord

The Baghdadi Jews of Kolkata

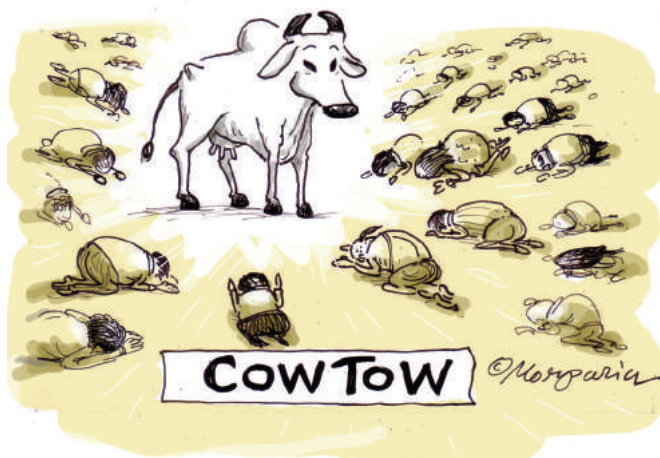
The lean, mean machine?

Shackled Forces?

Ruling the seas

Great Indians: General K.V. Krishna Rao, PVSM / Justice Leila Seth / Altamas Kabir

MORPARIA'S PAGE



E-mail: morparia@hotmail.com

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General K.V. Krishna Rao, PVSM



Justice Leila Seth



Altamas Kabir



Managing Editor

Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

Editor

Anuradha Dhareshwar

Assistant Editor

E.Vijayalakshmi Rajan

Design

H. V. Shiv Shankar

Marketing

Mahesh Kanojia

OIOP Clubs Co-ordinator

Vaibhav Palkar

Subscription In-Charge

Nagesh Bangera

Advisory Board

Sucharita Hegde

Justice S. Radhakrishnan

Venkat R. Chary

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Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for

One India One People Foundation,
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Mumbai - 400 026
Tel: 022-2353 4400
Fax: 022-2351 7544
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oiopsub@fouressindia.com

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visit us at:

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

"Kudos to you"

I came across the July 2017 issue of *One India One People (Oceans: the last frontier?)*. I am an ex-Merchant Navy officer and it was interesting to see so many articles about the various aspects of the oceans. The article *Treasures from the deep blue* was very well written as also the rest of the articles. The *Know India Better* feature on Mangalore and Udupi was very well written too. I am from South India myself and the writer has brought out the essence of these places very well. Kudos to you for bringing out a very informative issue.

– Pradeep Unni, Kochi

"We are a noisy lot"

We are a noisy lot indeed. From our mother's womb till the time we will reach the tomb, we have been used to hearing loud music. Noise pollution is a serious concern for our generation. Sounds of loud music, vehicular honking, industrial turbines, supersonic aircrafts, have all become our daily diet. Our eardrums take all the beatings. The alarmingly high decibels have made our audio system immune. We have become so hardened that we do not hear anymore the wind blowing, the

clock crowing or the cuckoo singing. Our Indian festivals are celebrated with firecrackers and loud music. Politicians of all hues canvass for themselves or their parties by yelling into microphones with multiple numbers of speakers. The sick and the aged look for a peaceful slumber, so do the students preparing for their exams.

We have to wage a war against noise pollution. We have to exhort all vehicle owners to use the horn sparingly, only when it is required. They should refrain from honking near hospitals, places of worship and education institutions. Our festivities must be expressed more sedately. Then only we can make our planet a better place to live in. Otherwise, we will all go to pieces.

– Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Letters should be addressed to:

The Editor

One India One People Foundation
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th Floor,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai - 400 026
Tel: 022 - 2353 4400 Fax: 022-2351 7544
e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com

WHO AM I?

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



Earth...



afenavate@gmail.com

Jai Jawan!

*Forget all the rhetoric, and let's go with the simple truth that without our soldiers we would be nowhere, says **Nivedita Louis**. For once, she is serious!*

THEY are the torch bearers of the nation. They count themselves lucky if they can get back in one piece after every mission. Meet the defence personnel of the nation. These men stand for the country at its borders, risking their lives, while our bosses discuss if we can replace the proverbial national animal with their bovine variant. We are ruled by the covernment!

The men in camouflage uniforms deserve more respect than the customary Independence Day wreaths. We whistled our hearts out in movie halls watching *Border*, *Tango Charlie* and *LOC Kargil*, spill those tears in the climax and vacated the theatres with heavy hearts. Don't expect the kindness to continue on the way back from theatres if we spot an army man standing in the bus for want of a seat. No! We think it is the Khans saving the country. Not the poor man sweating out in his 'military hair cut'.

Our *netas* keep the fire across borders-alive and omnipresent, far more furious than the raging embers of 'Amar Jawan Jyoti'. So long as we have nasty neighbours, *netas* get the votes. Patriotism and killing go hand in hand. Every day we read the news about someone being killed in combat and flip the page without a passing glance. Lives don't matter. The unknown son of the soil passes away into oblivion, as we scour for news on cricket and its gods.

The circus the chaps are accustomed to as they travel across the country for 3,000 miles in their military gear, laden with trunk boxes itself is a nightmare, if he can't avail his lucky advance booking. The return of a military man, home on vacation, is a festival by itself. The lad must have enlisted when he was still learning the ropes of relationships in his native village, and his return on vacation is the most celebrated event for the whole family. Love is measured in 'quarters' as the guy dresses in all finery and roams the streets till he is called back again on duty. Someone said blood is thicker than water, no, my folks, alcohol is thicker

than blood. The relationship of an army man is measured not by degrees of comparison, but by the quality of free booze.

Has anyone wondered how Mohan Ram who has seen the arid south Indian summers, can hold his gun without accidentally pulling the trigger in sub-zero Himalayan winters? How does Ghanshyam Meena from the Thar sail the lonely waters of the Indian Ocean? The men with grit and determination survive the race to save the country. They

live to tell us the tales of their bravery, as the *netas* snack on their subsidised lunches and discuss One Rank One Pension for the uniformed. No, *Ji!* They are not asking for alms, they are deserving of our civility for their service.

Before we judge the men for their yeomen service, let us not forget that half the nations with military might profess compulsory enlistment to Defence. I shudder to think how the Porsche driving daddy's darlings would complete their compulsory service without ramming onto the dividers or running over the sleeping pedestrians.

Of late, recruitment to the Defence has been nose-diving and may we suggest compulsory enlistment of the gun-wielding Khans and Dutts? The dead black bucks stand testimony to the shooting skills of the ever-*jawan* Khans. We spend billions in procuring weapons to ensure our safety, yet, we give two hoots about the safety of our soldiers. We, the common people, let the border conflicts escalate and hold the lives of these men and women for ransom. It is high time we get up from that comfy

window seat and offer it to the tired man in camouflage, for without him, we would have been dead and buried long back. *Jai Jawan!* ■



Nivedita Louis is a writer, blogger and social activist by choice. Bitten by the travel bug, and smitten by nature, she loves travelling and cooking. She blogs at www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com.

The lean, mean machine?

India has one of the largest defence forces in the world, but is it a well-equipped one? The forces can definitely do with increased budget allocation, better equipments and more manpower in light of the work it's called upon to do, says Brig. A. Thyagarajan (Retd.).

WE have fought major conventional wars against two neighbours, China and Pakistan. Threats from these two countries have to be incorporated into our strategic goals. It is imperative to take note of the rise of the extremist Islamic movement, Pakistan's desperate bid for Kashmir through "inflicting a thousand cuts", and the massive increase in China's military strength. Military strategy is often influenced by economic and ethnic reasons. We have been thinking too narrowly by concentrating on threats, and should realise that a big nation may need to project its military power overseas to protect its own interests, or sometimes join international missions like keeping the Singapore channel open, or counter sea piracy. Future wars will require joint operations by the three Defence Services, and responsive civil-military understanding.

The Pakistan factor

Our major concerns for national security are two external sources, i.e., Pakistan and China. Pakistan, since 1947, has been continuously engaged in hostilities, mainly in Kashmir, which erupted into conflict in 1965, when both countries launched operations across the international border, without any substantial result. Pakistan has changed its strategy after the 1971 war; now it uses insurgents and terrorists to cross into our territory and create havoc, and try to topple the civil administration. In 1998, the Kargil intrusions were another unconventional method to create chaos in Ladakh. In spite of their failures, they have continued to use proxy agents, *jihadi* elements of Afghanistan and from the Taliban, to continuously create border intrusion and major flare ups in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. Even though the strength of their army is lower than the Indian army, it has adequate armour and artillery to quantify its offensive task. In addition, they have the backup of various insurgent groups who provide good strength to their military establishment. Further, China as its new ally is capable of providing troop strength and logistics to aid any limited offensive operations.

In a broader perspective, while Pakistan is able to defend its border adequately, its Air Force it has to be mentioned,

though smaller than ours, has a good modern inventory which can deliver a punch, or thwart our offensive tactics. An analysis of the last 10 years of Pakistan military thinking would reveal that they will not launch any major operation, but will keep on creating local intrusions with the aid of other insurgent groups that are well motivated to support the *jihadi* culture. Due to good equipment upgradation, Pakistan army can also launch limited operations in Kashmir and Rajasthan that could cause attrition to our forces.

The China factor

China's military strength and economic might is a big factor in our perception of threat. They have a military strength of over 20,00,000 troops, of which one lakh can be mobilised at its Tibetan Command, which can directly attack our forces in the North and East. The Chinese army can also operate 30,000 airborne troops who can operate very close to the Sino-Indian borders. They have an excellent inventory of tanks, artillery and missiles, which can support their offensive tasks. In Tibet, the Chinese have built excellent roads, railways and airbases, which are all-weather status.

The Chinese Navy with its large fleet of 350 numbers of various war ships and 60 submarines, today dominates the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The China-Pakistan economic corridor that is being developed from Tibet to western Pakistan, will help them to move additional forces to the POK (Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir) region. On the other hand, we have troops stationed at a lower level who have to move uphill against the grain of the land. A number of strategic roads which have been sanctioned by the government, have not yet been completed.

The wide gap

Both the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force have developed slowly in the last decade to fulfill their tasks in operations. However, their growth has not been sizeable to fulfill this strategic task. Equipment wise, the Air Force is short of 25% to 30% of the total assessed operational strength, which includes fighter aircraft, missiles and transportation

fleet. The Indian Air Force certainly doesn't have the adequate fleet strength to provide operational capabilities if there are hostilities on both fronts, i.e., East and West.

We have about 3,000 tanks such as Arjun, T90, T72 and T55. Most of them are worn-out. Replacements and modernisation have been lagging. It is understood that nine regiments will be replaced with latest technology tanks which are superior in all aspects. However, we need to procure another 900 tanks like T90MS, which are now offered by Russian sources.

For the artillery, we need urgent replacement of over 1000 units, as we have not obtained new guns since the Bofors scandal hit the country. Some of the important requirements are:

- Self-propelled and wheeled artillery to cater to a matching mobility in desert terrain, long range vectors in terms of rockets and missiles, provisioning of adequate drones and loitering systems, 90 modern light combat helicopters needed for close fire support, and 200 light utility helicopters for observation, communication and reconnaissance.
- Infantry, which is the main state of our combat force, needs many items such as latest automatic rifles, light machine guns and portable rocket launchers. For personal protection, the infantry soldiers are urgently in need of light weight helmet, jackets and boots. Our war wastage ammunitions cater only for 10 days intense operations. This needs to be brought up to a level of 30 days.

The complicated logistics

Much has been written about the problems of procurement, acquisition and replacement of the military hardware by the defence ministry. While there are various financial constraints which need to be understood, the ordinary citizen is not aware of the complex procedure of defence procurement and acquisition. It starts with projection of requirement by the armed forces headquarters, which then proceeds through

various stages of vetting, negotiation, approval and financial allotment by the government. Even the identification of the item and its qualitative description is a complex procedure. Though India's defence forces have been supported by a large number of ordnance factories, public sector units and defence research laboratories, for major items we have been heavily dependent on imports from countries such as Russia, America, France and Israel. Since the last two decades, it has been noticed that the defence ministry is not able to match up to

the requirements of hardware due to complex procedures, bureaucratic hurdles and long span of logistics. Only recently, the defence ministry has framed various procedure policies that give greater clout to private sector, and collaboration between foreign arms manufacturer and a local partner. The government has also set up new bodies such as the Defence Acquisition Council, Acquisition Board and special committees to stream line the process of acquiring costly equipment. It is now realised that unless we collaborate more with private sector units, we cannot launch joint sector ventures that can outpace the ordnance factories. In fact, the government ought to even fund in a systematic manner private sector giants, to launch major ventures in artillery, weapons, tanks, submarines and even aircraft manufacturing.



Our border challenges

We have a long border with Pakistan, China, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The terrain varies from deserts to the plains, mountains, and extremely thick jungles interposed with rivers. Our defence system is based on a combination of fencing, man power patrolling and aerial surveillance. In these efforts, we are hampered by a number of factors such as diffused authority, lack of adequate foot prints, hostile local population, and climatic disturbances.

To give an example, in the western border, the BSF (Border Security Force) and the Indo Tibetan Border Force (ITBF) support the Indian army, but in the eastern theatre, the role is given to 'Seema Suraksha Bal', Assam Rifles, and the Indian

army. The border forces come either under the operational control of the defence ministry or the home ministry. Naturally, there is lack of coordination at the lower levels which hamper speedy response. Even in manpower resources, the deployment in the borders of Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh and Bangladesh need quantitative upgradation supported by adequate technological devices and air surveillance. Authority of various sectors must be vested with the Indian army for coordination, based on the operational criteria as stated by the service headquarters.

While it is not possible to discuss the force levels of the Indian army, it needs to be stressed that in the eastern sector, the army headquarters had recommended an increase in the force level by an additional 60,000 troops. Though the government had accepted this three years ago, there is still poor implementation of the sanctioned additional formations due to various financial hurdles. This needs to be resolved with political will so that the Indian army's capability matches the intent. Another worrying factor is the almost 20 percent shortage of junior officers, which severely affects the operational capability.

The 'civilian' army

Aid to civil power is a very important facet of the army's role in national security. These can be summarised in the following manner:

- Law and order when requested by civic authorities as in the case of the Jat agitation, ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) threats in that state, and disturbances in Punjab after operation Blue Star.
- Floods and earthquakes as it happened in Kashmir and Uttarakhand.
- Evacuation of Indian nationals from foreign countries such as Lebanon, and Iraq using our Air Force and Navy.

On counter insurgency both in Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland and Manipur, there is widespread concern about our inability to stem the rot. For this, three issues need to be tackled at the highest level:

- The lack of unified command which can direct all elements including the army, CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), BSF and the local police. A few years ago in Jammu & Kashmir, the corps commander in Srinagar Valley was given the title of Unified Commander. However, due to political reasons and various other compulsions, this system was revoked. As a result, on the ground there is lack of coordination and consultation while launching various operations.
- There have been various attempts to remove the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) that provides immunity

to the soldier who takes part in action against terrorists and insurgents; but the government has stood by the army. However, recently, the Supreme Court has directed that FIRs can be registered by the police in case of army's actions such as opening fire or destroying hostile dumps. This is a very dangerous step which can vitiate the army's capability to quell insurgency.

The tendency of the government to start enquires as a result of human rights agitation, needs to be curbed.

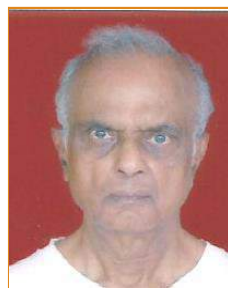
Conclusion

The most important issue is the lack of a unified higher command at the national level when operations break out. At present there is a chief of staff committee shared by the senior most serving chief in rotation. Various groups and committees have recommended strongly that India must have a Chief of Defence Staff who will tender single window advice to the cabinet. Such a system is well adopted in many advanced countries such as UK and USA, but we are still dragging our feet.

While this article has focused on the factors such as equipment, manpower, strategy and command, it must be borne in mind that our budget allocation for defence is approximately 1.8% of the GDP, which needs to be stepped up to a more reasonable level of 2.75%.

Last year's allocation of approximately 2.6 lakhs crores was just a nominal increase, with the result that our capital expenditure is restricted. The demand of the services has always been pruned down by the Ministry of Finance which results in paltry modernisation. Delay in the approval of various projects can also be traced to the many financial controls. Unfortunately, the services cannot carry forward the lapsed amount to the next financial year. Major reforms are needed on this topic including the placement of service officers in the Ministry of Defence as a part of integration.

We have large gaps in the intelligence system that affects our operational coordination. The agencies such as IB (Intelligence Bureau), RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) and military intelligence are working under different authorities; however, collation and dissemination are tardy. ■



Brig. A. Thyagarajan was commissioned on 11 December 1955, and joined the Army Service Corps, which is the logistics branch. He retired in June 1990. He had operational service experience in Ladakh, Assam and Mizoram. During the 1971 war, he was Grade 1 staff officer with the headquarters armoured division. He has also held various appointments in instructional establishment of the Indian army.

The working alliance

The relations between the civilian government and the military is a delicate one, but has set good precedents in India. And it must remain so, says Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma (Retd.).

CIVIL-military relations comprise rules and practices to define the relationship between the civil authorities and the military services. In democratic countries, the ultimate authority on all issues rests with the political leadership. The various elements of civil power are the executive, legislature and the judiciary.

Civil power is assisted by the civilian bureaucracy and the military services to execute their decisions. Control of military services by the political leadership should be effective, and there should be minimum interference by the military in political or foreign affairs.

Similarly, the military should be left free to decide their course of action. This perception appears to be right, but there are many historical examples of both success and failure when the political leadership overruled the military. For example, during World War I, then

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wanted a naval operation to break through the Dardanelles into the Black Sea, and overruled the naval chief who was opposed to the operation. The operation ended in a disaster with the loss of thousands of lives. This relationship is critical and decisions should be taken without ego or prejudices.

In India too, there have been occasions of serious difference between the Service Chiefs and the Defence Minister. For instance, General Thimayya opted for retirement and was persuaded by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to withdraw his resignation. Later, Nehru criticised General Thimayya in the Parliament, which led to some embarrassment to Thimayya.

Political power

Before Independence, the Viceroy was the executive head and there was only one incident of controversy between the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C), that of George Curzon and Horatio Kitchener. After Independence, the ultimate authority for civil and military affairs rested with the elected political cabinet, as in all democratic countries. In India, Nehru had reservations about the role of the military and was apprehensive about a military coup. This was perhaps due to military coups in newly independent countries. While going

around the cabinet secretariat, he was surprised to see a few officers in uniform and asked about them. On learning that they were members of the military wing of the cabinet secretariat, he gave instructions for them to come



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Defence Minister Arun Jaitley, Air chief Marshal Arup Raha (now retd.), Navy chief Admiral R.K. Dhawan and Army chief General Dalbir Singh (now retd.)

to the office in civilian clothes. Even stranger was his reply to a note from General (later Field Marshall) Claude Auchinleck for a meeting to discuss the threats to India. Nehru replied that India did not face any threat and the police was adequate to deal with any emergency.

The defence secretary is the advisor to the cabinet on defence issues, and the President is the C-in-C. This is in name only and he has no authority. For instance, the Army was moved to the border after the attack on the Parliament. To an enquiry from the army chief about the aim of this concentration, the Prime Minister replied that they would explain later. Later, the units moved back to their locations and the response to Kargil intrusion was delayed. In 1965,

the Prime Minister decided not to use the Navy in any offensive task without consulting the navy chief. Pakistan navy got away by bombing Dwarka. Admiral N. Krishnan said that the Pakistani ship should have been chased and destroyed. It was not the only such decision. Rajiv Gandhi issued orders for the Colombo operations without consulting the military who were not even briefed about the task. The net result was loss of lives without any political gain. The army chief is not a member of the Cabinet Defence Committee and is invited to attend the meetings as and when necessary. In fact, the cabinet remains without timely professional advice on military matters.

The military culture

Unlike other careers, military life demands discipline and pressures on service members and their families in peace locations as well. Living away from families in tents or small mud huts can be accepted without any loss of morale only because of the sense of pride. Rules limit freedom of speech and association. Commanders have widespread authority on issues which in civilian life are considered to be strictly personal. The warrior ethos looks down on timidity and a superiority complex is a natural and essential feeling. This state of view is not well appreciated by the civil bureaucracy. A former cabinet secretary, while writing about his experiences refers to the local military commander (a brigadier) as one with a chip on his shoulder. An individual can offer his life to serve the nation or save his comrade only by considering himself to be a superior individual. A normal person cannot be relied upon to rush in an emergency when everyone is running away.

