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No country for the old

A dignified end

Begin again

KNOW INDIA BETTER

The Andamans: A paradise of solitude

FACE TO FACE

Andrew T. Mackay

The Golden Age

MORPARIA'S PAGE



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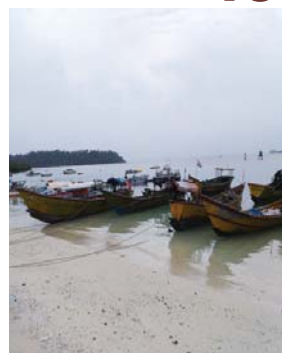
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Prabhakar Panshikar



Gauri Lankesh



Managing Editor

Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

Editor

Anuradha Dhareshwar

Assistant Editor

E.Vijayalakshmi Rajan

Design

H. V. Shiv Shankar

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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No country for the old

The statistics on the elderly in India is startling. There are an estimated 104 million elderly people in India, but they are largely neglected, abused, and financially dependent.

HelpAge India, which works for the cause of India's elderly, details the various measures needed to take care of this vulnerable section of our population

TODAY, there are an estimated 104 million elders in India. In short, India is home to one out of every 10 senior citizens of the world. By 2050, the number of senior citizens is estimated to rise to 324 million. People are living longer, the oldest old, those who are 80 plus, are estimated to reach 48 million by 2050. In fact, in the last two decades, life expectancy has increased by 20 years.

What does this mean in terms of the health and financial means of this population? In rural areas, 66% of the elderly men and 28% of the elderly women were working, while in urban areas, only 46% of elderly men and about 11% of elderly women were working. This doesn't mask the fact that more than 71% of the oldest old (80 plus) are financially dependent on others, primarily the son. Nearly 88% of the oldest old suffer from chronic ailments – diabetes, hypertension, asthma, arthritis, heart problems etc.

Shockingly, more than 80% of the 80 plus elderly face abuse within the family. And 24% of the abuse is physical. As far as the senior citizen population is concerned, i.e., the 60 plus, there too there is roughly 50% who admitted to abuse within the family, primarily from the sons.

The Government has mandated several provisions for the elderly. At least as per the Parents & Maintenance Act (2007), there has to be an old age home in each district. In a country which has an aged population of 104 million, there are just around 300 Government-run old age homes covering 648 districts that take care of 13,000 elderly. The Government of India has allotted ₹ 200 per month as pension for only those elders below the poverty line. This is grossly inadequate. India spends only 0.032% of GDP (Gross Domestic Products) towards pensions, and covers only 25% of the eligible elder population. By contrast, a country like Thailand spends 0.324% of its GDP towards pensions, and covers 94% of the eligible elder population.

Thus, the work of non-government organisations becomes more important and credible. A case in point is HelpAge India.

The work of HelpAge India

HelpAge India voices the concerns of India's elderly. Formed in 1978, its mission is "to work for the cause and care of



A mobile dispensary for the elderly

disadvantaged older persons and to improve their quality of life".

HelpAge advocates for their needs such as for universal pension, quality healthcare, action against elder abuse and many more at the national, state and societal level with Central and State governments. The aim is to serve elder needs in a holistic manner, enabling them to live active, dignified and healthier lives. HelpAge India runs a gamut of programmes that impact the lives of many needy elders.

Programmes for the aged

Mobile healthcare services: This programme seeks to provide sustainable healthcare solutions to whole communities. The core of the programme is a sponsored Mobile Healthcare Unit (MHU). This Unit provides primary healthcare to the elderly, while simultaneously using the same resources to educate and inform the community on preventive healthcare, hygiene and connect the community to government schemes of health insurance and pensions. Each MHU has a doctor, pharmacist and a social worker. Currently we have 144 Mobile Healthcare Units in 24 states, providing 2.3 million free treatments.

Cataract surgeries: In India, 62% elderly suffer from cataract blindness. Credible and competent eye hospitals and organisations working for eye care are selected for carrying out surgeries with HelpAge India's support. All surgeries under



HelpAge India focuses on elderly health in a big way; we must ensure that our elderly are happy and content

the programme are performed only in base hospitals and not in make-shift camps. Since 1980, this programme has benefitted more than nine lakh elders, not just restoring their sight but enabling them to go back to work and live a life of dignity.