The role of the Civil Service

The Civil Service is one arm of the civil power. In India, the political leadership has heavily relied on this arm. The military accepts the supremacy of the civil power which is defined as the political power, and not the civil bureaucracy. Supremacy does not imply subservience, and the service chiefs should express their views freely. In India, the civil service has acquired a role of supremacy. The civil service has been putting across fear of a military coup. This has happened in spite of no evidence ever of a military take over. The army is composed of men with linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity. It does not offer chance of a conspiracy.

The legacy of the Curzon-Kitchener dispute has been that strict control of all expenses in the Ministry of Defence has been given to the Finance Ministry. A parallel organisation of Ministry of Finance (Defence) has to approve all proposals for expenses. This includes plans for equipment

and arms as well. The proposals can take a long time to mature. They do not restrict their comments to finance matters, and question the tactical and strategic aspects for which they have limited knowledge. Writer Nirad C. Chaudhuri has commented that for its own advantage the bureaucracy in India has placed the army in a cage. It is strange that in 1962, some military commanders were retired, but no civilian officer was held responsible for the poor show.

Military and domestic strife

The army has been frequently called upon to deal with riots, communal troubles and insurgency. The State must use the army to deal with large scale violence, insurgency and organised terror attacks. The prolonged use of the army in riots may erode their discipline and may have a deterrent effect. It causes frustration and may lead to politicisation of the army. It has made the army vulnerable to public criticism. It also is an obstacle to training for their main task, the defence against aggression. For employment against insurgency, the UK had evolved a good organisation in Malaya. A unified command was set up under an army officer who functioned under the head of the government. In India, there is a provision for placing the para-military and police forces under the command of the military during a war, but it has not been implemented in any war. The method has been to exercise operational control and not command. In the case of Doda in Kashmir, an unusual system was used of operational co-operation. There is a need to consider unified command system for good results.

Conclusion

The army must remain subordinate to the civil power which should not be confused with civil administration. The army commanders must give their views freely and not be subservient. This is important in our society due to the prevailing culture of sycophancy. Excessive control can cause a divided and supine military which is not in the national interest. It happened in India in 1962. The army is the most powerful coercive power available to the State and it must remain professional, disciplined and apolitical. The army must be powerful to prevail in war and not make excessive demands or dictate the course of foreign policy. ■



Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (Retd.) served in the Army for 30 years. Post retirement he served the telecom industry with multinational and Indian corporates. He is also a freelance journalist and has interests in national security issues.

Made in India

*The Indian navy has almost from its inception tried to be indigenous, with remarkable achievements to its credit. 'Make in India' has for long been its mantra, says **Rear Admiral M.K. Badhwar (Retd.)**, who draws a succinct picture of the Navy's growth over the years.*

NO other slogan in recent history has evoked so much interest globally, as 'Make in India'. If implemented well, it can certainly make India emerge as the world's leading economic power. The defence sector is of particular interest for 'Make in India' because investment in this sector is many times more rewarding than corresponding investment in the commercial sector, in terms of employment generation and absorption of newer technologies.

Indian Navy made indigenisation a fundamental tenet of its planning and growth soon after Independence, because it realised that indigenisation will not only support and encourage the resurgence of India's own industry but it will also cut costs and dependence on foreign nations, since import of military systems necessitates continued import of spares, upgrades and accessories throughout their life cycle. Indigenisation has been Navy's motto, which it is justifiably proud of. Indian Navy has supported not only PSU (Public Sector Unit) shipyards, but more recently even the private shipyards, so that they too can participate in nation building. It has also been supporting indigenous development and manufacture of ever bigger and more complex equipment that go into our warships.

India's naval strength

Today, India is one of the few nations that have the capability to design and build warships. In fact, with the commencement of the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier project, India becomes the fourth nation in the world with the capability of designing and building 40000T plus aircraft carriers. Indian Navy is also the only Navy with in-house design capability; the user and the designer are also organisationally integrated, a big plus that ensures that Indian warships are reasonably modern at the time of delivery, have ever increasing indigenous content, and find high user acceptability.

The background

Creation of any engineering equipment or system begins with its design. India, unfortunately, missed the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, at Independence, while it did have limited manufacturing facilities, there was no engineering



The Delhi class of destroyer

design capability worth its name. This meant either direct import, or manufacturing of goods under license. While foreign companies were willing to provide technical know-how for manufacture of non-military goods for commercial gains, supply of military technology was dictated by geo-political interests. Obviously, no nation would ever share latest technology with others. Besides, military technology rapidly becomes obsolete and needs continuous support of R&D. Therefore, at Independence, the country had no warship construction capability.

Realising that no maritime nation can remain relevant in global maritime scenario without the ability to design, build and support its naval platforms, the top leadership of the post-Independence Navy decided to strongly support indigenous warship design and construction, a foresight that transformed it from Buyers' Navy to Builders' Navy.

The early designs

In the mid-sixties, a modest beginning was made, setting up a small Central Design Office (CDO), for design of small crafts and auxiliaries. In 1970, the Directorate of Naval Designs (DND) was set up as a part of Naval Headquarters (HQs) by re-appropriating its resources. This arrangement of DND being a part of the NHQ was a blessing in disguise as it enabled



The Shivalik (above) belongs to the stealth frigate class, and has been delivered by MDL already

absorption of mid-stream changes that are inevitable in warship construction with long gestation periods, given the rapid obsolescence of military technology.

Design of a modified Seaward Defence Boat with significantly higher performance parameters including increase of speed from 15 knots to 30 knots was the first project implemented by Indian designers, without any past experience. S. Parmanandhan, the then Director (later to become the first Director General) of Naval Designs, who can truly be called the father of indigenous warship design, then took on the design of a new frigate using Leander design as the basis, but with payload as desired by the naval staff. The result was the Godavari Class design that took many with surprise at home and abroad, because, despite its much larger size and use of same propulsion machinery, the new ship was able to achieve higher speeds than the smaller Leander.

Since then, the story of the Directorate General of Naval Designs (DGND), has been that of one successful design after the other, including LCUs, Survey ships, LSTs, P-25 & P-25A "Corvettes", P-15 "Destroyers" and P-16A, the follow-on of Godavari Class, which though initially intended to be of repeat design, finally acquired a new look; again, an acknowledgement of the rapid obsolescence of military technology and relatively slow warship construction, also underpinning the fact that without in-house design capability, indigenous warship construction is unsustainable.

Indian Navy's current capabilities

Towards the end of the 20th century, ship signatures assumed considerable importance in naval warfare. Indian Navy too decided that all its future frontline platforms will be stealthy, i.e., not susceptible to easy detection. To deal with this challenge and to handle resultant increased complexity in

warship design and construction processes, the Navy's design organisation reorganised itself and built up considerable vertical specialisation in core areas of design, such as Signature Management, Hydrodynamics, Structural design, Propulsion System Integration and HVAC. This significantly enhanced its capabilities to design state-of-the-art warships. The first fruit of this capability was the design of P-17 class multi-role stealth frigates, with enhanced operational capabilities in terms of survivability, stealth, sea keeping, ship handling and weapons. Three ships of this class, namely, Shivalik, Satpura and Sahyadri have already been delivered by MDL (Mazagon Dock Ship Builders Limited).

During this period, the MDL was also tasked to build three destroyers as follow on of Delhi class, designated as P-15A. Since, the naval designers had already built up expertise in stealth technology, they were able to incorporate many of these features in this design as well.

Today, DGND, MDL and GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd) are already working on two new futuristic designs, i.e., stealth destroyer P-15B, 4 of which are already under construction at MDL, and a stealth frigate P-17A, seven of which are to be built jointly by MDL and GRSE. Needless to say that these ships will be comparable to the best in the world, just like their predecessors and built at half the price thanks to the cost competitiveness of our shipyards. In all, our defence shipyards have delivered close to 100 ships of different classes.

At the start of the 21st century, conscious of its increased responsibilities in the changing global maritime scenario and resultant need for significantly larger number of frontline warships, our Navy felt the need to expand the core warship design capability as well the warship building capacity in the country.

Therefore, it was decided to utilise the limited resources of DGND for core functional design activities only, and transfer the less complex detailed design and production drawings to the shipyards. Accordingly, while DGND concurrently worked on the functional designs of Projects 17, 15A and the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC), the most prestigious project taken-up so far by the Indian designers, the detailed design of these projects were transferred to the respective shipyards.

Modernisation of shipbuilding infrastructure

As the building facilities at our PSU yards were quite archaic, modernisation of building infrastructure has been undertaken in all the four PSU shipyards during the past decade with new building berths and wet basins, block outfitting shops, high capacity cranes, mechanised transporters and allied facilities to enable them to adopt modern shipbuilding processes like integrated construction and enhance their throughput.

(Continued on page 15)

Imperative of maritime governance – the Indian Ocean

India, with her long coastline and primarily ocean-dependent trade should be known as a seafaring nation. But she's not. Vice-Admiral Venkat Bharathan (Retd.) outlines the reasons and suggests solutions.

ONLY on the oceans lie India's hopes". The Indian Ocean being every one's lake is the reality today. As the largest stakeholder in the region, India at least ought to be fully aware of what is happening in our waters, as a sovereign democracy. Others may sail away, but we cannot. This subtle difference has huge, telling implications on the effect, impact and consequences for the sub-continent.

The Indian Ocean is a floating home to about 35 to 40 warships from different nations, not to speak about the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan navies. At any given time, there are at least a few submarines transiting underwater. Nearly 2,000 to 3,000 merchant ships ranging from super tankers, gas carriers, cargo ships, and container vessels traverse these waterways every day. Fishing fleets, dhows, trawlers, exploratory vessels, big oil rigs also cross the sea lanes. In peace time alone, the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the important straits from east to west, are all subject to constant threats of closure that would paralyse trade, not to speak of other adverse collateral effects.

Oceans – India's only hope

"Only on the oceans lie India's hopes" is neither a cliché, nor a marketing statement. It is a reality staring in our face. K.M. Panikkar, the architect of India's naval doctrine, argued in his works more than 50 years ago that New Delhi should recognise the significance of the Indian Ocean for the development of its commercial activities, trade and security. Panikkar remarked: 'India never lost her independence till she lost the command of the sea in the first decade of the 16th century'. He had written as early as 1945: "A Navy is not meant for the defence of the coast. The coast has to be defended from the land. The objective of the Navy is to secure the control of an area of the sea, thus preventing enemy ships from approaching the coast or interfering with trade and commerce.

Our reality

India's three-sided island features, as well as the towering Himalayan mountain chain give us a geographical advantage. This, and the fact that 95 percent of our trade is by the sea, should make us a predominantly sea faring nation.

This maritime view which did flourish till the early 13th century in the coastal parts of India, did not survive the advent of European onslaught, and even today despite our complete dependency on the seas, our continental look continues to make us 'ocean blind'. This in turn has caused us to accept an opaque maritime construct. Today, sitting astride an ocean named after it, our ancient land should bemoan that India is really and truly at sea.

Why maritime India?

In the last decade, the Indian maritime spread has been significant. The Indian Navy does enjoy considerable reach with long sea legs. The coast guard and the Merchant marine are continuously expanding. All these augur well. What is needed is only focused optimisation through dynamic coordination.

There is a urgent need to vastly improve across the span of trade, commerce, development, ocean exploration, fisheries, security and maritime access. Present maritime arrangements, existing regulations and compartmentalised activities of the various stakeholders, and maritime players result in endemic inefficiencies, considerable fiscal shortfalls, significant security gaps, disjointed crises coordination and sub optimal decision making.

Indian Ocean commerce

A picture is worth a thousand words as one can see below. The Indian Ocean is the 'lifeline' between the West and the East. Oil is the prime energy source that keeps the wheels of the world moving. (See figure) India is dependent on the seas for 95% of its trade and 80% for oil.

Essence of maritime governance

The central and state governments, the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, as well as other agencies have made progress in the overall maritime domain. It is understood that a national committee of secretaries with suitable participation from the Navy and Coastguard, has been instituted. This is a welcome move.

However the complexities of the maritime scenario, the functioning patterns, traditional practices, organisational behaviour and turf protectionism involuntarily create disjointed, reactive solutions with short-term advantages. Hence, the creation of a legislated statutory Maritime Governance Authority (MGA) with autonomy and accountability, is an imperative essence of our completely ocean dependent nation.

The sea-borne attack on Mumbai on 26 November, 2008, has starkly highlighted the reality of a disorganised maritime India. The bigger and unspoken fear is that such an attack could have taken place anywhere in any major port, the Andaman & Nicobar group of islands, off-shore oil platforms etc. The same goes for a major environmental disaster or a natural calamity, notwithstanding the Indian Navy's yeoman service in the last tsunami.

In reality, India and Indians are neither situationally aware, let alone be optimally prepared on the ground to manage any major contingency that may occur in our waters. Consequently, the system tends to be reactive rather than be responsive as behoves a nation of our stature and strength.

Span and scope of the MGA

A broad outline on the span and scope of the Maritime Governance Authority (MGA) is necessary to understand the import, importance and impact it would have for creation of a maritime vision, and its sustenance for sovereign India. Maritime governance is knowing, monitoring "order and

disorder" at sea in a constant, timely, coordinated and responsible manner. It also calls for proactive participative, optimal response to search and rescue, disaster management situations of varying scales.

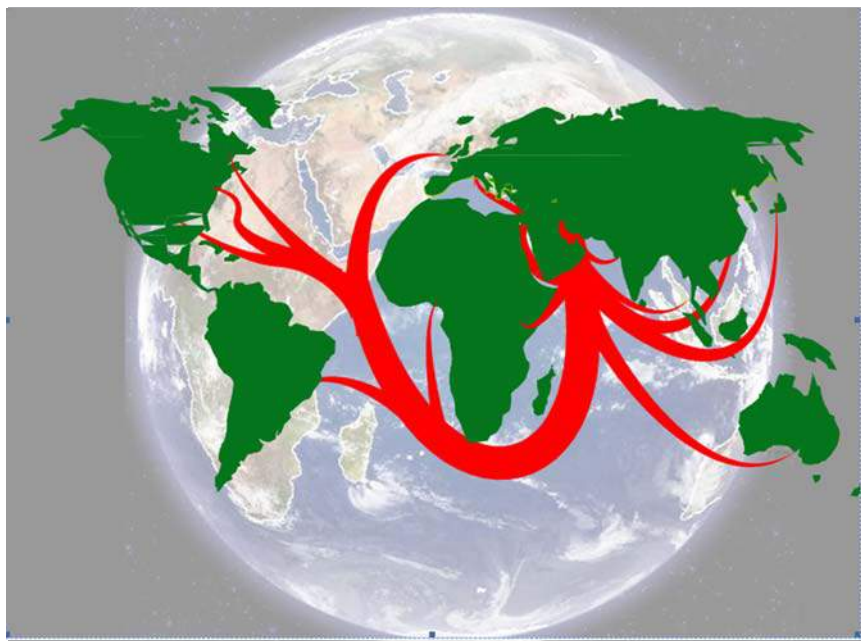
The primacy of MGA would not be, to replace the role and functioning of the various stakeholders, but to bring to bear on them; holistic maritime domain awareness and understanding the significance of their participation with synergy. Coordinating the activities of the various stakeholders including national readiness to deal with matters maritime, both in peace and war would be its primary charter. India's complete dependency on the sea being a given, it is imperative

that sea lanes of communication are continuously kept open both during peace and war. A review of the existing maritime acts and getting them updated, is an onerous overdue task that should get focused priority of the MGA.

MGA would in essence, also cater for Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) The Indian Navy alongside the Coast Guard would be the lead agency

in creating, setting up and monitoring this. Coastal surveillance would be integral to MDA. Peace time as well as war time actions and contingency planning would all be factored in. It is understood that efforts are being made in this direction. The formation of the MGA would be both opportune and optimal. A single point authority would be able to monitor, coordinate and report to the CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security)/NSA (National Security Adviser) on matters maritime, regularly. This in turn would spread awareness and synergy among all decision makers as well the maritime stake holders.

The ministries of defence, shipping, home, intelligence agencies would have suitable representation in the MGA both at the central as well regional/ state echelons. Existing systems only need tweaking up to cater for this. The CCS through the aegis of the NSA would be the apex body accountable for maritime governance.



Over one thousand million tonnes of oil from West Asia passes close to our shores, each year

The role of Legislation

Legislation would have to be ensured to enable continuous monitoring of all ocean activities. This would enable creation of data bases, monitor cargo movement, regulate traffic and bring to bear the importance and advantages of maritime management. The MGA would provide a unifying standard for all coastal states. The coastal state would be very much integral to the MGA set up in that region. This would ensure:

- Formalised link-ups with the Department of Fisheries to set up operating patterns, fishing areas, trawler/boats, issue of biometric cards to fishermen, organising local watch groups, storm warning, exercise alerts and training.
- Creation of networks linking all fishing villages, ports and jetties to marine police stations and Navy/CG ops centres.
- Oversight of coastal surveillance infrastructure and integrating this with the national grid.
- Infusion of marine police with standardised equipment, training, and joint exercises with all sea going entities.
- Follow standardised processes in handling merchant vessels, management aspects, cargo handling, customs, excise enforcement, harbour and waterway security,

emergency and contingency planning/monitoring activities.

Conclusion

The MGA is the prime essential for sustaining and growing India, alongside creating much needed Maritime Situational Awareness. India is fortunate that concerned Maritime Stake holders are individually growing, learning and contributing to Their Nation in several Ways. If these valuable entities learn to operate, communicate, coordinate in holistic 'Maritime Awareness', India would be able to accelerate its growth. Equally important would be the International Cooperation among the Indian Ocean littorals and other maritime powers. The MGA could make this happen in a facile, cost effective manner. ■

Jai Hind!



Vice Admiral Venkat "Barry" Bharathan (Retd.), writes now and then on matters of topical interest. He is grateful to life and the Navy for enabling him to be healthy and hopeful.

Made in India

(Continued from page 12)

The Navy went a step further and funded part cost of this modernisation. Today, infrastructure at all the PSU shipyards is significantly augmented and modernised, which should not only help in speeding up the construction process, increasing their throughput, but should also result in significant labour saving and higher product quality.

Looking into the future

Indian Navy is at the threshold of a major transformation and rapid growth. A fleet strength of roughly 140-150 ships is envisaged by 2022. Additionally, 80-90 ships are also envisaged for the coast guard. This translates into a need to build anywhere between 12 to 15 ships annually for the next at least 15 years, and is clearly an opportunity for many new players in the private sector. Realising this, based on an approach paper submitted by the Indian Navy in 2008-09, MoD (Ministry of Defence) has already made provisions in the DPP (Defence Procurement Procedure) to involve private Indian shipyards in the warship building activity to enhance gross national throughput.

Unlike the merchant ship industry, warship demand is not cyclic in nature, making it more attractive than commercial shipbuilding. Also, unlike commercial ships, there is no

competition for warships from foreign shipbuilders. Therefore, Indian private shipyards must grab this opportunity. This will benefit not only the Navy and the shipyards, but the nation as a whole in creating additional jobs. Once this capacity is built up, it can be used to meet export potential for warships to third-world countries. This market is presently in the hands of European shipbuilders, with whom Indian yards can easily compete. However, this is where collaborative work and hand holding will play a vital role. Both DGND and the PSU shipyards must take private design houses and shipyards under their wings, grooming them to become as capable as themselves, otherwise this opportunity may get lost. ■

Rear Admiral M.K. Badhwar, AVSM VSM IN (Retd) is one of the most highly qualified Indian shipbuilding professionals with multifarious qualifications, all from institutions of global repute. He served in the Indian Navy for almost four decades before retiring in December 2009 as Director General, Naval Designs. He made significant contribution to the whole spectrum of warship acquisition and upkeep, including design, overseeing construction, development of warship equipment, processing of financial sanctions and management of shipbuilding budgets. He was one of the founding fathers of 'Warship Building Procedure', an integral part of the DPP. He was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 2002, and later the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2009 by the Hon. President of India.



After retirement from the Navy, he was the Chief Operating Officer, Strategic Business with Pipavav Defence and Offshore Engineering Co., one of India's largest private shipyards, until December 2012.

Ruling the seas

Unlike land, guarding a country's maritime borders present multiple complexities. The seas are governed by various national and international rules and laws, says Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan (Retd.). He narrates a gripping story.

INDIA's security is founded upon the core national interest of India, namely, *to assure the material, economic and societal well-being of the people of India*. The expression, *"the people of India"* presupposes the existence of a geopolitical entity called India, in which *the people of India* exist. Like every physical entity with a defined shape, the geopolitical entity called India is intimately tied to the concept of 'borders', and it is its territorial integrity that gives India its cartographic characteristics as a physically and politically recognisable sovereign nation-state.