Geriatric physiotherapy: Under this programme, elderly persons with musculoskeletal diseases such as back pain, arthritis and even paralysis and other age related mobility challenges are treated. The aim is to enable the elderly to support and maintain their fitness and mobility level and make daily living easier, restoring their self-confidence and self-esteem. The services are provided through stationary physiotherapy clinics, mobile services to remote communities, to residents of homes for the aged, and home visits are made by a qualified physiotherapist. Currently, there are physiotherapy clinics operational in 70 locations across the country in 23 states.

Cancer and palliative care: Cancer treatment in our country is highly priced and a majority of elders are not covered by any form of medical insurance. HelpAge India provides palliative care to end-stage cancer patients, in partnership with a number of credible and competent cancer hospitals and organisations. Over 99,000 treatments have been supported since 1998.

Support a gran: There are thousands of destitute elders who need basic support. Over the years HelpAge India has enabled more than 30,000 destitute elderly sustain themselves with regular supplies of food rations, clothing, basic healthcare and sometimes provide livelihood opportunities. Today, the programme supports needy elders supporting their day-to-day sustenance, so they can live a life of dignity.

Old age homes/day care centres: A roof over their heads is the critical need of the elder destitute, sick and abandoned by family, and uprooted by disasters. HelpAge India has established model homes for the aged in places such as Patiala and Gurdaspur in Punjab, Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu, and Kolkata in West Bengal. Besides these, HelpAge has also supported over 60 old age homes across India.

Disaster relief and rehabilitation: Every disaster impacts the elderly more than others as they have difficulty accessing relief. HelpAge India has stepped in at every major disaster, delivering specialised relief and rehabilitation measures during the floods in Assam, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, or the Tsunami which hit Tamil Nadu, flash-floods in Uttarakhand, and earthquakes in Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir etc.

Livelihood programmes: To enhance elder capacities, HelpAge mobilises them through the formation of Elder-Self-Help-Groups (ESHGs) that are centered on sustainable methods of income generation. These ESHGs are then federated into higher level community institutions so that they gain additional robustness. This model of HelpAge India has been adopted by the Ministry of Rural Development and HelpAge has been designated as the National Resource Organisation for elderly by the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. Currently this programme covers more than 60,000 elderly across India.

Tamaraikulam Elders Village (TEV): TEV is a unique rehabilitation project situated on the Cuddalore – Puducherry road, Tamil Nadu, built by HelpAge India-NDTV viewers, after the Tsunami in 2004. A 100 elder victims of the Tsunami devastation were given a safe place to live in a modern elder village, which provides health care, professional care, livelihood options, and recreational facilities.

Elder helplines - 1800-180-1253: The HelpAge Toll-free Elder Helplines across 22 states of India offer assistance to older persons in need of emergency care and protection. The services offered are – rescue of abandoned elders, counselling those in distress, legal support, information related to services available etc. The helpline works as the co-ordination unit linking elders to various institutions such as old age homes, hospitals, geriatric specialists, police, government and non-governmental organisations. HelpAge has also launched the 'HelpAge SOS' App to ensure help is just a click away.

Advocacy: HelpAge India reaches 1.25 million elderly through its various interventions. Raising public awareness and interacting with media, legislators, and government to espouse the elder cause is therefore an essential and continuous

activity for HelpAge India.

HelpAge each year conducts a survey on elder abuse to create awareness about the hard reality that our elders face on a daily basis. In its most recent survey across 19 cities in India, titled: *How India treats its elderly*, it brought out some startling facts on how elders are treated in the public space such as banks, hospitals, shops etc. (See box)

Public awareness on elder issues: Building public awareness on the importance of supporting the elder cause is a key objective of HelpAge India. It invites public participation in 'Walkathons' on International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) on 1st October; involves the media in highlighting the evil of Elder Abuse on 'World Elder Abuse Awareness Day' on 15th June every year. Regular interaction and meetings are held with senior citizen associations in the cities, and elder groups in the rural areas. Common cause is found with partners working on other rights based issues such as Pension Parishad, National Association of Street Vendors of India etc.