The issue of sovereignty is impacted by several conceptual differences between the maritime borders of a nation-state and its land ones. The concept of a land border is a relatively straightforward one, and within the land borders of a State, sovereignty is absolute. Once the land border is reached, the sovereignty of one State ends and that of another begins. The main complications are limited to contestation of the border by another sovereign State.

The challenges of maritime borders

The exercise of sovereignty within the maritime context is a far greater challenge because, in the various legal regimes adopted by international law, sovereign jurisdiction dwindles (rather than suddenly disappearing) as one proceeds seaward from the coast. Thus, on the one hand, a territorial 'border' or 'boundary' that encloses a maritime belt within which State sovereignty is absolute does exist (although here too, States must concede some sovereignty to allow for the 'innocent' passage of international shipping). On the other, one must contend with additional maritime boundaries as well. These include boundaries that define the outer limits of maritime-zones that are contiguous to the sea-territory, but within which there are specified limits to the application of national laws; and, yet other boundaries that define the outer limits of areas in which sovereignty is limited solely to sovereign rights of exploitation of living and/or non-living resources.

Public perception of the country's maritime boundary is, in and of itself, a challenge. Contrary to popular belief, the 7,516 km of our coastline does not define our maritime border. That border lies a further 12 nautical miles (nm) or 22.2 km to seawards — not seawards of our coastline, but of our internationally promulgated 'baselines' which, in some areas,

do coincide with the low-water line along our coast, while in other areas, they do not. The sea-area enclosed between our baselines and this maritime border is our 'Territorial Sea'. Here, the full majesty of India's laws applies, with the notable exception of the Right of Innocent Passage.

This right, enshrined in both, the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that India has signed and ratified, and in national legislation, permits ships of all States to navigate through the Territorial Sea of any coastal state without needing to have taken prior permission, so long as the passage is innocent, continuous and expeditious. A passage is considered to be innocent so long as it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State. It includes stopping and anchoring in so far as these are incidental to ordinary navigation or are rendered necessary by *force majeure* or distress or for the purpose of rendering assistance to persons, ships or aircraft in danger or distress.

The security conundrum

This Right of Innocent Passage within the territory of a nation-state constitutes a huge difference between land and maritime borders and, as may be readily imagined, brings in its wake a number of security challenges. For example, where foreign warships are concerned, India does not require prior permission to be sought, although prior notice is certainly required to be given, and submarines are required to navigate solely on the surface. It is reiterated that the waters of our 'Territorial Sea' are an integral part of the territory of India and every entity within it, if it is not a foreign-flag vessel engaged in 'innocent passage', is subject to every facet of Indian law to exactly the same manner as on land.

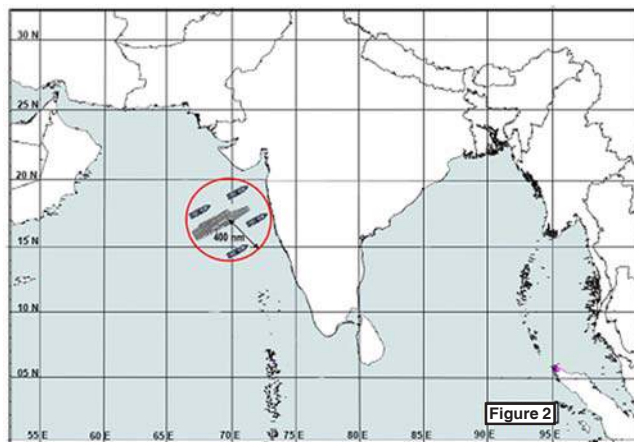
The Contiguous Zone and EEZ

The UNCLOS has also created two additional jurisdictional zones, subjecting them to varying degrees of national jurisdiction. The 'Contiguous Zone' extends to 24 nm from the same baselines that were used for measuring the Territorial Sea. Within this zone, national legislation relevant to immigration, sanitation (health), customs and other fiscal matters is applicable.

The 'Exclusive Economic Zone' (EEZ) extends to a breadth of 200 nm from the same baselines. Within its EEZ, India



(Figure 1) India's maritime border with Pakistan



(Figure 2) India's 'moving neighbours' in the seas

has the exclusive right to explore and exploit all living and non-living resources on and under the sea, as also on and under the seabed. For countries such as India that have a 'Continental Shelf' that extends beyond 200 nm from these baselines, UNCLOS stipulates that the EEZ can be 'pushed outwards' to a maximum of 350 nm from the baselines, subject to certain hydrographic conditions being met.

Since each of these maritime zones have borders or boundaries that define their inner and outer limits, the challenges of guarding them and the sea-areas they encompass, are accordingly multiplied. Moreover, within the maritime domain, the term 'border', has a number of nuanced differences with land borders. For example, the maritime boundaries between India and Pakistan – not just the boundary that would delimit and delineate each country's Territorial Sea, but also the one that would do so for each country's EEZ – continue to defy resolution. The Sir Creek Boundary issue remains vexed not only because of Pakistani intransigence over the reference median line within the Sir Creek itself, but also because the final direction of the seaward extension of the boundary line will have an enormous impact on the EEZ area and its resources that will become 'exclusive' to one or the other country.

If one were to cross the land border of any given country, one would find oneself in another country – in other words, in a land area politically controlled by some State other than the one from which one came. This is not necessarily the case with maritime borders. If one were to cross a maritime border (the outer limit of a given State's territorial sea), it is certainly possible that one might find oneself in the territorial sea of another, adjacent State that has a common territorial-sea boundary with the one from where one came. It is, however, also quite possible that one might find oneself in a sea area that does not belong to any State – in other words, in international waters.

This has significant geostrategic overtones. For most of us, the border between, say, India and Pakistan (its disputed segments

notwithstanding) is a thin wavy line that starts from Sir Creek and wends its way north-north-eastwards to the northern territories and the Siachen glacier. In the maritime context, however, the border between India and Pakistan is a thin wavy line that starts from Sir Creek and wends its way steadily westward, keeping 12 nm to seawards of duly promulgated and mutually accepted baselines, to Pakistan's common maritime border with Iran! This is depicted in Figure 1.

It is obvious that when both these borders are considered, a number of new military-strategic challenges, as well as opportunities present themselves.

'Moving' neighbours

A further nuance of maritime borders is that a coastal nation-state like India can 'acquire' a new neighbour with unexpected speed. Take the case of a modern Aircraft Carrier Group (often called a Carrier Battle Group (CBG) or, sometimes, a Carrier Strike Group (CSG). This is a synergistic and mutually-supporting conglomerate of warships centred upon an aircraft carrier. The adjective 'synergistic' is particularly apt because the combat-capability of the group as a whole is almost always greater than the sum of its parts. Current technology allows a modern, Carrier Battle Group (CBG) to exert its power to a range of at least 400 nautical miles (740 km) around it. This circle may be considered to define an area of superiority within which the air and sea space may be said to almost 'belong' to the nation owning that Carrier Battle Group. To all practical (although not legal) intents and purposes, therefore, this is a moving area of 'sovereignty'. When such a CBG's 'circle-of-superiority' impinges upon, say, the Indian coast (as depicted in Figure 2), we have suddenly acquired a new and powerful 'neighbour' who may, as long as he remains where he is, even be superior to us.

Now we could choose to counter this superiority by building, say, an air-base at this point. However, such Carrier Battle Groups can move up to a 1000 km in a single day, and can disappear and appear with little or no warning.

(Continued on page 20)

Shackled Forces?

Indian soldiers, especially those posted in the sensitive border areas, operate under severe constraints. So it is only fair that some of the Acts like the AFSPA continue to be enforced so that they can carry out their duties, rationalises Brig. Atma Ram(Retd.). Does he have a point?

NAXALITES, insurgents and anti-national elements (ANEs) are active in various parts of our Motherland, but the state of Jammu & Kashmir (J & K) has been battling an upsurge in violence since the killing of the militant Burhan Wani by security forces (SF), last year. The pelting of stones on the security personnel has been going on for quite some time and now, the recent incident of the abduction and killing of an officer of the Indian Army, Lt. Ummer Fayaz, who was on leave for a relative's wedding, must be seen as an open challenge to the nation and its forces who are engaged in dealing with the misguided youth/militants. We must know under what circumstances and restrictions our men in Khaki are performing their assigned duties in the areas where AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act) is not applicable. And, even if AFSPA is applicable, the imposition of certain local restrictions do not permit the SF to follow the Act in its totality to deal with the prevailing situations.

Defining democracy and security

While our democracy guarantees Fundamental Rights to all its citizens, for a soldier, these same rights come under some restrictions due to the nature of his/her duties. Similarly, while the 'security' of a nation encompasses protection, safety and freedom from internal and external dangers, internal dissensions cause a lot of strife in the country. Since our borders are porous, the faultlines of our society are exploited by our neighbours who wage proxy wars and pump-in drugs, man-portable arms, terrorists, fake currency, illegal immigrants etc. A soldier performs his/her task while dealing with the countrymen with minimum adequate force, with impartiality, and in good faith. But, while guarding borders or LOC (Line of Control), he/she has to be ruthless against the enemies of the State and does not hesitate to make his/her supreme sacrifice.

The enlisted soldier

After the successful completion of military and technical training, he/she pledges to go by air, sea or on ground, and perform duties as per the Constitution of India, without considering his/her own safety. Similarly, at the time of passing out as a Young Officer in the Indian Armed Forces, he/she pledges to safeguard the security of the country first, then of



The stone pelting following Burhan Wani's death in Kashmir; a worrying trend for the forces

his/her subordinates, and lastly of himself/herself. The young officer comes under the Army/Navy/Air Force Acts and is dealt with for all minor/major offences speedily, except for civil offences.

Soldiers and human rights: national conventions

Articles 14 and 21: Article 14 relates to equality before law and equal protection of law, no discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth etc. There are other conventions like right to freedom of speech and expression, to assemble peacefully and without arms, form association or unions, move freely throughout the country, choice of residence in any part of the country (except in a state where special provisions are made to the contrary), choice of profession, not to be compelled to be a witness against him/herself.

Similarly, Article 21 relates to protection of life and personal liberty, whereas protection against arrest and detention, is given out in Article 22.

Hence, all armed forces personnel are to protect human rights and uphold human dignity, which is ensured by military discipline, compassion and camaraderie, treating everyone alike, maintaining an apolitical entity, and by cultivating / creation of goodwill amongst the civil population. It is an irony that a soldier in hostile environments cannot even ensure/ask to uphold his/her own human rights.

Indian Officials Secret Act – 1923 as amended by Act 24/67 and its applicability to the SF: The Act lays down the provisions for security of military establishments, offices and

official documents, regulating admission to others in prohibited places. It also bans communication with foreign agents, wrongful communication of information, and unauthorised use of uniforms. He/she signs the certificate every year to uphold the provisions of the Act.

Soldiers' communication to the press/media: It may please be noted that as per the Defence Services Regulations, 1987, permission of the Central government is sought but, only on issues which are not political or non-controversial. Yet, readers may find certain details/subjects which are published/aired on TV channels, disregarding the effects on a soldier's morale and motivation.

Soldiers' role while performing duties in aid to civil authorities: These are maintenance of law and order, maintenance of essential services, assistance during natural calamities and any other type of assistance when requisitioned by the civil authorities (the Magistrate). Soldiers must fire with intention to incapacitate, rather than to kill. Limited legal indemnity is available under Code of Criminal Procedure Section 132. But, on ground, the local restrictions are imposed due to considerations beyond the comprehension of a soldier.

What is The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act – 1958 (AFSPA)?

This Act was passed on 11 September, 1958, by the Parliament of India. It conferred special powers upon Armed Forces in what the language of the Act calls “Disturbed Areas” in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura (states bordering China, Myanmar(Burma) and Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan). It was later extended to Jammu and Kashmir as The Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990, in July 1990.

According to the AFSPA, in an area that is proclaimed as “disturbed” (the peace, quiet, calm, or the civil government's orders have been broken), an officer of the Armed Forces has powers to:

- “Fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law” against “assembly of five or more persons” or possession of deadly weapons.
- To arrest without a warrant and with the use of “necessary” force anyone who has committed certain offenses or is suspected of having done so
- To enter and search any premise in order to make such arrests.
- The Act gives Army officers legal immunity for their actions. There can be no prosecution, suit or any other legal

proceeding against anyone acting under that law. Nor is the government's judgment on why an area is found to be “disturbed” subject to judicial review.

It was withdrawn by the Manipur government in some of the constituencies in August 2004 in spite of the Central government not favouring withdrawal of the Act. In December 2006, responding to what he said were ‘legitimate’ grievances of the people of Manipur, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared that the Act would be amended to ensure it was ‘humane’ on the basis of the Jeevan Reddy Commission's report, which is believed to have recommended the Act's repeal. But, one should know that acting without such powers would result in prolonged court cases which a fighting Force can ill afford due to constraints in manpower in such areas.

The UNHCR angle

When India presented its second periodic report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) in 1991, members of the UNHRC asked numerous questions about the validity of the AFSPA. They questioned the constitutionality of the AFSPA under Indian law and asked how it could be justified in light of Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The Attorney General of India responded to the UNHRC that the AFSPA is a necessary measure to prevent the secession of the Northeastern states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland). He said that a response to this agitation for secession in the Northeast had to be done on a “war footing.” He argued that the Article 355 of the Indian Constitution made it the duty of the Central Government to protect the states from internal disturbance, and that there is no duty under international law to allow secession. Indian officials claim that troops need such powers because the Army is only deployed when national security is at serious risk from armed combatants. Such circumstances, they say, call for extraordinary measures.”

Human rights organisations have also asked the Indian government to repeal the Public Safety Act, since “a detainee may be held in administrative detention for a maximum of two years without a court order. Nineteen years later after the introduction of this Act in the Valley, on 23 March 2009, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, asked India to repeal the AFSPA. She termed the law as “outdated and colonial-era law that breach contemporary international human rights standards”. Many human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) have condemned human rights abuses in Kashmir by Indians such as “extra-judicial executions”, “disappearances”, and torture; and termed the “Armed Forces

Special Powers Act”, as which “provides impunity for human rights abuses and fuels cycles of violence.”

Conclusion

Recently, the J & K Valley has been battling an upsurge in violence since the killing of militant, Burhan Wani by Security Forces, last year. The pelting of stones on the SF has been going on for quite some time and now, the May 2017 abduction and killing of an Officer of the Indian Army, Lt. Ummer Fayaz who was on leave for a relative's wedding, must be seen as an open challenge to the nation and its forces.

If the AFSPA is not operative, troops without legal protection, will be busy doing the rounds of the police station, in response to FIRs filed, appearing in various civil courts as witnesses or defendants.

So, the choice is yours, citizens, to keep the Act or repeal it ! As per Article 355 of the Indian Constitution, it is the duty of the Central government to protect the States from internal disturbance. I, as a citizen of this country, having

participated in counter insurgency operations in Mizoram, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and J & K, strongly feel that troops need such powers as given in the AFSPA because the Armed Forces are only deployed when national security is at serious risk from the armed combatants/insurgents and this Act enables a soldier to undertake extraordinary measures to safeguard national interests. Otherwise, he is burdened by the load of restrictions as highlighted above. ■

Jai Hind!



Brig. Atma Ram was commissioned into 2 Grenadiers on 15 June, 1969, and retired as Commandant, Military Police, on 1 November 2001. He is “War Injured” from the India-Pakistan War of 1971, with 50 percent war injury. He has served in CI environments in Sri Lanka, Upper Assam, Mizoram, J&K (Valley) and was awarded Commendation Card by the COAS for his services to the nation, in Ujjain division after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in August 1993.

Ruling the seas

(Continued from page 17)

It is, therefore, impossible to site relatively static defensive formations, such as airfields, cantonments, etc., all along our coast. This would be a prohibitively expensive way of maintaining the integrity of our maritime borders and is, in any case, a poor strategy, since the capability of maritime forces that are fundamentally mobile can only be countered by mobile maritime forces of our own.

Closely related to the whole concept of baselines and their legal implications is the subject of coastal security - one that has become increasingly vexed and emotive. Internal security involves the maintenance of law and order, where the laws in question are passed by due domestic legal and legislative processes, and enforced by the police. Since India is a democracy and not a military dictatorship, in the event of a breakdown of law and order, a specific flow-path comes into play which can only be allowed to run as follows:

‘State Police → Failed? → State Armed Police → Failed? → Central Police → Failed? → Central Armed Police → Failed? → Paramilitary Force → Failed? → Military’.

‘Failure’ could occur either because of a lack of ‘capacity’ or a lack of ‘capability’. It is important to differentiate between ‘capacity’ and ‘capability’. ‘Capacity’ is used in the context of ‘material’ wherewithal — i.e., the provision of hardware. For example, when the coastal police are given shallow-draught patrol boats with which to carry out patrols in coastal waters, this would constitute ‘capacity’. ‘Capability’, however,

involves organisational, functional, attitudinal, and training-and-implementation procedures and processes, which will enable them to logistically-support, maintain, repair, and operationally deploy these boats. While the government can provide or augment ‘capacity’, each later echelon of the aforementioned flow-path can and must provide ‘capability’ to the earlier echelons. Thus, the Navy must provide such degree of ‘capability’ to the police as will enable them to move from ‘failure’ to success. Issues and imperatives related to coastal security are not limited to the Territorial Sea alone, nor are they restricted to actions by malevolent non-State actors. They extend throughout and beyond the maritime zones of India and this is why the Navy has been the overall responsibility for coastal security which, given that it is already facing significant operational stretch, is a challenge of no mean proportions. ■

Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan retired in December 2013 after an extremely distinguished four-decade-long career in the Indian Navy, wherein he commanded several of the Navy's frontline surface combatants including the aircraft carrier INS Viraat. He was the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff for Foreign Cooperation and Intelligence, the Chief of the Staff of the Western Naval Command, and the Commandant of the new state-of-the-art Indian Naval Academy at Ezhimala, Kerala. A much sought-after leadership mentor and orator,



he is also a prolific writer. He has just completed Volume 1 of a definitive, two-volume book, *India's Maritime Strategy*. He is a Fellow of several important think-tanks including the Ananta-Aspen Centre, the National Maritime Foundation, and the Centre for Strategic and Security Studies. In 2015, he was also honoured by IIT Kharagpur with ‘Distinguished Alumnus Award’ for making significant professional contribution in his field of work.

Budgeting for defence

*India's defence budget which is less than three per cent of its GDP, is woefully inadequate, says **Dr. P.M. Kamath**, especially given the threats we face on the twin fronts of Pakistan and China. Can this budget be increased?*

NDIA has a budget that used to be introduced on the last day of February every year. For the first time, the current budget for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2018 was presented on 1 February 2017 and approved by the Lok Sabha before the commencement of the new financial year on 1 April. Next year onwards, it is likely that the budget might be cleared in the month of January.

A unique feature of the annual budget and its final approval is the highest exclusive prerogative of the elected representatives of the people. In brief, it has its origin in British people's refusal to pay taxes without approval by the people's representatives in the House of Commons. That in turn had its origin in 'no taxation without representation.'

The Indian defence budget

Though defence constitutes an important charge on the national budget, there is no separate defence budget as such; it is an important segment of the national budget. Let us examine the trends in defence allocation in Indian democratic governance. There is a generic distrust of armed forces amongst India's early policymakers after Independence. In retrospect, in the period soon after Independence, in the general context of the developments in Afro-Asian countries at that time, where military generals had assumed political power in quick succession, as for instance, in Egypt, Indonesia and Pakistan etc, probably, skepticism was good for the health of Indian democracy. But now even after 70 years of Independence and self-governance, skepticism seems to have become a negative factor as a pre-assumed and unquestioned axiom in national security policy making. If this trend is not changed, it is likely to affect the defence of the country.

Over the years, as fallout of the above observation, the defence ministry's top echelons are occupied by IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officers, who claim to have knowledge of everything under the Sun, from Agriculture to Zoology (A to Z), obviously D for Defence, F for Foreign, N for National, P for Policies and S for Security come in-between! Many security experts had recommended making a beginning by associating defence personnel at the higher levels of policy making, and also creation of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

After the Kargil War of 1999, the K. Subrahmanyam Committee had recommended the creation of a CDS position as

a single point of defence authority in place of the present service chiefs, for coordination and consultation. Nothing has come out of it, so far. Prime Minister (PM), Narendra Modi had come into office by promising to reform foreign/security policymaking by involving, what Americans call, 'in-and-out' system under which, ministers to be advised by experts associated with the party-led-think-tanks; whenever party complexion changes, a new set of advisers comes in with the new ministers.

Expenditure over the years

In India, the level of defence spending has been low always since Independence with a few exceptions, which I will discuss a little later. Since every leader is conditioned by the international environment in which he nationally operates, our first PM, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had an intellectual disdain towards men in armed forces; he was also fearful of the military taking over power in India, same as nations which had newly won their Independence, just like India.

Thus, it is a safe statement to make that successive governments, have provided only a limited budgetary allocations. Between 1950 and 1962, in terms of the percentage of a nation's GDP (Gross Domestic Product), it was hovering around 1.83. But after the Chinese aggression in October 1962, it went up to 2.56. It was only under Rajiv Gandhi that it was further raised to 2.83 per cent of GDP during 1984-85 and 1985-1986. During his later years – 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-1989, it was 3.32, 3.34 and 3.14 respectively.

The current features are in keeping with the budgets of earlier years. In dollar terms, the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) II had provided in their last budget for \$37.86 billion. They had made a provision in the interim budget for \$36.13 billion. NDA II inherited the UPA II made interim budget in 2014-2015. For the current FY, 2017-18, ₹ 359,854.12 crores has been set aside, inclusive of pensions. It does not even meet annual inflation and depreciation of the rupee. It constitutes 1.56 per cent of the GDP.

Increase in the budget allocation?

Any sudden increase in the defence budget is likely to send an adverse message to our neighbourhood, and beyond to our international community that India is preparing for some military action. Under such circumstances, we need to take

initiatives to inform our friends and foes about the grounds for our actions. Thus, during the Chinese aggression, Pandit Nehru trying to maintain his policy of nonalignment sought urgent military assistance as well as purchases for preparing Indian armed forces for any border conflict in future with China – particularly from the US and Israel. In the aftermath of the October 1962 war, there was gradual but clear collaboration between China and Pakistan on principle of the enemy's enemy is a friend – as a result, India has been accepted as a state facing two-pronged security threat.

On the other hand, when Rajiv Gandhi increased defence allocation and went in for developing a blue water Navy, Australia raised hue and cry as to the intentions of the Government of India. The saving feature then was the perception in the US and the West that Rajiv was, unlike his mother, favourably inclined towards them. That in turn, made the US refer to India as an emerging major power. This was borne out by the Indian use of its Army in 1987 to save Sri Lankan President Jayawardhane from a military coup in the face of the LTTE threat there, and India's use of its Navy in 1988 to save the Maldivian President Gayoom from a military coup and restore him to presidency.

The later years saw a decline of defence allocation below three percent. Economic bankruptcy reached under successive UF (United Front) governments and later under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, the allocation for the armed forces never reached anywhere near to three percent of the GDP. On the other hand, during Singh's last two years, in 2011-12 and 2012-13, it declined to 1.83 and 1.93 percent of the GDP, respectively.

Indian PMs since Indira Gandhi have emphasised the need for the upgradation of technology used in defence, under the slogan of self-reliance. Yet, very little has been achieved in practice. During the last few years India has retained the tag as the highest importer of weapons from foreign sources. A nation that is dependent on imported weapons or technology without arrangement for its transfer, is unlikely to be a winner in any likely conflict.

It is this aspect of defence that has prompted PM Modi to speak in terms of 'Make in India.' But such production in India takes enormous time. Thus for instance, India had agreed to have six French scorpene-class submarines built in Mazgaon Dock Ltd., in Mumbai in 2005, but in the last 12 years, only two have been built. Such undue delays defeat the very purpose of 'Make in India'.

Defence budget and preparedness

Threat perceptions of policymakers at a given time govern the determination of budgetary allocations, since national security is the first priority in the determination of budget. These perceptions are often exaggerated by the non-democratic systems; budgetary allocations are not fully reflected in the budget as some amounts are camouflaged under some innocuous headings. This could happen even in the democratic systems. But increasingly, a growing sense of accountability in governance, and under the constant fear of Right to Information (RTI), things are changing, albeit slowly, in democracies.

Conclusion

Generally stated, there is an urgent need to increase defence budget provisions. India continues to face twin threats from China and Pakistan. Like India, Pakistan has acquired nuclear weapons. Its nuclear deterrence should help Pakistan to maintain a budgetary equilibrium with India. Yet, it spends 3.4 percent of the GNP (Gross National Product): China is another headache for defence policy makers. It is also a nuclear weapons state which is 34 years ahead of India in the development of nuclear and missile technologies. It has a defence budget that is 2.5 times larger than that of India. Hence, the Defence Committee of Parliament headed by the BJP MP Major General (Retd.) B. C. Khanduri, asked for allocation of three per cent of the GDP on Defence. But it is also to be noted that only an increase in GDP growth will enable government to allocate more funds to defence.

It is also a fact that defence funds allocated are not always fully spent, for instance, the Defence department could spend only 85 per cent of the total allocated amount in FY 2015-16. Another reform is urgently needed to make funds allocated to defence purchases are transferred on a non-lapsable basis, as in Indian democracy procedure for defence acquisition is a cumbersome, time consuming process. In the absence of such an innovative procedure, the nation's programme of modernisation will certainly suffer. ■



Formerly Professor of Politics, University of Mumbai with specialization ranging from national security, peace, security, foreign affairs—Indian and American, and International politics & currently Chairman and Hon. Director, VPM's Centre for International Studies, Mumbai, affiliated to Mumbai University. He is also an adjunct Professor, in Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal University, Manipal.

Did you know?

The headquarters of the Indian Armed Forces is in New Delhi, India's capital. The President of India serves as the formal Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces, while the de facto (actual) control lies with the executive headed by the Prime Minister of India. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is the ministry charged with the responsibilities of countering insurgency and ensuring external security of India. The Indian Armed Forces, as per 2010 records, has a strength of 1.4 million active personnel and 2.1 million reserve personnel. In addition, there are approximately 1.3 million paramilitary personnel, making it one of the world's largest military forces.

KNOW INDIA **BETTER**

India's enchancing pottery

*There is something sacred about pottery, humble though it may be. From earthen lamps to more sophisticated, glazed varieties, pottery is a fascinating and colourful part of our handicrafts. **Kusum Mehta** potters around this colourful world.*





A pot being shaped

POTTERY has been called the lyric of handicrafts because of its irresistible and universal appeal. But it is the association of religion with this very humble object that has given it a deeper significance and wider dimension.

A water pot filled with water has, from time immemorial, been a symbol of good omen, and is indispensable in any ritual. A variety of earthen objects are used in rituals, like lamps, earthen drums, flower vases, musical instruments, etc.

Domestic pottery is in profusion and found in innumerable shapes and sizes, and is inseparable from any Indian scene. The common earthenware is unsophisticated in that it is that

free of eccentricity and artifice. The shapes are organic, simple but attractive, and true to the material.

Pottery from various states

In Bengal, *surai*, the common jug, is not made on the wheel, but four pieces are joined together with a decorated disc for the top, an ordinary one for the lower part, and the base. The neck alone is made on the wheel and attached to the body.

Delhi has a very old tradition of its famous blue pottery which is very distinctive. The base is powdered quartz mixed



Pots lined up for domestic use



Multani mitti; pots are made of these



The Kagzi pottery from Alwar

with gum to make a kind of soft paste to be moulded, and is vitreous and semi-transparent. While the products turned out have a Persian flavour, it is in reality quite original in its composition, claiming kinship with porcelain.

The Jaipur blue pottery is equally famous, but is quite unique, for the base is prepared out of the material from which the slip is made, and no clay is used. It is perhaps the only pottery produced without the use of clay – a couple of factors rather

simplify the procedure. One, all the materials that go into the composition, quartz, raw glaze, sodium sulphate, fuller's earth locally known as *multani mitti*, all require the same temperature, and the pottery needs to be fired only once, unlike other pottery. The other is that the slip does not develop any cracks. It is also more impervious, and therefore more hygienic for daily use.

Rajasthani pottery has certain distinct characteristics. The



The unique Jaipur blue pottery

mouths of water pots are small, probably to prevent spilling when water is being carried, a natural precaution where water is so precious. Their shoulders are painted in black and white patterns. Alwar is noted for its paper thin, almost sheer body pottery, known as Kagzi (paper) Pottery, which has distinct roots as proved by excavation finds. The painted pottery of Bikaner is tinted with *lac* colours to which the gold shade is added. The Nohar Centre of Bikaner is famed for its products.

In Uttar Pradesh, Khurja has evolved a style of its own by raising the pattern with the use of thick slips into a light relief. It also works out its own shades in warm autumnal colours like orange, brown and special light red. Floral designs in sky-blue are worked against a white background. A speciality of Khurja is a type of pitcher like a pilgrim's bottle decorated within relief by a thick slip.

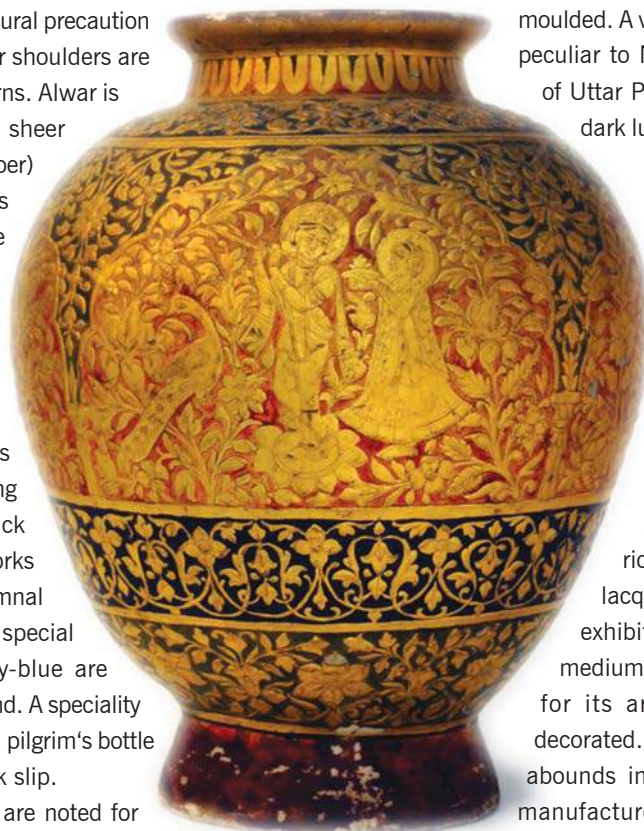
Rampur *surais* (water pots) are noted for their uniform green-blue glazes with plain surfaces, the base being prepared from red clay. Chunar is also famous and at one time used to glaze its wares with a brown slip, interspersed by a number of other tints. Excellent water containers are made in other parts of Uttar

Pradesh, like Meerut and Hapur, which are both turned and moulded. A very special kind of earthenware peculiar to Nizamabad, Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, is distinguished by its dark lustrous body.

Kangra in Himachal Pradesh is rich in clay wares all through the valley. They are mostly black or dark red but in a wide range, all for domestic use, traditional in form and most attractive.

Kutch and Saurashtra in Gujarat are noted for their earthenware both in shape and in decoration. All the richness one sees in the textiles, lacquerware, beadwork is equally exhibited through this humble clay medium. Banaskantha merits mention for its artistic water pots, skilfully decorated. Vidi, a small hamlet in Kutch, abounds in clay and contributes to the manufacture of this soft white pottery. Saurashtra has a clay called Gopichandan because of its likeness to *chandan*, or sandalwood paste, when it is tempered with water.

Potters from Gujarat, who have settled down in Mumbai form a big colony at Dharavi called Kumbharwada. They make



The painted pottery of Bikaner is tinted with *lac* colours



This pottery is made in Kutch, Gujarat



In Kumbharwada, Mumbai, where migrants from neighbouring Gujarat state make earthen pots and lamps

many new functional items, but the traditional base is retained because of their attraction and popularity.

Goa's earthenware with its deep rich red velvety surface, has a charm and style of its own. Apart from a large variety of domestic ware which include attractive water and flower pots which are a speciality, a wide range of figures and panels are made.

The southern pottery

Khanapur in Belgaum district of Karnataka is known mostly for its large-sized containers and jars, and a variety of articles



Goa's earthenware has a charm of its own

for storage and preservation. Because of the excellence of the local clay, a thin variety of pottery has evolved with design, etched or stamped on the body.

The South has several centres of noted glazed pottery. Vellore in North Arcot has black and red wares. Usilampatti in Madurai district has black pottery painted over with a special yellow substance which has an old tradition. Panruti in South Arcot is famous for a large variety of clay work, large and small figures of deities, toys, etc., and Karigiri in South Arcot is the most famous.

Karigiri pottery is unique in many ways. The base is local semi-vitreous white low fusing china clay with high plasticity known as 'namakatte' as it has been used to make the *nama* or caste mark. After it is washed, it is put into moulds to drain out excess water. When it reaches the required consistency, it goes on the wheel. Intricate items are made in parts and then joined.

Pottery from Karukurichi in Tirunelveli district is popular. It is technically superior and with novel and attractive shapes.



Red grey and black clay are used for the base. The clay body looks brighter after a coating of red ochre.

One may say that the most unlettered of potters display an innate sense of aesthetic qualities. ■

Kusum Mehta is a Jaipur-based freelance journalist.



The Padmanabha Swamy Temple

The reclining lord

The Padmanabha Swamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram shot to limelight a few years ago when underground vaults filled with treasures were discovered in the temple. Dr. Roopa Vernekar who visited this temple recently, tells us more about this fascinating find, and the divine serenity one finds here.

It was a long flight of imagination for us from Mumbai to the south Indian state Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram (erstwhile Trivandrum), where recently wealth worth crores of rupees were found in the famous Padmanabha Swamy Temple's underground secret chambers. I, for one, was very thrilled to be visiting the temple.

A myriad thoughts chased my mind as we boarded the flight to Kerala's capital. What was this temple about? Which king built it? Why were the secret chambers built? Why was all the wealth accumulated? And why were all the chambers not opened in the past decades?

We reached Trivandrum and headed to our hotel. We were staying at Chitram Hotel managed by the KTDC (Kerala Tourism Development Corporation). It was just a 10-minute auto rickshaw ride from our hotel to the temple, which is located in the heart of the city. We were in *saris* and *dhotis*, as the temple allows people in Indian ethnic attire only.

The temple

The big *gopuram* at the entrance of the Padmanabha Swamy Temple welcomed us, and the sweet breeze carrying the fragrance of the flowers and camphor drew us into a divine



The idol of Sri Ananta Padmanabha Swamy Temple at Trivandrum; the reclining lord

serenity. By the side of the temple was a tank called the Padma *theertham*, outside the temple were small outlets which sold *dhotis* for those who were unprepared and needed ethnic clothes, a must to enter the temple. We entered the temple after a strict security check (remember not to carry mobiles and unnecessary items). As we entered the temple our eyes went to the intricate carvings on the huge pillars and ceiling of the temple. As we passed each pillar and moved into the interiors of the temple, we were struck by both the architectural

excellence and the divinity that this temple exuded. We headed towards the *garbhagudi* or the confined place where the deity was situated. As we were asked to move faster in the line by a few volunteers, our eyes were blessed to catch the glimpse of Lord Vishnu who was in his reclining form on a five-headed serpent in the *garbha graham*. It was a life-size statue as if of the real Vishnu in Vaikuntha!

One of the volunteers was kind to us and allowed us to stay for a few extra minutes to admire the deity, and also gave us



The Padmanabha *theertham*



The idol of Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple is made up of 12008 *saligramams*

information about the deity and his form. She explained that the right hand of the deity was over a Shiva *lingam*, and the left hand held a lotus, and from his *nabhi* (navel) arose Bramha sitting on the lotus, and hence the name to the deity as the Padmanabha. Sitting next to Lord Vishnu are Bhudevi and Lakshmi, and the deity is made up of 12,008 *saligramams* (black stone) that were brought from the Gandaki River in Nepal. The diety is visible through three doors. We thanked her and moved on and reached the other side of the temple, where we found a huge crowd surrounding one of the temple priests, who was giving information about the temple. We too joined the crowd.

According to the priest, the *gopuram* is 100 ft tall and is broad when compared to other temples of India. The *gopuram* has seven doors located one above the other signifying the seven doors of the Vaikuntha, and the devotees symbolically cross the seven doors before reaching the deity. The temple has 365 pillars indicating the 365 days in a year with different carvings stating the significance of each day. As the priest continued, a curious visitor asked "What about the secret vaults and can we have a look at those?" The priest explained that the secret chambers were present underground and were not open to the public. He said that six vaults were opened and gold and precious stones worth cores were obtained, but one of the vaults named Kallarai B is yet unopened, as it is closely associated with Lord Padmanabha, and is not a part of the temple treasury. The Lord Ugra Narasimha is believed to be the protector of vault Kallarai B. There is a serpent image on the vault, and he alleged that that previous attempts to open the vaults had failed. Indeed, the people who tried to open the vaults found it occupied by serpents, and fled for their lives, he narrated.

According to the priest, the *gopuram* is 100 ft tall and is broad when compared to other temples of India.



A part of the treasures discovered at the temple

He contended that Kallarai B has no nuts and bolts or any other latches, but was secured using Naga *bandham* or *nagapaasams*, secret chants by the *Siddha purushas* who lived during the reign of King Marthanda Varma in the 16th century; and only by reciting the Garuda *mantra*, the sacred chant by the *Siddha purushas* can this vault be opened. It is believed by Vedic astrologers that any human attempt to open this vault could bring about catastrophes in and around the temple, or even to the whole world! The priest's audience was spellbound and had no further questions about the vaults. The priest, who was also a good guide, then received *dakshina* from the crowd and went away to perform his daily rituals.

As we walked amazed, recalling and discussing all that the priest had told us about the secret vaults, a volunteer instructed us to follow a particular line, and as we did so, without knowing where we were heading to, we landed in the temple's dininghall, where meals are served to devotees every day. We picked up our plates and were served with rice, *sambhar* (a tamarind and pulses dish), *palyam* (a vegetable gravy), and finally with sweet *pongal* to complete the meal. The meal was filling as it calmed the body of hunger and our mind was satiated. We left the temple thinking that indeed, there is enough for everyone's needs in this world, but not for man's greed. And while we may have reached the moon, let's not forget the divine as he is the creator of the moon and the universe. ■



Dr. Roopa Vernekar is a dental graduate and a writer. She likes to write articles on medical and dental topics, as well as travel and tourism.



The Baghdadi Jews of Kolkata

The Beth-El synagogue

*Not much is known about the Baghdadi Jews of Kolkata, one of the reasons being their exodus from India after Independence. **Manjira Majumdar** brings to light a book written about this community and its fascinating food, lifestyle and culture.*

Photos courtesy: www.jewishcalcutta.in

DESPITE a number of communities that came from outside into India, not much is known about their food, for the simple reason that they were not popular outside private homes. Whatever little was available outside the community had to be specially catered for. However, re-introduced in cafes and restaurants, cuisine does have a way to revive memories and provide glimpses into culture, along with a sense of shared history. It fosters new hope.

“Calcutta Stories” is an unassuming eatery located in a primarily residential area of south Kolkata. Its introduction of a Jewish platter of *aloo makala* and *shoofta*, triggered an interest in the Jewish community, whose once rich presence the citizens often tended to overlook, as unplanned construction and chaos eclipsed famous relics of the community dotting the city. The three outstanding synagogues under various stages of renovation merely added to the string of other tourist attractions like the Greek Orthodox Church, Armenian Church and, several Christian churches, big and small. Only Nahoum & Sons Confectionary inside New Market continued to thrive, selling plum cakes, *panthras*, various kinds of breads and other goodies.

India, a magnet

So food does showcase a community, for it is about people. Over time, other Indian metros as well as cities in various parts of the world have witnessed varying degrees of multiculturalism, but Calcutta (now Kolkata), the leading city of the British Empire, attracted unique immigrants, and one of these was the Baghdadi Jewish community which flourished here 200 years ago, under the British. Soon after the country gained Independence, they left in droves. Their numbers may just have been 6,000 at one time, but the impact they made in terms of their wealth and contribution to the city, was immense. Today, not just grand synagogues, but stately mansions built by successful businessmen of this city bear silent testimony to the character they lent to the city. “But once the exodus started,” says Jael Silliman, writer, academician and now a passionate archivist of her community, “it was difficult to turn the tide.”

The number of communities who came from outside to settle down in various parts of India simply cannot be counted on our fingers. They are numerous. They came in droves as



The beautiful Maghen David synagogue in Kolkata

conquerors only to settle down and adopt the land as their own. They also came as merchants and traders, as religious apostles, and those fleeing persecution in their own homelands.