Working with the youth: *The Student Action for Value Education (SAVE):* Student Action for value Education (SAVE) aims to inculcate care and respect for the elderly through HelpAge India's long standing programme with schools across the country. The Help Unite Generation (HUG) initiative aims at involving college students and young professionals to engage with elders and keep in regular touch with them, providing them companionship.

Digital literacy for elders: The pace of change in technology makes it difficult for most to keep up. More so with the elders who find it almost impossible to keep up with the latest gadgets, mobile applications, new smart phones, tablets etc. To tackle this, HelpAge has started an easy 'Digital Literacy' programme introducing elders to the online world. Partner



Empowering the elderly is the way to go

institutions, organisations, volunteers and interns are encouraged to conduct basic tutorials for elders, using the HelpAge Handbook for senior citizens – *Computers and Smart Phones learning made easy*.

Working with Governments: Sensitising legislators in governments both in the States and Centre, has resulted in HelpAge India contributing significantly to the formulation of the National Policy on Older Persons and the enactment of the Maintenance & Welfare of the Parents and Senior Citizens Act (2007). Current ongoing advocacy efforts aim at – increase in old age pension, inclusion in health insurance and food security for elders.

Working with Senior Citizens' Associations: HelpAge India taps the potential of senior citizens in evolving solutions to address their needs. It is currently associated with more than 1,145 Senior Citizens' Association with 14.75 lakh members across 20 states. Additionally, seniors are offered counseling for financial assistance schemes like the reverse mortgage scheme and assistance with wills and legacies. Senior citizens associations are mentored to engage actively with charitable work and many elders help the disadvantaged around their locality by teaching underprivileged kids, conducting free yoga classes, help in maintaining physiotherapy services etc.

AdvantAge card programme: This benefit card offers discounts from retail associates on various products, services, and facilities ranging from health and wellness to holiday homes. It helps the card holder to stretch household budgets, especially of those elder citizens living on limited or fixed incomes. Currently there are 1.72 lakh members from over 400 towns in 23 states being offered discounts by more than 7,000 retail outlets across India. ■

(Source – HelpAge India (Communications Department). The Government of India has recognised HelpAge India's work by according donations made to it eligible for tax exemption.)

The report by HelpAge India, *How India treats its elderly*, has some startling facts about how we in India treat the elderly in public places:

- 44% elders have been abused in the public space at some time or the other, that is, nearly 1 out of 2 elders.
- 53% elders feel the Indian society discriminates against them.
- 64% elders say it's easy to get away, despite being rude to elders.
- 52% elders say, if they are not dressed well it invites more rudeness.
- 54% elders say younger people get priority in a shop over an older person.
- 13% of elders have said that they have been treated rudely by bank staff.
- Compared to government hospitals, in private hospitals elders get relatively better treatment due to their age.

The gender of ageing

*While ageing in the Indian society can itself be an unpleasant experience, the elderly women have it worse. It's time they were given their due privileges and recognition, says **Shoma A. Chatterji**.*

AGEING, at first glance, does not appear to discriminate on grounds of gender. But a closer look reveals cracks that might not apply, to the same degree, to old men. Men might not be as vulnerable to distress and miseries in old age as women. The main reason is that women in India form a small percentage of the working population. Thus, they are denied the retirement benefits that working men have access to when they retire from work. An interesting finding emerged in the results of a survey conducted by the Calcutta Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology, started in 1988, through a questionnaire distributed among men and women about to retire. While 61.23 per cent of the male respondents spoke of economic problems as a major off-shoot of retirement, a significant percentage of 40.9 among the females claimed that they did not anticipate any problems at all. This sounds ironical in a social environment where old women are constantly being edged out of their own homes, and their children's homes when they lose their husbands.

Patriarchy has seen to it that a major share of movable and immovable assets within an extended Indian family, including financial documents and land, are managed and controlled by the men in the family. They are held in the names of the women – wives and daughters-in-law, true, but purely for purposes of tax evasion. These women have no control over these assets even when the male head of the family passes away or becomes senile. The control automatically passes over to the son or sons and the old woman is left in the lurch – financially speaking. In nuclear families, the mother or unmarried older sister has to live with grown-up children or brothers and sisters who have their own families. While some children, who lead working lives, might look upon an ageing mother as a blessing in disguise/unpaid babysitter/ nurse/ cook – all rolled in one, this is more an exception than the rule.