The mixing and assimilation over centuries resulted in wonderful hybridisations or rather fusion in sartorial styles, cuisines, architecture, music and even language. This was a slow cooking process perfected over time and centuries. But

what is fascinating is to separate the different strands of history; while some communities stayed on, they fiercely retained their tongue, culture and cuisine, often making do with ingredients that could be substituted in place of the original, creating newer ideas. And just as they had come, these communities vanished due to various historical reasons. They chose to re-migrate, now to greener pastures, on the move nonetheless.

If one looks back, the Indian metros, especially Calcutta and Bombay (now Mumbai) were essentially microcosm of the universe. These two cities held more number of communities both from the east and west and mostly inhabited areas that were urbane, so much so that the word cosmopolitan could well have been coined from here.

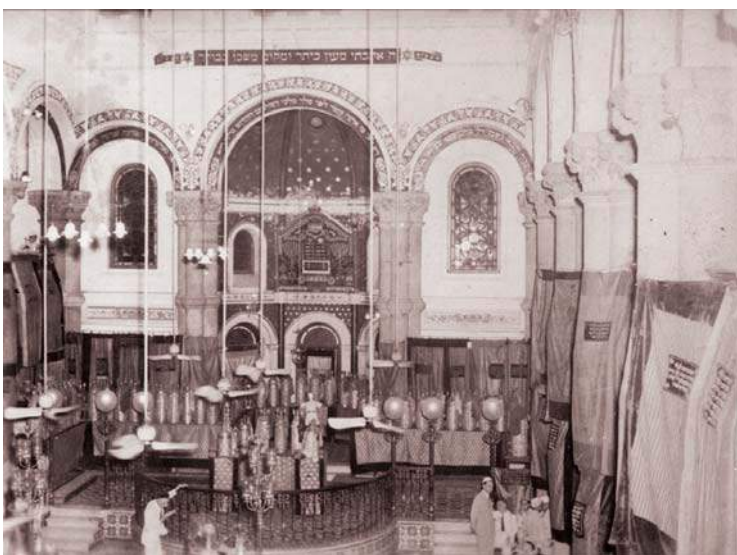
The Jewish community with ties in UK, and other commonwealth countries, as well as USA, provided the clannish support as is wont with migrants, and many went there to re-establish their fortunes once again and succeeded due to their innate intelligence and creativity. The “exodus” started in the 40’s and continued till the late 60’s, as the community was apprehensive that an independent India may not be that open-minded towards their business interests. Israel too was a new country that needed people, and the Jews considered it their own country at long last.

A personal account

If we go with personal histories to construct a community, Jael’s life serves as a wonderful example. Her mother and brother left for Israel while her father stayed back. Jael’s mother, Flower, a very striking looking woman, started an Indian restaurant in Tel Aviv called ‘Maharaja’ which dished up *tandoori* chicken. “But to adhere to *kosher* laws of food preparation, I could not marinate the chicken in curd, so I used lime,” she says.

Jael went to USA to study and work, but is now back in the city of her birth, adding to the digital archive she has painstakingly built with support from Jadavpur University and other partners. Her reverse migration somehow, is a bridge between the past and present. Her mother too has joined her, which raises hopes that roots can be re-kindled, even if the past glory of the erstwhile grand, often charmed lives, is irretrievable.

Jews are an ancient people. There are various Jewish communities who crisscrossed over countries and continents and travelled far and wide as traders and businessmen. In India, the major Jewish communities were the Malabari Jews (an entire chapter emerges here); the Pardesi Jews, who came to Cochin from Spain in the 16th century and those considered the lost tribes Bene Israel of the Konkan coast, and Bene Menashe of Manipur and Mizoram.



An early photo of the Maghen David synagoge; you can see all the *torah* scrolls lined up for the festival of Simchat Torah (The Rejoicing of the Law)

The Jews in Calcutta primarily came from Iraq, Iran and Syria. Known collectively as Baghdadi Jews; some went to Bombay. In Calcutta they built one of the most beautiful synagogues – Maghen David, in addition to Neveh Shalome and Beth-El synagogues, which have witnessed various additions made by rich businessmen when they were here, but were often images of neglect in the past as the number of Jewish people rapidly dwindled. As the religion demands a quorum, that is, 10 people minimum for a congregation, one can understand the difficulties in a city in which just a handful of Jews are left.

The Maghen David is one of the most ornate synagogues in Asia. Built in 1884 by David Ezra in memory of his father Elias David Ezra, its typical red brick finish stands out with its high steeple. It is built in the Italian Renaissance style with checkered marble finish, stained glass windows, and ornate floral pillars giving it a European look.

Today, historically, facts on the community can be accessed virtually but piecing together the various academic and fictional works by Jael, throws up highlights of a community, which in spite of a very trendy anglicised lifestyle, fiercely clung to their rituals and traditions. “For instance, Jewish Girls School (which once stood on Pollock Street in bustling Burra Bazaar area before being shifted to its present location on Free School Street) educated both the rich and poor Jewish girls, but today has more Muslim students and certainly, not a single Jew,” informs Jael. Most Jewish girls from well-to-families studied in the nearby Loreto House, and unlike Anglo-Indians, went to college.



The Esplanade Mansions is one of the landmarks of Calcutta

Adds Flower who studied at Irwin College, Delhi, “It was a given that the community did not want its girls to study in Presidency College because then they would marry outside the community.” In fact, that’s what exactly happened to girls who did! With so many Jewish women in the city, inter-community marriages did take place, but they were very few in numbers. English slowly replaced Arabic as their tongue, the Hebrew words restricted to various rituals. Under the British rule English was the lingua franca and the men learnt to speak Hindi and Bengali too. The children had to study Hebrew to be initiated into the study of the *torah*, the first of the five books of the Old Testament. Then there was the Elias Meyer Free School and Ezra hospital to serve other communities as well.

If the men from the Jewish community added to their wealth and real estates, they were also known for great philanthropy. Some of the stellar names to dot the cityscape to date are Elias David Ezra behind the opulent Esplanade, Chowringhee and Ezra Mansions; Elias Meyer, B.N Elias who owned National Tobacco Company, Ezekiel Judah, Elias Shalome Gubbay who donated parts of the Gubbay House to the Alipur Zoo still so popular among citizens and visitors alike. Solomon Mansion was another such stately building, and it comes as no surprise that Calcutta as it was known earlier, came to be known as the “City of Palaces.”



The Jewish Girls School once educated both the rich and poor Jewish girls (Photo: Ashok Sinha)



Elias Shalome Gubbay donated parts of the Gubbay House to the Alipur Zoo (above) (Photo: Elliott Abraham)



Jael Silliman's mother's wedding photo

A community which flourishes in the city has its share of all classes. The priests followed the traders and Shalome Obadiah Ha-Cohen who is said to have founded the community. The priest is known as Cohen in Hebrew who ensured strict following of the Jewish way of life.

Jael's own books are very informative. Among one of her books, an academic treatise takes a look at the personal histories of her grandmother, mother and herself in *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames – Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope*. Regarding it, noted scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak comments, "It is about a revisionist identity." Her gender identity notwithstanding, Silliman's other two fictional accounts *A man who wore many hats* and the recent *A teak Almirah* give a closer, warmer look at her life in her city, community and her family. Jael definitely wears her many hats from Harvard, Columbia and academic tenures with Iowa, so very lightly.

While the Jews maintained a lavish lifestyle by throwing parties and attending them, the strict adherence to Sabbath from Friday to Saturday is worth noting. Large amounts of food were cooked and served to guests over Friday and Saturday, till the three stars signified the end of Sabbath. Other rituals such as the coming of age for boys known as Bar Mitzvah were conducted with due respect and pomp. Traditional delicacies

like cheese *samboosa* and *baklava* were served at these occasions.

In a city that never was known for being anti-Semitic, instead, quite the opposite in welcoming all faiths, it is sad that in times rising of close mindedness, such pluralism is dying out. Luckily, we have an exhaustive, digitally created archive on the Calcutta Baghdadi Jews, but that may be the only "tangible" remains of a vibrant community, when the names etched on stones also get erased due to the elements.

To conclude, Jewish cuisine has not set the Hooghly on fire, but when you bite into that *aloo makala* that is a whole potato crisply fried on the outside and soft in the inside, there is renewed curiosity of a new generation to look at this unique community that once lived here – their various artefacts and simply, their lives; a crusty surface hiding a soft, warm heart. ■



Having worked as a full-time journalist, Manjira Majumdar today is an independent journalist combining writing with part-time college teaching and media advocacy. She is also the author of 3 children's books: *Ten of Us*, *The Story of Anjana* and *Ghost Stories from Bengal & Beyond*.

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Oceans	Water woes	Safety	The Northeast	Humour	India's Heritage

Yes, people who have seen my items identify me as the ‘coconut man!’



Calm, cool, smiling, **Narayan Mahadevan**, 77, retired as Deputy General Manager, Advtg. & Mktg, Menezies Cosmetics, makers of the Old Spice range of toiletries. A creative and artistic person, he has put his skills to good use to create an array of ornamental crafts like key chains, table lamps, animals and coin boxes using raw materials like coconut shells. This is a hobby of passion and he has yet to try to milk it commercially. **A. Radhakrishnan** spoke to this unassuming man, who is literally converting waste into pieces of art.

How would you introduce yourself?

I am a science graduate, and have also done my Intermediate course in Art conducted by the Government of Maharashtra, and a four-year course in Applied Arts through the Sir J.J. Institute of Applied Arts, Mumbai. I learnt visualising and designing of advertisements for print and audio media, media planning, block making printing, batik printing, lithography, portrait drawing in pencil and colour from models, etc.

Who was the inspiration behind this hobby? Did you learn on the job or attend a handicraft course?

I got into this hobby out of my interest in art and designing. My father Ramier Narayan is the main inspiration, as he used to make interesting articles out of coconut shells during his

leisure time. I learnt it on the job by just watching him.

Describe this hobby in your own words.

I work on anything that inspires me like models of animals like tortoises, toads, pigs and birds, and utilitarian items like pen stands, table lamps, bowls, pots, key chains, and coin boxes.

Explain the process of creation? How does the craftwork begin and end? How cost effective is this hobby?

First and foremost, I buy the coconuts looking at their size and shape. I use very simple tools like; a) A small Axa file for cutting, b) Rough files for smoothening, c) Scraper for cleaning the inside of the coconut, d) Small jeweller's files in various shapes, sizes and textures for creating the desired designs.



Creative and innovative handicrafts made out of coconut shells



Decorative items made by the 'coconut man'

I use fevikwik super glue for joining the pieces. I sprinkle the coconut powder I collect during cutting and filing to fill gaps in joints. It is not very costly except for the cost of coconut, adhesives, tools (one time cost), but it is very laborious. I work on my own without any help. This workmanship involves days or months, depending upon the items.

How many types of items can be made out of coconut shells?

While sky is the limit, I must have already made about 300 items.

Do you go in for contemporary concepts?

Contemporary concepts, yes! For instance, during the Navaratri doll festival (*Golu*) I make a separate section of my items captioned 'Cocunut-Kalpa Vriksha'. I have made Kumbham, i.e., coconut on a pot fully decorated with colourful beads for my son's wedding.

I have also made *nelaguthengai* (during marriage functions the bride and groom play a game of rolling the coconut to and fro.) A round coconut is chosen and decorated with beads with *ghungurus* (little bells) inside, to make it chime while rolling.

Transforming a discarded item like a coconut shell is a tedious art? Where do you derive the patience for it?

Coconuts are always cut by me to the desired shape and never broken. I have patience galore!

Do you think other material could also be equally creative?

Yes, discarded plastic jars, toothpaste caps, toothbrush handles, roll on balls, etc., can also be creatively used.

Do you see a commercial value in your hobby?

I do it for my pleasure and satisfaction. There is a tremendous

commercial value for such handicrafts, but they are quite expensive. I have myself sold a few items. I have also considered making it a commercial venture in the near future. But that will require certain machines, a suitable place, and some manpower. Prices will vary depending on the items and labour involved.

Do you think there is a good market for handicrafts fashioned from these natural materials? Which items are more in demand?

Yes, there is very good demand for items made of natural materials, such as table lamps, pen stands, tortoises and other exotic items.

Does this hobby have government support?

I have never approached the government for any support, content as I am with treating it as a hobby. And definitely there are many other such artists, as I have read articles about them in magazines and social media.

Does this work give you your own identity? Has anyone in your family taken to your hobby?

Yes, people who have seen my items identify me as the 'coconut man!' My brother and younger son have also taken to it as a hobby.

What were the first items you made out of a coconut shell?

My first items were a few tortoises, which I consider auspicious, and which I have presented as gifts to many people.

What qualities are needed for this hobby? How happy does this hobby make you? Have you participated in exhibitions and contests and won any prizes or awards?

A creative mind and tons of patience are a requisite. I am fully satisfied, and am elated when others appreciate my work. However, I have not participated in exhibitions or contests because frankly with my then job and creative work, I simply had no time.

What is your advice to those wanting to take up this art?

Anyone who has a creative mind, plenty of time, and tons of patience, can take up this hobby/profession, but one should have an interest first. ■



A. Radhakrishnan, Pune based freelance journalist, with close to four decades of experience in mainstream print journalism, is aiming for the digital platform. Making friends interests him and for company, he loves music and books. He also writes short stories and indulges in poetry.

“The SJSRY scheme should be continued as it was. It has been altered now in an unfavourable way.”



The group of 30 business women from Mumbai

A group of 30 business women from Mumbai went on a pleasure cum educational trip to Bangkok in January this year. There's nothing extraordinary about that apart from the fact that it took them many months of saving, planning and effort to do it. They are first generation business women from the margins of the Maximum City. They began their long journey out of the slums of the city. Their startups had survived the test of time, fierce competition and inexperience. It

is not ever so often that this happens in the city of opportunities especially, not on the wings of a government policy for poverty alleviation.

Anuradha Kalhan spoke to **Manisha Katke** and **Vaishnavi Sawant** from the group to know the struggles and success of these enterprising women. Here is their story...

Why and how did all 34 of you choose to go to Bangkok?

Manisha: We are all members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) started under the guidance of Community Development Officers (CDOs) of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) under the centrally sponsored policy called Swarn Jayanti Shahri Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY). So we share a common platform. For a decade now we have been running our small enterprises based on our group savings, loans with government subsidy and training. None of us had ever travelled abroad; we had seen films and pictures and we all wanted to go. Our CDO was about to retire and she suggested we make that giant leap. Our CDOs accompanied us. We looked at the options offered and only Bangkok and Sri Lanka fitted in our budget. We chose Bangkok after we heard that it has a flourishing market and many women operating in it.

Vaishnavi: Yes, our budgets, our desire to look at other markets specially markets where women participate actively and the guidance of our CDO are the reasons we had the courage to think of it and then decided to go to Bangkok.

What problems did you face in organising the trip?

Manisha: The most difficult part was making passports. We had to collect required documents which none of us had in any kind of order. It took six months just to collect address proof, marriage certificates, and school leaving certificates, name change affidavits.

We did it ourselves. The next hurdle was that many ladies in the group, who were very keen to go, did not have enough savings to pay up their share. They did it slowly over months.

Do you think the trip was worth the effort?

Manisha: Yes, certainly. The main purpose of the trip was to see other markets and specially women working and handling business. We saw a lot of women working enthusiastically, politely and systematically where ever we went. What we also noticed was that there was a high level of discipline, processes and system in every aspect of the country. That and the cleanliness really impressed us. I think in India we are far behind in all these dimensions. We are not even ten percent there.

Where would you like to go next, why and when?

Manisha: We are thinking of going to Sri Lanka next, to learn what we can from that country. It will take us two to three years to generate time and resources.

Vaishnavi: If I wanted to go for sight-seeing, I would go to Switzerland. But to see a big market perhaps Dubai would also be a good place.

What did you like most about Thailand?

Manisha: We noticed that no matter how angry they are, they talk very softly, kindly and politely. The management of systems is so efficient that everything is orderly, clean and tidy. If the market is to close at 5.30 pm it will close exactly at that time. We enjoyed the Alcazar show, the grace and beauty of the dance, very much.

Vaishnavi: I liked many things, but most of all the peaceful, efficient systems in place for traffic and public hygiene and general cleanliness. The attitude and behaviour of people is remarkable. Women are active in all spheres, are skillful and have good business acumen. They make their own decisions, even about marriage. There is a lot to learn from them.

What did your friends like about the place? Did you discuss it with them?

Manisha: Yes we discussed among us what we observed. We noticed how they manage their waste and how everyone participates in keeping everything clean as if they owned the city and the country not just their homes.



Manisha (centre) with CDOs Shubha and Mangala

They even treat gay people respectfully. There was a market named Indira and in that and in other markets we saw so many women, all of who were working safely, confidently and enthusiastically.

Vaishnavi: We mostly liked the same things, especially the floating market and to see women multi-tasking.

What do you all manufacture in Mumbai?

Manisha: We do an assortment of things within our SHGs. My group manufactures jute bags, some make leather bags, garments, others jewellery, files, paper products, liquid soap, phenol, etc. Others run a restaurant, some do catering etc. Most of our exhibitions and sales are CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities of companies.

We have learned the important requirements of a viable business. We have learned to treat our business like

our baby, to deal with customers politely and honestly, make our products as well as we can and as neatly as possible. If the products are costly we should be able to explain why.

Vaishnavi: I operate a food business. We run a tea stall along with four women from my SHG. We undertake catering; make festival sweets and other edibles.

Other women in the group make candles, perfumes, jewellery, garments etc. We try to become more and more financially and mentally capable.

Tell us how you began your work?

Manisha: It is a long story and an intense struggle; you see all of us were very poor, struggling with low and unsteady family incomes, hounded by money lenders in our slum. Then we heard of this government policy SJSRY and formed Bachat Gat Self Help Group (SHGs). We would meet every month and pool our savings, then got linked to some public sector bank when we started SHG account. We started some work in packing and after five to six years we started the jute bag business as our own venture.

(Continued on page 42)



At the Alcazar show



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The sky is not the limit

The Indian Air Force needs to upgrade and indigenise more if it hopes to compete with the external threats posed by Pakistan and China. Air Marshal Brijesh D. Jayal (Retd.) takes us in-depth into the issue.

THE 'Basic Doctrine of the Air Force' issued in 2012 defines air power 'as the total ability of a nation to assert its will through the medium of air. It includes both civil and military aviation, existing and potential.' The doctrine amplifies that aviation related research and development, aeronautical and the nation's space capabilities, all have a force multiplier effect on air power and rightly concludes that 'the strength of India's air power lies in the IAF (Indian Air Force), with the capabilities of air and arms of the other services reinforcing that strength.'

IAF today is the fifth largest in the world with the sanctioned combat force level of 42 Squadrons approved some decades ago. Over this period, induction of modern combat aircraft with far greater performance levels along with force multipliers like the Flight Refuellers and AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control Systems) have augmented the IAF's operational potential manifold. Yet, for a two-front threat, a minimum number of combat squadrons is vitally important, and this is where the IAF has a problem.

Amongst the other elements of air power civil aviation is experiencing exponential growth and whilst India is the ninth largest civil aviation market today, it is forecast to be the third largest by 2020. HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) with 21 Divisions, has so far produced 15 types of aircraft from in-house R&D (Research & Development), and another 14 types under licence. Defence Research consists of fifty laboratories employing 5,000 scientists and 25,000 technical and non-technical staff with six laboratories dedicated to aeronautics alone. In addition, there is an independent design authority, the ADA (Aeronautical Development Agency) whose LCA (Light Combat Aircraft) is only now entering service. Our space capabilities under ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation), in many areas, are considered at par with the most technologically advanced nations. Added to these, the huge potential in the private sector is raring to go, untapped only due to policy indecisiveness.

Challenges in the Indian sky

There is little doubt that taken together, India has the potential to wield significant air power, and in terms of aeronautics R&D and manufacture, she ranks amongst the

top nations of the world. That this potential is not being realised and that the IAF and commercial aviation are both predominantly dependent on imports is a subject that needs introspection. This contrast is more striking when we see that in our space endeavours, ISRO continues to excel and compete favourably with other advanced nations.

In terms of a conflict situation, the IAF will be faced with a two-front war pitted against Pakistan and China, both of whom have converging strategic interests, and both are rapidly modernising their respective Air Force. Whilst the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is a relatively smaller Air Force, it can count on its numerical disadvantage being offset by a large part of the IAF remaining committed to a simultaneous Chinese threat. Beyond this, both countries have jointly developed and are producing the JF 16 Thunder, a light weight multi-role fighter that will become the back bone of the PAF. The latter can hence be assured of not just adequate product support, but quick replenishments in the event of losses in a conflict scenario.