Where age is not a barrier

There are outstanding women who are as active as women half their age despite having crossed the sixty-year barrier that divides the senior citizens from the rest. Among them are Asha Bhonsale, Sonia Gandhi, Kiran Bedi, Shabana Azmi,

Sharmila Tagore, Sheila Dixit, author Shashi Deshpande, dancer, teacher and choreographer Sharon Lowen, Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chairperson of SBI bank, theatre person Usha Ganguly among many others, "Ageing does not mean slowing down. In celebration of this fact, Harmony for Silvers Foundation proudly honoured 10 'silver' achievers for their contributions towards the well being of the society," Foundation chairperson Tina Ambani said when the awards were launched in 2007.

Indian women form a significant majority of the elderly population in India. Estimates state that there are 99 men to every 100 women belonging to the age-group of 60 to 64 years in developing countries. In the age-group of 80 plus, the male-female ratio tilts against the males with 69 males to every 100 women. The position of single women is more precarious because few are willing to take care of non-linear relatives. A majority of widows have no independent source of income, and the worst nightmare for them is old age. P.N. Mari Bhat of the Population Research Centre in Dharwad, concludes from his study on *Widows and Widowhood Mortality in India* that widows have a higher mortality rate than women whose husbands are alive. Around 50 per cent of widows in India are under the age of 60.

The belief that widows are taken care of by their parental families is a myth, especially in rural India where less than six per cent live with their in-laws or parents while 10 per cent live with their married daughters. Around 60 per cent get regular support from their sons, 16 per cent are cared for by daughters, 9 per cent by brothers, 5 per cent by parents and 3 per cent by in-laws. No study on widowhood gives an account of the castaway widows of Varanasi and Vrindaban who are totally shunned, their families having left them for dead. Pensions for widows are limited and arbitrary. The eligibility and amounts differ from state to state with Kerala forking out a meagre ₹70 a month regardless of the widow's other sources of income, class, age or whether she has an adult son. The Karnataka government raised widow pension from ₹50 to ₹75 a month in 1994.

In India, women with sons alone can rely on domestic support from them in old age. But changing behaviour patterns among the young, resulting from (a) pressures of inflation, (b)

shortage of housing space in urban metros, (c) the steadily increasing stress on consumerism, (d) the declining importance given to emotions and sentiments, and (e) the rising costs of raising children have all but wiped out the possible support aged women can expect their sons to give them. In terms of health care services too, old women are placed on the wrong end of the welfare axis because the entire focus of health care for women in India is on family planning, and mother-and-child care. Old women find no place in policy decisions covering the health of women.

The surprising UN move

In this negative environment, it came as a pleasant surprise when a United Nations (UN) Expert Group Meeting on Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women into Development held in 1991 took constructive and positive steps towards harnessing the productive capabilities of older women, so that (a) they can create and sustain a financially independent future, and (b) their productivity can be used for the betterment of the nation in general, and the institution of the family in particular. The Meeting recognised that major efforts had to be made to ensure the access of elderly women to basic education and information on the ageing process, learning skills – both traditional and non-traditional, and retraining as and when called for.

Besides formal education, Participatory Rural Approval (PRA) provides ways to learn with and from older people, women especially since it has been observed that women have a perspective of their communities completely different from men and this perspective can make a greater impact on the economic and social lives of these communities. The PRA experiment combines a number of approaches so that a community can conduct its own analysis and planning and share its experience with professionals. It is here that older women can be more helpful and creatively productive than older men.

Older women have the potential to make valuable contributions to society reaching beyond the limited and rigid framework of their immediate families. They constantly persevere to put their experience gained from life to productive use for social benefit. For example, older women are often called upon to attend to the sick and the dying. They also hand down their traditional modes of learning and experience to the next generation such as grandmother's medicines, pre and post-natal health care for mother and infant,

household hygiene, diet and nutrition. Such services go unrecognised and unpaid because they cannot be quantified in economic terms. Old women play a vital role in transmitting the accumulated wisdom and knowledge they have gained over their lifetime to the generations of the present and the future. They also contribute significantly to the maintenance of traditions and values that need to be upheld for sustaining our cultural roots.