The IAF, on the other hand, continues to suffer from depletion of its combat squadron force. From an authorised 42 Squadron strength, its strength is around 32 Squadrons, expected to fall to 29 by year end as older platforms end their technical life. The IAF being both a technology and a capital intensive service, is not only heavily dependent on imports, but a victim of high costs as well. To these woes is added a lethargic and bureaucratic procurement system. A system that took a shocking two decades from the time a high-level committee identified the absence of an Advanced Jet Trainer as a major cause of high accident rates and the MoD (Ministry of Defence) accepted the need in the early eighties, to its first arrival. The requirement for the more recent MMRC (Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft) project was initiated in 2001 with the procurement process beginning in 2007, and what the IAF will see a few years hence is a severely curtailed number of platforms.

It was the then Vice Chief of Air Staff (now CAS or Chief of Air Staff) who last year had stated in a media briefing that the IAF did not possess adequate numbers to execute a full air campaign in a two-front scenario. Whilst this caused hardly a ripple in the corridors of MoD, a 2016 paper titled *Troubles*

They Come in Battalions: The Manifold Travails of the Indian Air Force by Dr. Ashley Tellis of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was far more forthright, and hence the subject of considerable discussion amongst the strategic community. Having meticulously analysed the IAF's capability across the board, the author attributes the erosion in IAF force levels to 'serious constraints on India's defence budget, the impediments imposed by the acquisition process, the meagre achievements of the country's domestic development organisations, the weaknesses of the higher defence management system, and India's inability to reconcile the need for self-sufficiency in defence production with the necessity of maintaining technological superiority over rivals'.

Whilst it must be a matter of satisfaction to the IAF that professionally, Tellis considers IAF to be 'exemplary among air forces of the developing world', the IAF needs to ask itself why it has failed to convince the national security planners of air power's crucial role in a future conflict.

It needs recalling that in the Gulf War, air power had played a dominant role based on which it was considered that many nations would imbibe lessons and increase their own emphasis on air power. One study sponsored by the US Air Force, was undertaken by the RAND Corporation on the IAF. One of the conclusions of the 1995 report titled *IAF-Trends & Prospects* by George Tanham and Mary Agmon is: 'Overall, the army continues to dominate consideration of Indian defense matters. The war in the Gulf has not appeared to improve the IAF's political position in the Indian security community, nor has it spurred it to plan for a greater role for air power in India's defense.' It would be fair to say that some two decades later, this statement still rings true.

In many ways, the weaknesses that Tellis mentions are all inter-linked. At the heart of the problem is a higher defence organisation that is not responsive to modern day security challenges. The Kargil Review Committee had pointed out many grave deficiencies in India's security management system, and concluded that the political, bureaucratic, military and intelligence establishments appear to have developed a vested

interest in the status quo. This comment was indeed prescient, as more studies and committees later, except for minor tinkering, the system continues to resist change.

Misplaced bureaucratic authority?

As the armed forces continue to remain outside of the policy making echelons, it is the bureaucracy which holds sway in decision-making without being accountable for the operational consequences of this unfettered authority. Left to themselves, rather than explore jointness, rationalise roles and missions, and look for integrated war fighting and affordable options, the services prefer to zealously guard their respective

turfs. The Joint Service Doctrine recently released with much fanfare clearly shows that the three services are not in favour of 'jointness' either in the managerial sense or in the operations domain of joint operational commands. In contrast, China with its defence budget thrice the size of India's,



The IAF needs to upgrade and indigenise more

continues on a path of reform reducing its seven military regions to five Theatre Commands towards synergised ground, naval, air and rocket forces' operations.

Within the limited Indian defence budget allocations, each service continues to zealously guard its share of the cake, with the result that a capital intensive service like the IAF must make do with a traditional percentage share of around 22-24 % of the total defence budget. In FY 2016-17, the IAF was allocated ₹ 27,556 Cr towards capital expenditure of which ₹ 22,871 Cr (83%) was for committed liabilities, with only ₹ 4,685 (17%) remaining for new schemes. (*Ref IDSA Issue Brief by Laxman K. Behera*). To put this in perspective, the cost of one Rafale fighter along with its weapons package and essential supporting infrastructure would roughly equate to around ₹ 750-850 cr! With mere crumbs allotted towards its capital acquisition kitty, it is no surprise that IAF modernisation continues to suffer across its transport, helicopter and air defence domains, whilst its combat force level continues to shrink.

As to the other components of air power that include civil aviation, aeronautics research and development and aerospace

manufacturing, unless these are all aligned to a national aerospace vision and an integrated plan, the huge untapped aerospace potential of the nation will remain unrealised. Keeping the private sector out of defence manufacturing and now procrastinating interminably on how to co-opt it, we have consigned ourselves to being heavily dependent on imports!

The China story

China, on the other hand, has identified air and space to be high priority areas from the military and security stand point, as also towards a strategy to developing military technology, a sound military industrial base and for exports, which in turn will further their economic, geo-political and diplomatic interests. Such a long-term strategic vision for Indian aeronautics has singularly been lacking, notwithstanding the proposal for a National Aeronautics Policy driven by a National Aeronautics Commission; a structure for which was recommended by none other than President Abdul Kalam, when he was the President

of the Aeronautical Society of India.

Concluding an article on the Affordability of Air Power in the *Vayu* magazine in 2012, this writer had wistfully concluded: 'In these times of significant social, economic and security challenges, the best contribution that our MoD and armed forces can make towards effective and affordable defence is to plan jointly, wisely and with foresight. The choice is to 'swim together – or sink individually!'

As we attempt to bolster our resolve to rule over the skies,

we need to pause and reflect on whether 'business as usual' is an option any longer. ■



Air Marshal Brijesh D. Jayal is a retired Air Marshal of the Indian Air Force and has served as Deputy Chief of Air Staff, AOC-in-C, Eastern Air Command, and AOC-in-C, South Western Air Command.

"The SJSRY scheme should be continued as it was. It has been altered now in an unfavourable way."

(Continued from page 38)

The biggest problem was finding buyers, marketing our products. Initially MCGM gave us some venue for selling but it did not bring us enough demand, so we did some exhibitions and slowly got involved with exhibitions as part of CSR activities of firms. To be able to deal with that world we took a personality development course, learned to make power point presentations, dress and conduct ourselves with some confidence.

Vaishnavi: We began our work on a pani-puri handcart outside a garden. We used it in the off hours like mornings to sell tea. Then we got a stall of our own for selling snacks and tea. We did this for 13 years. More recently, we have bought a small shop for a restaurant in Panvel.

What was the most difficult part of your life in Mumbai once you came here after marriage?

Manisha: The most difficult part was living in a slum in a 10 ft x 10 ft room with my in-laws. It was a nightmare. I had a bigger room to myself in the village.

Vaishnavi: Everyone in my home opposed me when I wanted to start the tea selling venture on the roadside. Even my own family was very embarrassed. Our neighbours and friends teased us a lot.

How did you overcome your problems?

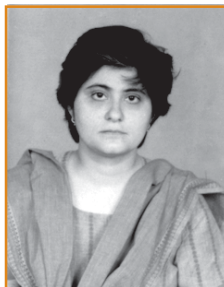
Manisha: One cannot overcome any problem in the city

without money. We did many things to earn money till we finally settled in this business. We have now bought larger homes.

Vaishnavi: I decided in my heart that I would not turn back from my venture. My friends in the SHG stood by me. Our trust and support for each other was firm, steady and strong. Our dream of owning a shop and keeping its name 'Jai Mahalaxmi Bachat Gat' has finally come true. Our hardwork has been rewarded. The same people who teased us earlier now appreciate us.

What help did you get from the government, MCGM and others?

Manisha: We got support, training and loans under SJSRY. Loans with a subsidy, when we paid that back we got a bigger loan of ₹ five lakhs for our business. This was the best and biggest help we have ever got from any government. The SJSRY scheme should be continued as it was. It has been altered now in an unfavourable way.



Vaishnavi: The biggest help was our CDO who showed us the way forward, gave us confidence and encouragement. That and the loan and subsidy that followed changed our life. ■

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

Love in the times of war

Here's a sweet love story set in the background of the armed forces. And it's for real, says **Rashmi Oberoi**, as her parents celebrate five decades of being together.

"Why, darling, I don't live at all when I'm not with you."

– Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

I have vivid memories of "Love Is A Many-Splendored Thing" playing in the background... was it Andy Williams or Connie Francis crooning the beautiful number? I don't remember, but I do know, that song had a powerful effect on me with its emotion invoking lyrics. Love can do that to you and more! There is no greater feeling than falling in love, being wooed and romanced, and each day blossoming into a love that is true and eternal. The bond just strengthens over time and is there to stay. A great love affair bespeaks of an emotional bonding, a physical attraction, a mental connection, unspoken words that mean much more than words, stolen glances, an inner radiance, and so much more.

On the flip side, there are those that 'fall' in and out of love at the drop of a hat... proclaiming love for a person with 'I don't know what I'd do without you' one moment and 'I hate you and want nothing to do with you' the very next is really not love. The very essence of the word is lost in all this. In my many definitions of love; words like being unselfish, loyal, benevolent, respect, concern hold a meaningful place. And love should be shown...not just said inanely. It is to be felt...to be sensed.

So even in this fast-paced world of ours, where at times it seems as if love has gone flying out of the window...there are also times where you keep the faith and your trust in that one word stays focussed and flourishes into a virtue that exhibits human compassion, kindness, affection and magnanimity. Stories that make you believe in that one word and even if at times, things look bleak, the belief keeps you going and the light at the end of the long, dark tunnel shines through. A story of a brave soldier's love has instilled in me that conviction.

An eternal love story

I narrate briefly the love story of this brave Indian soldier who was severely wounded during the war with Pakistan in 1965, when he was a captain with just four years' service. At that time, he was serving in the much troubled Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir with his battalion. On account of the severity of his wounds, his right leg had to be amputated at the Military Hospital, Delhi. Thereafter, he was transferred



The writer's parents; they have the perfect love story

to Military Hospital, Pune, for another operation and for getting an artificial leg fitted after the wounds had completely healed. The Artificial Limb Centre at Pune is adjacent to the Military Hospital and his stay here was for about nine months.

As per the custom in the armed forces, the better halves do often volunteer to assist in looking after patients in Military hospitals. In the Pune hospital, a very senior and highly respected lady belonging to the officer's regiment, who herself was the widow of a renowned Army General, used to regularly visit the hospital and especially see this young soldier, as he belonged to the same regiment. Often, she used to be accompanied by her 20-year-old daughter, then studying in college. Although the officer and the young lady had met earlier, before he had lost his leg, it was only during the hospital visits that love blossomed between the two. As the Captain's amputated leg healed, he started moving on crutches

and thus became mobile. This enabled him to visit the young lady's house often and meet her at the Army Clubs and the RSI on Saturday evenings and watch movies at West End.

They were often escorted by another wounded officer who had lost his left leg.

Their fairy tale "Romance on Crutches" was soon the talk of the town. Their whirlwind courtships days are spoken of even today. They shared the 'Honeymoon Special' ice-cream at a Kwality ice-cream vendor... wined and dined at 3 Coins and secret rendezvous at 'Latifs', to scrumptious Chinese food at Kamlin, their love bloomed. Salim, a crippled beggar, who sat outside 'Kwality' and had only the upper part of his body that rested on a flat board with wheels would notice the love-birds and smile at them and give them his blessings...he would be tipped generously, and much later wept with joy when he learnt the couple had got married.

After the young officer was fitted with an artificial leg, his mobility became near normal. He also had no inhibitions about moving around on crutches or with an artificial leg in public; unfortunately, many such physically challenged persons do have such inhibitions. It was perhaps this grit, determination, humour and 'cool', coupled with his dash and drive and zest for life, which the young lady admired and fell for.

The Captain had found for himself a lovely person indeed – she was vivacious, an extrovert, fond of the outdoors, extremely sincere and honest, and a balanced person in both head and heart. Although the soldier sometimes wondered whether it would be right to woo a beautiful girl even though her paramour had lost one leg in the war, however, the young lady never displayed any negative feelings on account of this. In any case, the young man used to tell everyone and still does that "disability is never a loss of limb or an organ, but is in the mind itself". In his own mind, he never wavered from this philosophy and instead took it as a challenge.

The young lady being a Maharashtrian and the Captain a Punjabi, was never a hurdle. The Captain's parents were highly

progressive in their outlook. Hence, there was no hesitancy or opposition from his family. The young lady also came from a modern family with liberated views. Her father was the

scion of a well-known and reputed Maratha family from the erstwhile State of Kolhapur. Her mother was a Muslim lady, also from Kolhapur, belonging to the famous Polomaster family. Theirs too was a love marriage that started with love-notes being left for each other, hidden in the cycle bells. They had eloped and got married when she was studying medicine at Lady Harding College, New Delhi. News of them running away and secretly getting married had made headlines in the newspapers, way back in the 1930s.

This paean is for Daulat and Capt. Vijay (who later rose to be a Lt. General in the Indian Army). Now, as happy grandparents of three teenaged grandchildren from two daughters, theirs is a testimony of the success of a marriage built on a foundation of undiluted love, mutual respect and devotion towards each other. Such love is hard to find.

They recently celebrated 50 years of togetherness. I wonder if there has ever been even a single day in my life

when I have felt less proud or more blessed with parents who have been in love each day of their lives... ■

As an army officer's daughter, Rashmi Oberoi was lucky to travel and live all over India, as also a few years in Malaysia and U.S.A. Keenly interested in writing for children, she wrote

two story books – My Friends At Sonnenshine, which was published in 1999 by Writer's Workshop, Kolkata, India and Cherie: The Cocker Spaniel, which was published in 2009 by the same publishers. For a few years she moved into the corporate world of HR but her love for writing took precedence, and she pursued her passion by writing articles and middles for newspapers, print and online magazines, including a children's magazine abroad.



The Captain had found for himself a lovely person indeed – she was vivacious, an extrovert, fond of the outdoors, extremely sincere and honest, and a balanced person in both head and heart. Although the soldier sometimes wondered whether it would be right to woo a beautiful girl even though her paramour had lost one leg in the war, however, the young lady never displayed any negative feelings on account of this.

You should know

All serving and reserve personnel of India's armed forces have actually "opted" for service. There is a provision for conscription (forced recruitment) in the Constitution, but it has never been used. Soldiers are recruited based on their overall merit and fitness based on stringent tests and trials. And once a citizen of India joins the forces, he/she becomes a soldier. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Small drops make an ocean

*A Navy wife, **Archana Bhat**, talks about life in the forces, and the good work done by the Navy Wives Welfare Association.*

DECEMBER 1997. A memorable month and year that I met and got hitched to 'my man in white'. And, should I also say, got officially inducted into the command family support system – in my case, Naval Wives Welfare Association (NWWA).

Self-sustainability, community support, education, health care, welfare and environment conservation are the key aims of the Association. Being a voluntary organisation, we follow an 'open door policy' for all volunteers and this helps in active participation by members at any stage in any of the activities of the Association. Commenced in 1948 as Naval Officers' Wives Association, it was renamed in 1986 as Naval Wives Welfare Association, since it now involves all naval personnel as members. Women members actively volunteer in the various activities of the Association and contribute their mite.

Learn and earn

With an objective that follows an approach of "learn and earn", various hobby and professional courses are conducted by the Association to help the women members to become self-reliant. 'Tarsh' (Thirst, Wish, Desire) - a block printing unit has been set up in all the regions to train ladies in this traditional art, and that includes mixing and preparing different colours from scratch. They are taught to make block printed sarees, bedsheets, curtains and table covers, which are then sold in the shop 'Samudri' that is run by the ladies themselves.

'Udyogika', our tailoring and handicraft unit alongwith 'Pragati' (Progress) help inculcate various skills among women through hand embroidery, painting, tailoring, baking, beautician courses, etc. The amount of hidden talent that comes to the fore at these workshops is amazing and helps in building self confidence among the participants.

'Spash', an outreach programme helps by reaching out to the underprivileged in orphanages and old age homes that are run in that State. Deserving students are identified in the orphanages, and their education is sponsored and their progress monitored from time to time. Physical and mental health of the women are also given due importance. The Command Hospital periodically conducts health and sanitation camps, and women are encouraged to attend it.

A military wife is stronger than she knows, braver than

the rest. Yet, even the toughest of the tough sometimes go through a crisis and need that 'healing touch.' NWWA provides in-house professional counseling and timely assistance, helps families cope with the stress of marital, parenting and learning disorders.

Empowering women

To empower Navy wives, in 2016, NWWA in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences started a three year Diploma/ Advanced Diploma/ B. Voc Degree course in Early Child Development (ECD). One of the key features of this course is that the lady has the option of picking up from where she left off, in case of transfers, at the next station. The second batch of the course is successfully running in Delhi, and plans are afoot to start in Kochi and Vizag.

NWWA is committed in preserving the environment and is involved in a number of green initiatives in which children of the naval staff are encouraged to participate. 'Prakriti' (Nature) is one such initiative that endeavours to build awareness of the 3 R's – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle waste for a cleaner and healthier tomorrow. Waste management which involves segregating the wet and dry waste is another project in full swing in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and emulated in the entire southern region. Dry garbage is deposited by the residents at a Center specially created at a location at the naval base. The wet waste collected is dumped in the compost pits to produce manure, which is then sold.

Conclusion

'Milan' is a meeting of like and unlike minds, where the lady members gather to have an hour of fun once a month.

These meetings helps to showcase hidden talents and the ladies also bond over other mundane matters. Beauty tips, health talks, parenting skills, etc., are freely shared, and women do what they love to do...dress up! ■



Archana Bhat loves good food, travelling and racquet games. She loves a good thriller novel, and endless cups of tea prepared by anyone but her!

The perfect cover

Ismat Chughtai's Lihaaf landed her in some trouble in pre-independent India, when issues of sex and sexuality were never really discussed openly. But is the situation so very different today, queries Nikhil Katara.

LIHAAF, or *The Quilt* by Ismat Chughtai was first published in the Urdu journal *Adab-i-latif* in the year 1942. The events that followed its publishing were controversial to say the least, because the author had to spend a considerable amount of time in the courts of Lahore defending herself against charges of 'obscenity'. But nothing could be proved. Why did that happen? How could Ismat Chughtai prove her innocence in a text that showcased the loss of innocence? Maybe because *Lihaaf* wasn't just a motif in the story, it had a constant and definitive presence in the text of the work also. It separated word from meaning, and thought from action with such subtlety, that no obscenity could be proved from the text of this short story. With no mention of sexual intercourse or homosexuality in its entire length, Ismat Chughtai had said enough to communicate her intended meaning without whispering a word. *Lihaaf* through the many years that passed, eventually grew to be Ismat Chughtai's most known work.

The contemporary take

Recently, a theatre company called Tricycle Productions rediscovered *Lihaaf* to explore its subtlety, and the large meanings that emerge between its innocent words. The tale is of Chunni, who finds herself in Begum Jaan's beautiful palace. The massive structure is home to Begum Jaan and her Nawab. The Begum withers in loneliness as the Nawab finds solace in spending his



A still from the play *Lihaaf*

time teaching 'slender-waisted' young boys. She wanes and her skin peels, and no Hakim has an answer to her pains of isolation. Until one day when an unattractive servant girl called Rabbo arrives, who is deft with her hands and has an answer for Begum Jaan's agony. Her hands work like magic and Begum Jaan survives. Chunni sleeps in Begum Jaan's room and when the darkness takes over, strange shapes begin to appear on the *lihaaf*. Co-incidentally the only other occupant who sleeps in the room is Rabbo – the masseuse. Chunni can sometimes see an elephant, and sometimes a snake, and these animals take the shape of her deepest, darkest fears. She queries but gets no answer, her fears only grow and sleep stays away. One day Rabbo leaves for her village to meet her son, much to the displeasure of her mistress. As

Rabbo leaves Begum Jaan's aches and pains return, she writhes in them until Chunni attempts to relieve her by being her masseuse. The Begum is thankful and teaches Chunni the art of making a *paan*, an act that changes Chunni forever. In this milieu, one can always see a *lihaaf* and the shadows that live inside it.

The play staged at the Marathi Sahitya Sangh had the deft touches of Rabbo's hands, for it kept the story alive even though it changed its form from written word to a performance. The subtlety of intimacy between the Begum and Rabbo was preserved. Another interesting device that the cast used was shadow work to bring alive the realm of Chunni's fears. The performers comprising Rohit Mehra, Radhika Chopra and Kartavya Anthwaal Sharma, play multiple characters. Rohit Mehra

played the Nawab, Rabbo, Chunni's father and the first servant girl. Radhika Chopra played Begum Jaan, Chunni's mother, and the second servant girl, whereas Kartavya Anthwaal Sharma played Chunni, the Hakim, and the third servant girl.

What strikes one is the confluence of theatre styles that the group brings to the fore. Rohit Mehra represents a form of physical theatre that he brings from London International School of Performing Art. His characterisation of Rabbo is a representation of this style. Her grotesque yet elegant mannerisms are personified by Mehra through a body that has four hands and an animal-like form. Kartavya Anthwaal Sharma's training at the Drama School Mumbai, brings Chunni to life, his effortless transition to the Hakim, is also equally worth mentioning. Radhika Chopra's portrayal of Begum Jaan is subtle and the nuances of her solitude, and ache for intimacy are captivatingly done. The complexity of her relationship with the Nawab is exacerbated by silences, her intimacy with Rabbo is in her gaze, and her moments with Chunni are but moments that at face-value mean nothing, but on interpretation can mean a number of things. For what can the act of teaching a young girl how to make a *paan* mean? It is because the story had such myriad possibilities, that Ismat Chughtai was never found guilty in her trial of obscenity. Nothing is stated literally. The literal is silent.

Less is more

The set, the lights and the production on the whole, is minimalistic. The stage with just a bulb and a *lihaaf* is all that exists. The play is supported by the simplistic light design of Adi Shastri and has Trinetra Tiwari on production. Keith Sequeira holds the sound with his expertise as a percussionist, and he quite ably provides the necessary



***Lihaaf* is more relevant today than ever before**

tempo that supports the story. The play heavily depends on the physicality of the performer and the moments of silence interspersed in it. The performers wear many hats throughout the act, and it is in these hats that they shift shapes.

The pertinent questions *Lihaaf* raised were for a community that found such discussions 'obscene' and 'taboo'. Though many such communities still exist that would find dialogues on sexuality and lesbianism a matter of great discord. Yet many others have evolved where such discussions are not considered taboo anymore. Does *Lihaaf* remain relevant for both? Perhaps it does. For it shows the ability of the unsaid. *Lihaaf* wouldn't be able to achieve its literary worth had it been a work that stated what it meant, because in the silences and shadows myriad meanings arise, and in those meanings the possibility of the angst of a lonesome woman, the claim to a partner of the same sex, the unfortunate harm to the mind of a young child, and the complexity of human relationships arise.

Lihaaf is a work that has found its way into history. But was it only relevant

to the time when it was published in 1942? Or did it stay in the books just to be performed for the people that inhabit today's world. Its relevance perhaps exists in a world where sexualities are questioned, its relevance exists in a world where women suffocate in an insulated life, and its relevance also lies in a time where innocence is lost. It is somehow more relevant today than it ever has been.

And as time goes by another shape appears, that of a woman, who tells a tale after years of her passing, through three performers behind a veil of hidden desires and truths. ■

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



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

An epic journey

A play based on Nobel prize winner Jose Saramago's epic *The Elephant's Journey* was staged in Hindi recently, in Mumbai. Titled *Gajab Kahani*, it was a beautiful adaptation that brought to the fore many socio-political conundrums of our times, reviews **Prof. Avinash Kolhe**.

CENTURIES ago, it was the royalty that generously supported art and culture. In modern times, this responsibility has been taken over by some sensitive and sensible corporate houses. We have the Tatas running the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Mumbai. We know that the Aditya Birla group has been supporting good theatre through its new initiative 'Aadyam' under which every year some very good plays are staged in Mumbai and Delhi. This is Aadyam's third year and it began with the staging of *The Guards at the Taj*, an English play, followed by *Gajab Kahani*, a play in Hindi.

The elephant's journey

Gajab Kahani is based on Nobel Prize-winning author Jose Saramago's sprawling epic, *The Elephant's Journey*. This play was presented by the Aaskata Kalamanch, a Pune-based group and is directed by Mohit Takalkar. This is Aaskata's second stab at Saramago's novel, having mounted an identically named Marathi play in 2012. Saramago's (1922-2010) novel was published in Portuguese in 2008, and an English translation was made available posthumously. The novel is set in the 16th century and it begins in an abandoned nook of a palace court in Lisbon. Here the elephant, Solomon, and its mahout, Subhro, have been miserably consigned ever since their arrival from India as a gift for King Joao III of Portugal. In due course, the



Gajab Kahani is based on Jose Saramago's *The Elephant's Journey*

elephant is gifted away as the official wedding present to Maximilian II of Austria. The elephant's onerous journey after being dispatched from Lisbon is the subject of the novel and the play, *Gajab Kahani*.

An elephant, in those days in Europe, was a rare creature. Europe of that era was passing through the most uncertain times in terms of political tug-of-war. Subhro and Solomon negotiate unforgiving terrain with breathtaking vistas, beautiful mountains, rivers and cities, before arriving in Vienna, the de facto capital of the Holy Roman Empire.

A novel presentation

Aaskata Kalamanch, under the baton of Mohit Takalkar has mounted

a very engaging show with eye-catching costumes and excellent lighting. The shows of *Gajab Kahani* were held at the intimate theatre, 'G 5 A' located at Mahalaxmi. This time Takalkar got swivel chairs in the hall so that audiences could move 360 degrees in their chairs as action was taking place in all corners of G 5 A. This was indeed a novel way of presenting the show.

The story is set in 1551 A.D., and is about the transcontinental journey of Solomon with his mahout Subhro. In the play Solomon (Geetanjali Kulkarni) sets off from Lisbon with mahout (Ajeet Singh Palawat) and a company of soldiers led by commander (Nakul Bhalla). These are the three main characters supported by a large ensemble cast.

(Continued on page 50)

A superstar in her own right

A centenary tribute by **Shoma A. Chatterji** to the legendary Kanan Devi, considered the first superstar of Indian cinema.

KANAN Devi was the first superstar of Indian cinema. When one hears of the journey from Kanan Bala to Kanan Devi she made to reach where she did as an actress, a mellifluous singer, a producer and a star rising from the slums to become an enchanting and regal personality, all debates will fall flat.

A centenary tribute to Kanan Devi was organised jointly by New Theatres where she blossomed the best and left her footprints as a singer-actress on the sands of time, and Nandan, the cultural wing of the state of West Bengal. Apart from talks and a seminar, some of her major films under the New Theatres wing were screened to a packed theatre at Nandan III, which stands testimony to her audience reach decades later. Women from red-light areas were called to work in the films. It is said that Kanan Bala belonged to one such family herself, and her entry into films was preceded by her talent in vocal music.

Her biography

Her first film as leading lady was in *Jore Barat* (1931) one of the first Bengali talkies, and she became an overnight star. She dominated Bengali cinema for nearly three decades – first, as a talented singer trained under different schools of music, second, as a star and an actress, and third, as a fashion icon among women fans who modelled their fashion status by imitating her hairstyles. But she was considered as having risen from the dredges, and though her hundreds of



Kanan Devi was an actress, singer and producer

fans adored her and worshipped her screen image, they were reluctant to bestow her with the respect she rightly deserved.

Kanan Devi created her own space in every film she performed in for two major reasons – her talent for singing as she acted in leading roles in many musicals and two, because though she had a dusky complexion off screen, she was extremely photogenic and the directors and cinematographers of those times took great care to construct her screen image to suit what the audience was looking for. Among some of her best remembered films are *Maa* (1934), *Manmoyee Girls School* (1935), *Mukti* (1937), *Bidyapati/Vidyapati* (1938), *Saathi/Street Singer* (1938), *Sapurey/Sapera* (1939), *Parajay* (1940), *Abhinetri* (1940) *Haar*

Jeet (1940), *Parichay* (1941), *Shesh Uttar/Jawab* (1942), *Jogajog* (1943), *Chandrasekhar* (1947), *Mejdidi / Majhli Didi* (1950).

She became the first Bengali star whose name on the billboards assured that the film would become a hit at the box office. They mostly did. The optimum peak as an actress was after she quit Radha Studios to join New Theatres. She got two great directors to work with, Debaki Kumar Bose and P.C. Barua, and the best among music directors – Rai Chand Boral and Pankaj Mullick. The most memorable film that is as popular today as it was when it was made starring Kanan Devi and P.C. Barua was *Mukti* (1937). *Mukti* had a bold storyline. Released at Chitra on 18 September, 1937, *Mukti* became an instant hit, turning Pramathesh and Kanan Devi into screen icons overnight.

Kanan Devi created her own banner Shreemati Pictures in 1949 and produced around a dozen films between 1949 and 1965. Most of these films were adapted / based on classics by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, the film rights of which she had purchased. The directorial team she had created and named Sabyasachi to direct the film, included her name alongside the names of Ajoy Kar and Binoy Chatterjee. Though the films did not meet with great commercial success, the critics panned them quite well.

Among the productions of Shreemati Pictures, *Andhare Alo* (1957) based on a novel by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay

won the All India Certificate of Merit for the Second Best Feature Film at the 5th National Awards at the hands of Rajendra Prasad. It also won the President's Silver Medal for the Best Feature Film in Bengali. It was the inaugural film at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival where Kanan Devi and Haridas Bhattacharya were specially invited for the screening. *Rajlakshmi O Sreekanto* (1958) was perhaps the biggest hit under her banner because it starred Uttam Kumar and Suchitra Sen in the title roles. The film was directed by Haridas Bhattacharya. *Indranath, Sreekanto O Annadadidi* (1959) was a well-crafted film that featured Kanan Devi in a very layered role.

Kanan Devi remains one of the most outstanding and versatile creative artists Indian cinema has ever produced. She wrote an autobiography *Sabare Ami Nomi* (1973) and in 1977, Kanan Devi was bestowed the Dadasaheb Phalke award for her contribution to Indian Cinema. She also worked as President of the Mahila Shilpi Mahal, an organisation that helps aged and needy female artistes of yesteryears. The journey from Kanan Bala to Kanan Devi was not just in the change of name but was a real symbol of Kanan Devi's rise reportedly from the infamous bylanes and ghettos of Kolkata to

recognition and respectability, both as star-actress-singer as well as a respectable citizen of the city. ■

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



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

An epic journey

(Continued from page 48)

The Elephant's Journey is a story of friendship through thick and thin, a story of emotional bonding between Solomon and Subhro. It is also a story of transformation brought about by travel, which always is the case. Remember *Life of Pi*? There, adversity brings together a tiger and a young man. And also remember *Rain Man*, starring Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman? Charlie Babbitt (Tom Cruise) has to drive down Raymond Babbitt (Dustin Hoffman), his elder brother, who suffers from savant syndrome. The road journey to Los Angeles brings the brothers together creating a strong emotional bond. So is the case with Solomon and Subhro.

First and foremost is the issue of language. Subhro can talk only in Hindi whereas other members of the cast speak gibberish. This device has been used to lend authenticity to the experience and it works. It certainly creates the atmosphere of an alien language and culture. Despite the language barrier to both, Subhro, Solomon and audiences,



The play had excellent costumes and lighting

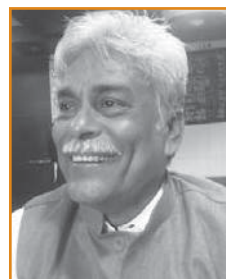
the play moves ahead as the body language is very powerfully used. An elephant that has never experienced the killing chill of the Alps has to go through this just because his boss has gifted him away to some other king as a part of 'elephant diplomacy'.

After landing in Vienna, the new home of Solomon and Subhro, the new boss suddenly feels that name of Solomon should be changed to

Suleiman. Subhro protests in his humble way. He feels that a name is not just a name (sorry, Shakespeare). It has various memories associated with it and also the culture. All that would be erased with the change of name. But then who cares for the feelings of a mahout and that too about the name of an elephant! This is how powers all over the world function, and the subjects, whether animals or human beings, have to meekly surrender to it. We Indians know this for sure as we were ruled by foreign powers for many centuries!

The lead actors carry the play on their shoulders with aplomb. A special mention needs to be made of Ajeet Singh Palawat who was excellent as Subhro. Lights (Pradeep Vaidya) and costumes (Isha Ahluwalia) made *Gajab Kahani* a grand theatrical experience.

A must-watch play! ■



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

Transforming India

A report by **Vandita Morarka** on a mega youth event organised by the Maharashtra government in Mumbai, which saw immense participation and a lively exchange of ideas.

A grand event 'Transform Maharashtra' was hosted on 1 May 2017, coinciding with the Maharashtra Day celebrations. This event was a finale to a state-wide competition conducted over several months.

'Action for Collective Transformation' designed this unique initiative, 'Transform Maharashtra: Platform for Youth to Create a Roadmap of Developed Maharashtra by 2025' with the support of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis, who launched it on 26 December 2016.

'Transform Maharashtra' aimed to provide a chance to young college students from Maharashtra to design policy and offer programme level solutions in teams, that could be implemented by the government under 11 identified critical challenges being faced by the State currently, like urban poverty, digital divide, corruption etc. More than four lakh youth were engaged in this process and 2300 entries were received from 11,000 students from across Maharashtra. Three hundred students were also selected as ambassadors alongwith 2,015 other volunteers who helped increase publicity around the event to drive participation.

The winners were decided based on online votes and on criteria set by a judge's panel. Over three lakh votes were received and the top three teams in each category and under each theme got an opportunity to present their ideas to the CM and were awarded on the occasion.

Involving youth in state building

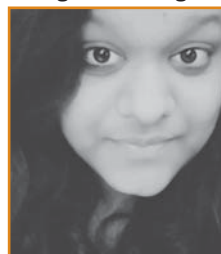
The event by itself was a grand affair that provided a magnificent platform to young students from across Maharashtra to put forth their ideas. As it was held on Maharashtra Day it seemed like a perfect amalgamation of the development agenda of the government and its focus on youth as the channel for development of the State. The event focused on building up young people and their solutions through a collaborative process. The winners got to present their ideas to a large audience comprising students, professionals, eminent personalities, army leaders and political leaders of the State. Actor Akshay Kumar and industrialist Ratan Tata also graced the occasion and provided valuable insights to the development trajectory of the State. Their presence increased the buzz around the event and the interest of people in it.

Several interesting ideas were presented by the students. Ideas like 'Connect the dots: Improving mobility in cities' focused on physical integration of transit services towards improving transportation systems in India. Another idea, 'Looking Glass: Zero Corruption Maharashtra' focused on two prime areas of corruption; the awarding and execution of civil works contracts, and the management of cooperative housing societies. There were some brilliant ideas presented by award winners under the remaining heads as well. Solutions presented looked at irrigation issues in the State, rural education, ways to reform the

judicial process, etc. What was striking was the detail and thought behind each solution and the highlight that such an event brings to the importance and need of building and nurturing our youth demographic dividend.

CM Fadnavis took this opportunity to reach out to the 8,000 plus students present, to encourage them on matters of development and nation building. Throughout the presentations by the students, he asked thought provoking questions while continuing to be extremely supportive.

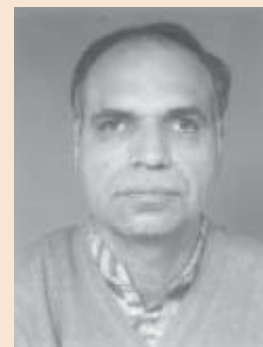
Akshay Kumar spoke of his work towards building change and of his support for such government initiatives, including his recent work for the Army. He also urged the CM to focus on building toilets in the State and suggested innovative measures of solving the issue of open defecation by converting old ISD/STD booths to toilets, while alongside working on the mindset of the people. The State government has aimed to make Maharashtra open defecation free (ODF) by 2018-19 under the Swachh Maharashtra Mission. Ratan Tata also shared key insights and answered questions by the students. This event highlighted the State government's commitment to ensuring that citizens are a part of the dialogue of change and state building. ■



Vandita Morarka is a Law and Public Policy student with special interest in gender and human rights issues.

The rural reality

Each summer brings with it intense water woes, especially in India's rural areas. Help must be provided on a sustained basis to the worst affected, namely, children, widows and the elderly.



Bharat Dogra
is a Delhi-based freelance journalist who writes on social concerns.

It was a scorching hot afternoon of late May and we were sitting in a group meeting in the hamlet inhabited by Sahariya tribals in Kauriya village of Bundelkhand. This village is located in Jatara block of Tikamgarh district in Madhya Pradesh. The Sahariya tribals told me that they have just one functional hand-pump for their *basti* of about 45 households. This hand-pump is also able to provide water only after long gaps. This means that after filling one pitcher, villagers may have to wait a long time to fill the next one. Hence, they have no other alternative but to fetch water from open wells located some distance away. This water is likely to be contaminated by dust and leaves particularly at the time of strong winds. The consumption and use of contaminated water in turn leads to various diseases.

As these villagers particularly women have to spend a lot of time just to arrange water, this has an adverse impact on their livelihood opportunities as well. Similarly, the education of children also suffers. The hand-pumps at school also do not work; as a result, many children have to return home to quench their thirst.

While the drinking water shortage is very distressing for people, it's even worse for animals. The villagers told us that during this season, in Kauriya village, about 50 animals, mainly cows, have already died. The villagers said that last year, since drought was officially declared, more funds were available for arranging water through tankers. This year, tankers have been much less visible in the villages of nearby area.

Similarly, other help is also now less available from government as well as non-government sources. Last year, as the drought peaked, great relief was provided for the people living in the Sahariya hamlet in the form of a community kitchen run for about five months with the support of a voluntary

organisation Parmarth supported by the European Union.

This community kitchen provided nutritious and filling meals twice a day to about 34 of the poorest and most needy people. Old people left behind by migrant workers, widows, and disabled persons were selected on priority basis. The selection was made on the basis of certain criteria by the villagers themselves. The cooking and fuel were also arranged by the village community.

The community kitchen functioned smoothly for five months. Simbhu, a widow who lives in this village with her disabled son, said, "It was a blessing to be sure of getting two good meals every day." Phoolan, another old widow of this hamlet said, "We still need this kitchen, so why was this stopped suddenly?". Sanjay Singh, co-ordinator of Parmarth, responds, "We had to stop this after the worst period of the drought had passed, as the funds for this were available only for a limited period. However, we withdrew from this community kitchen with a very heavy heart as we realised that the old and disabled people particularly in a very poor community like the Sahariyas still need this support, drought or no drought."

Ravi Kant Tomar, a local co-ordinator of Parmarth says that when the community kitchen started, some of the old people were in very precarious health, but when they started regularly eating two nutritious meals a day, their health improved visibly. In the process, some of the old people were probably saved from possibility of death, he asserts. Some of the elderly people also brought small grandchildren to the community kitchen, so their nutrition needs were also met to some extent, he says. The possibility of continuing such community kitchens where they are functioning well, beyond the officially declared drought period, should be examined carefully. ■

A welcome move

Surveys are important to determine policy in a country like India. But the kind of survey, and the agency carrying it out, are equally important.



Anuradha Kalhan

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

IN May, the Prime Minister's office constituted a task force to estimate employment growth based on regular household surveys. After the 2008 global economic recession set in, the government had initiated more frequent employment data gathering, and the Labour Bureau (LB) had been appropriately entrusted with the job of producing quarterly data. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) also conducts surveys to collect household based data, but their reports are long in coming, usually five yearly. These have been the most popular basis of analysis and discussions about employment and unemployment in India so far. The Niti Ayog seems to think that the efforts of the Labour Bureau need to be supplemented, and instead of strengthening the efforts of the Bureau, a parallel task force has been announced. The difference between the two surveys will be in the sample frame. While the LB is an industry-based non-random survey, the task force will conduct random household surveys and publish it quarterly.

India has an estimated labour force of 47 crores, of which the LB looks at about three crores using a 2012-13 industry census as the sample frame. Since industrial patterns shift with growth, the vice-chairman of the Niti Ayog thinks that a four-year-old frame, of which eight sectors are chosen, may not be perfectly appropriate now. The task force he feels will overcome this deficit by a household survey every quarter, to estimate actual employment and unemployment. Urban employment will be estimated separately.

The frame, cost, scale and speed of such a survey, to be supervised by the task force will have to be unprecedented. Household surveys are usually very time consuming, given the geographic spread and difficulty in accessing respondents during working days. Non-response of households will impact the randomness of the survey. The stigma of failure associated with male unemployment in urban areas will also impact the responses of respondents, while women in low paying and home-based employment, seldom respond to

questions of employment. The men in the family respond on their behalf, downplaying their employment. Training and supervision of numerous investigators is an important component of such surveys. All these hurdles are the reason why industry surveys and employment exchanges are supposed to be the nodes of information. Given the poor status of our employment exchanges in matching demand and supply in the labour markets they cannot be used as the only node of information and estimation.

However, all these hurdles notwithstanding, recognition of the fact that employment generation is the purpose of GDP growth and it is politically and socially the most important aspect of growth is a welcome pressure point in public debate. The immediate cause of this development was the latest quarterly report of the LB that estimated a loss of 1.52 casual jobs in sectors such as IT (Information Technology) and manufacturing, during the October-December 2016 demonetisation period.

Besides, about half the labour force is self-employed in small enterprises. It is counter intuitive, almost irrational to assume that they would not have lost sales, income and savings in a cycle due to the shortage of currency in the market. Many of these tiny self-employed enterprises would have business and personal bank loans to repay as part of the two-decade-old financial inclusion project. This would have led to an accumulation of debt, possibly making some enterprises unsustainable.

The new task force should be able to capture this phenomenon if it attempts a past year recall section in its questionnaire. Long term trends in the labour market have not been favourable. Jobs and livelihoods have become fragile. NSSO surveys have generated sufficient data to suggest that job creation resulting from growth is not robust. Casual and self-employment are the long term trends. All the data generated from these new surveys could provide valuable and quick inputs for future labour market policy. ■



DISASTERS IN HISTORY-1

YOUNG

Black Death

BLACK Death was one of the deadliest pandemics of bubonic plague to hit mankind, killing up to 75 million people all over the world in the 14th century, of which 25 million died in Europe alone! It was called the Pestilence or the Great Mortality.

In 1347, Mongol invaders besieged Caffa, a Genoese trading colony in Crimea (Russia). When the Mongol soldiers fell prey to plague, the army catapulted the diseased corpses into the town, infecting the inhabitants.

As the Genoese fled home in their rat infested ships, the plague spread through the European continent like wildfire, claiming lives like never before in history. Infected survivors fleeing the plague spread the disease further.

The plague ravaged Italy, France, England (1348) and finally Russia (1351). By 1351, a third of Europe's population was wiped out!

At that time, medieval doctors



neither understood nor could explain the devastating disease. So the layman became superstitious. Jews were blamed for causing the plague by poisoning the wells and were massacred. Religious fanatics called flagellants believed that it was God's fury and publicly flogged themselves to atone for their sins. On the other hand, with so many people dying, wealth was now in the hands of the few survivors, making them rich!

Plague is a highly contagious bacterial infection carried by rats. When fleas carrying infected rodent blood attach themselves to human hosts, victims suffer from high fever and painful swellings in the armpits and groin. Without medication, death is rapid. It has three forms – bubonic, pneumonic and septicaemic. The disease flourishes in polluted unhygienic environs as was the case in medieval Europe.

Quick Facts

- 'Black Death' was a 19th century term to signify the dread the plague evoked, not so much the victim's darkened state in the last stages of the disease.
- Plague doctors wore a strange costume when visiting patients – a long black overcoat, a bird-like mask with a huge beak and a wide-brimmed black hat.
- Modern research suggests Black Death was caused by diseases other than plague, eg. Anthrax.
- It is popularly believed that Black Death inspired

the English language's most familiar nursery rhyme, *Ring-o Ring-o Roses*.

- *Le Danse Macabre* is an allegorical dance of skeletons mingling with the living – a reminder of the dreadful times.





ÁGUEDA, a municipality in Portugal, hosts the Ágitagueda Art Festival in the month of July every year. Open to all, the festival celebrates street art in all its forms be it music or art. Public spaces in Águeda like walls and stairs come alive with the colours of street paintings. Street musicians and artists perform in the open through the day while rock bands and orchestras entertain at night.

At this time, Portugal faces summer. In 2011, a company devised a creative and economical solution for offering relief to the common man on the streets from the scorching sun. The star of this most striking art installation is the humble umbrella. Called the Umbrella Sky Project, it has hundreds of colourful umbrellas strung up over pedestrian streets with the help of rooftop cables. The rainbow-coloured floating canopy remains in place until September. It is so popular that it has become the top draw of the festival with tourists from all over the world visiting the city in summer.



CURIOSITY

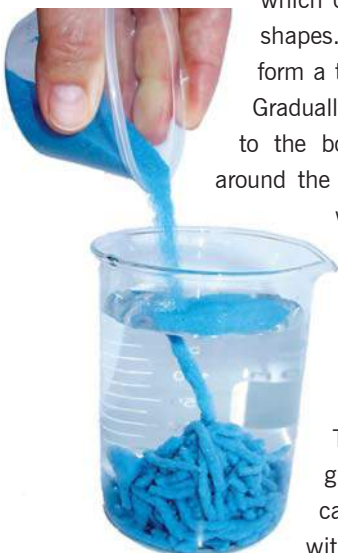
What is magic sand?

It is ordinary sand coated with a hydrophobic compound called trimethylsilanol. This compound makes the sand resistant to water. The substance which was originally made to clean up oil spills is now used as a children's educational toy.

This sand has many amazing properties. When it comes into contact with water its granules stick together forming blocks

which can be moulded into various shapes. These blocks of grains form a thin layer and float on water. Gradually it becomes heavy and sinks to the bottom. As air bubbles form around the granules they appear silvery when seen underwater. But once they are taken out of water the shapes disappear and the sand is surprisingly dry. It also flows freely when dropped from the hand.

This mysterious sand is a great attraction for kids who can have hours of fun playing with it.



PUZZLE

Teaser

Holmes was reading a note from Professor Moriarty. Holmes then told Watson the time of the meeting.

"How can you be sure of the time, Holmes?" asked Watson. "You were holding the note upside down!"

"The time reads the same upside down as it does the right way up," replied Holmes.

What time was the meeting to take place?



Answers: Noon

GENERAL K.V. KRISHNA RAO, PVSM

An exceptional and sensitive officer (1923-2016)

GENERAL Krishna Rao was born on 16 July 1923, and was educated in Maharaja's College, Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh. He completed his military training at Officers Training School, Bangalore, and was commissioned into 2 Mahar on 9 August 1942. For a short while, the unit was employed on internal security duties at Nagpur during the Quit India Movement. During the Second World War, he served in the North West Frontier, Baluchistan, and Burma.

After the war, he was selected for a permanent commission as well as for the civil service. He opted for the Army. He took part in the 1947-48 War in Jammu & Kashmir (J & K). He attended Defence Services Staff College, commanded 3 Mahar, and was posted as instructor at the Staff College in March 1963. In 1967, he was selected for studies at the Imperial Defence College in UK. He took over command of 26 Infantry Division in 1969.

He had just completed about a year in this job when he was shifted to 8 Mountain Division in Nagaland in September 1970. The situation in Nagaland and Manipur had deteriorated, and the Army Chief had specially selected him for this task. The rebel Naga groups fighting for independence were getting arms aid from Pakistan and China. The security forces were compelled to act against the underground movement. Gen Krishna Rao improved the intelligence system and ensured that the local population was not alienated. Any allegations of excess by troops was investigated and action taken when necessary. This ensured good relations with the locals and the state government.

In the 1971 Indo-Pak War, the Division secured Sylhet. The Pakistani troops fought hard, but were pushed back. They offered to surrender on 16 December and were assured treatment as per Geneva Convention. They were apprehensive of revenge attacks by Mukti Bahini soldiers and were allowed to keep their arms till the Indian troops were available in strength to ensure their safety. The Division received orders to move back to Nagaland in January, General Krishna Rao was awarded PVSM for outstanding leadership, courage,

determination and drive. On his return to Nagaland, General Krishna Rao took the initiative to reach out to the hostile force and a meeting was held with the underground "Home Minister Subeto." The meeting scheduled for thirty minutes went on for four hours. He left on posting to Shimla in end May 1972, and subsequently an agreement did materialise with the hostile party.

He was appointed as Chief of Army Staff on 1 June 1981, and met Prime Minister (PM) Indira Gandhi regularly, and put across his views frankly. She consulted him on various issues concerning internal security. He found that the threat

had been underestimated in some sectors and updated the operational plans. He retired on

31 July 1983. His services were warmly recognised by the PM who wanted him to stay on in Delhi as advisor. But he retired to his home in Hyderabad and declined job offers from the CM of Andhra Pradesh and a few companies. He accepted the offer of an assignment as Governor of Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura in June 1984.

The area was beset with secessionist movements, insurgency, political instability and ineffective administration. At one stage President's Rule had to be imposed in Nagaland. He took steps to tone up the administration, visited all the districts and reached out to the political leaders.

The PM then invited him to take over governorship of J & K. Insurgency had broken out there. He was sworn in as Governor of J & K on 11 July 1989. Vested interests made false allegations against him in that he favoured the Congress. V.P. Singh had taken over as PM and he offered his resignation which was accepted on 18 January 1990. When a proxy war developed in J & K and reached its peak, he was reappointed as Governor and served there from 12 March 1993 to 1 May 1998. In this capacity, he was instrumental in restoring peace and democracy in the insurgency-driven state after a long gap of seven years. Krishna Rao passed away on 30 January 2016 in New Delhi. ■

— Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)



JUSTICE LEILA SETH

The passing away of eminence (1930-2017)

It was by chance that the eminent jurist took up a career in law. On a trip to England, Leila Seth thought it was one of the few things one could do without attending classes. And thus history was made. In the world of legal affairs in India, Justice Leila Seth broke many glass ceilings. When she died of cardiac arrest at the age of 86, on 5 May 2017, obituaries poured in capturing her personality.

Born on 20 October 1930 in Lucknow, U.P., she was the first woman judge of the Delhi High Court in 1978; the first woman to become Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court in 1991; the first woman to top the London Bar exams back in 1958, when she also graduated as an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officer.

Through her career, she held her own, refusing to do just women's cases and competed with men, taking up tax matters, constitutional law and criminal cases. As a member of the Justice Verma Committee, set up after the brutal December 16 gang-rape in Delhi in 2012, she contributed extensively in the roadmap for overhaul of criminal laws and steps to keep women safe.

She was part of various enquiry commissions, studying the effects of the popular television serial, 'Shaktiman' (about a popular superhero) on children which was at the center of controversy because many children set themselves on fire or threw themselves off buildings hoping that Shaktiman would rescue them, and the death in police custody of businessman Rajan Pillai, known as the 'Biscuit Baron'. As part of the Law Commission of India until 2000, she was responsible for many amendments to the Hindu Succession Act which gave equal rights to daughters in joint family property. She championed sharper legislation for women.

Mother of the celebrated author Vikram Seth, the literary bug bit her too. She penned down three books, *On Balance*, her autobiography in 2003, *We, The Children of India* in 2010, a book explaining Constitution to the country's children, followed by *Talking of Justice: People's Rights in*

Modern India, in 2014, which looked at critical issues that she had engaged with in a legal career spanning over 50 years. She said with her first book she became known as a biographer. With her second book she was called a writer of children's books. "I don't know what I will become when I do my third," she said. "You will become competition," her son had said.

A strong supporter of the gay rights movement, she strongly disapproved of Section 377 and her belief was that the 'gay child needs more love.' She chose to put herself out there in ways most public figures avoid, in a world where social stigma often outweighs the law. The

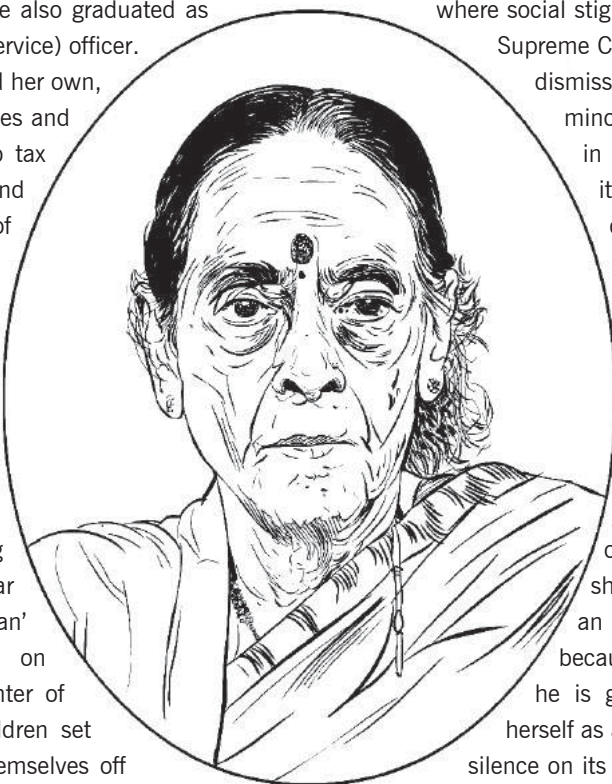
Supreme Court's reinstating of Section 377, dismissing homosexuals as a minuscule minority, forced her to write an op-ed in the *Times of India*, saying that it "would be like saying the Parsi community could be legitimately imprisoned or deported at Parliament's will because they number only a few tens of thousands."

She didn't shy away at mentioning why that ruling disturbed her, not just as a judge but as a mother. Speaking of her homosexual son Vikram she said, "He is now a criminal, an unapprehended felon. This is because like millions of other Indians, he is gay." She could have restricted herself as a jurist and maintained a discreet silence on its personal impact on her. But she

worried about something far more fundamental, something much more vulnerable - love and loneliness, in acceptance not just for her children, but for everyone else's.

She lived with the courage of her convictions and set an example by her high standard of exemplary living. She is survived by her husband, two sons and a daughter. As per her wishes, no funeral was held since she donated her eyes and other organs for transplant or medical research purposes. ■

— A.Radhakrishnan, poet, freelance journalist, short story writer, dreamer, social media poster who otherwise loves to make people laugh and be happy.



ALTAMAS KABIR

A distinguished jurist (1948-2017)

JUSTICE Altamas Kabir, who served as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for around nine months before retiring on 18 July 2013, had a distinguished career at the Bar and a long tenure as a judge of the Supreme Court to which he was elevated in 2005.

Kabir was the son of a leading Congress leader Jehangir Khan who served in the ministries of B.C. Roy and P.C. Sen and also in the non-Congress government of Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee. His uncle Humayun Kabir was a renowned Bengali writer and a minister in the Union cabinets headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Altamas Kabir was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in a prominent Bengali Muslim family and studied law in the University of Calcutta after obtaining a post-graduate degree in Arts. He soon became a leading civil and criminal lawyer practicing in Calcutta courts before becoming a permanent judge in the Calcutta High Court in 1990.

As the acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, he was responsible for the computerisation of the entire data of the Calcutta High Court, City Civil Court and the other courts in Calcutta. Kabir also served as the Executive Chairman of the National Legal Services Authority. He later assumed charge as a judge of the Jharkhand High Court before being appointed as a permanent judge in the court. Justice Kabir also served as the Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court from March 2005 to September 2005. He was elevated as a judge of the apex court on 9th February 2005, and became the Chief Justice on 29 September 2012, and retired on 18 July 2013. In his capacity as the CJI he was the Chancellor of the West Bengal National University of Judicial Sciences, and Chairman of the General Council of Gujarat National Law University.

As a judge of the Supreme Court Justice Kabir delivered several important and path breaking judgments, and right through his career as a legal luminary he made a name for himself in the fields of human rights issues and in the

matter of election laws. On his last day in office Justice Kabir authored a controversial judgment when by a majority of 2-1 he quashed the single window National Eligibility-cum-entrance test (NEET) a common mode of admission for all MBBS, BDS and MD courses, which would have come as a boon for private colleges. The judgment was later set aside by the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

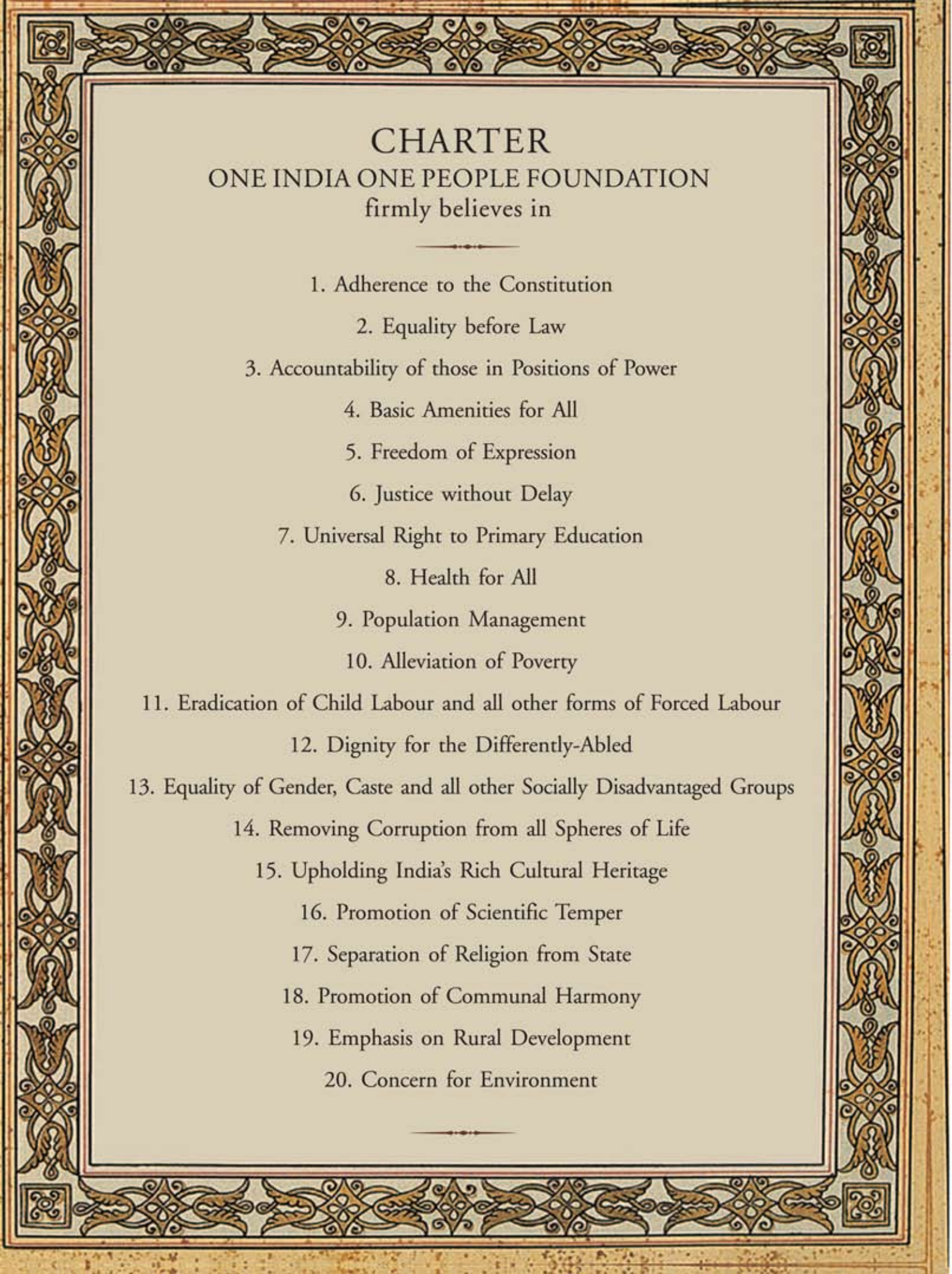
The eminent jurist was known for his erudition and tongue-in-cheek humour and endeared himself to his fellow judges and lawyers with his amicable nature. Justice Kabir, who was only the second CJI (Chief Justice of India) after his predecessor to be born in post-Independent India, though gentle in demeanour, was firm in the matter of handling court work and the administrative jobs assigned to him. The learned judge in one of his addresses bemoaned the fact that corruption had become a way of life in the country. He emphasised on the need for sensitivity and values in governance which alone could curb the menace. He further observed that unless there is a change in the mindset, elimination of corruption could only be an Utopian dream. After his retirement he returned to his first love, teaching, and taught at the West Bengal University of Judicial Sciences.

Justice Kabir passed away in Kolkata at the age of 68 succumbing to multiple ailments. In his condolence message, the President of India Pranab Mukherjee paid rich tributes to the late Justice Altamas Kabir describing him as a brilliant judge and recalled his association with Justice Kabir during his tenure as the Chief Justice of India. Hailing his contribution to the initiatives in the sphere of legal reforms, he also touched on his eminence as a progressive jurist who had earned a fair name for himself with his path breaking judgments. ■

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

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





CHARTER

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

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

WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)

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