Older women have the potential to make valuable contributions to society reaching beyond the limited and rigid framework of their immediate families. They constantly persevere to put their experience gained from life to productive use for social benefit. For example, older women are often called upon to attend to the sick and the dying.

The world offers ample examples of elderly women who are still actively taking part in rebuilding the lives of refugees traumatized by disaster or war. The political participation of elderly women in world politics is now a part of living history. Many elderly women have been elected as the administrative and executive heads of their respective states. Women supposedly in the margins, continue to cook and care and nurse and clean and take care of the family marketing and budgeting, long after they have crossed sixty. Grandmothers are known to be the best educators of their grandchildren, handing down to them, tales of mythology and history, of wisdom and fables, no longer taught in formal educational institutions.

Yet, these contributions are completely ignored when the same women need to fall back on some kind of emotional support from the very families they nurtured through their lives. Ageing, especially among women, is still sadly taken to be a purely biological inevitability. Most women still consider menopause as the end of the world. What we

seem to forget is that age is a cultural category. Its meaning and significance vary both historically and cross-culturally. It is time we began to challenge the stereotyping of ageing women as an assumed homogeneity. Class, race, gender and culture can counter biological factors. Thankfully, there is growing research interest in this field, not only in the experience and ethnography of the aged, but also in the specific constructions of "old age" across cultures and through time,

with special attention being paid to elderly women. ■



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.

A dignified end

Elderly care is becoming a significant area of interest in India, given that life expectancy has gone up considerably, with reduced family and other support systems.

Dr. Rajam Iyer talks about management of the elderly, and palliative care, a nascent area in Indian medical science, and what it entails.

Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.

—Mark Twain

INDIA today has over 100 million people above the age of 60 years. This number is growing at a steady pace, as a result of modern scientific capability. It is estimated that by 2050, 16% of the world's population will be above the age of 65, accounting for 1.5 billion elderly, compared to 5% in 1950. Fifty percent of the elderly live in low and middle-income countries.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the issues faced by older folks, and to propose a way where they are treated with dignity and respect. Also, I will discuss ways to empower the elderly and their care givers with knowledge to make a planned, informed decision through health, illness, emergencies and terminal phase.

Longer lives, but quality?

We are living longer, but not necessarily well. Scientific advances have changed the process of ageing and dying into medical experiences to be managed by doctors, which health care professionals are totally unprepared for. Unlike the past, only about 10% of people die suddenly, the rest go through a bed bound stage with a chronic prolonged course of uncertainties.

Most adults die of a chronic non-malignant disease which they have had for a long time, along with other co-morbidities. According to published literature, half the people over 65 years have three co-existing chronic conditions, and one in five have five or more. These are musculoskeletal, psychiatric, cognitive and chronic pain related problems, each with high symptom burden and disability. Causes of death, globally, in the age group above 65 are largely ischemic heart disease, cerebro-vascular disease and lower respiratory disease. Out of the 8.4 million people who die in India annually, 1 million deaths are due to cancer, and approximately 5 million deaths due to chronic diseases.

Traditionally in our country, the joint family system took care of our ageing members without all the complex managerial issues we face today. In Atul Gawande's book, *Being Mortal*, he describes the contrast with which his grandfather was cared for in his last days in India, with the geriatric population in the west. In his book, he writes that in

contemporary societies, old age and infirmity have gone from a shared multigenerational responsibility to a private state, something experienced largely alone with the aid of doctors and institutions. Global economic development has provided more opportunities for the young and resulted in them leaving home for a better and prosperous future. This has only made care of our elderly challenging.

The malaise of the elderly

Among the elderly, a group of them will not die due to any specific illness, but general slow progressive frailty. For these elderly, the increasing functional and cognitive decline leads to a gradual loss of functional reserve, susceptibility to illnesses, and inability to recover from them fully. Many will require long term care and assistance at home, and sometimes when this becomes inadequate, admission to a nursing home or care home becomes a necessity.

With advancing age the elderly face a number of challenges, including physical, psychological, nutritional, social, financial and spiritual. The once energetic, in-control individual experiences significant alterations physically. The changes are seen from top to toe, with diminution in memory, hearing, vision, height, stamina, reflexes, digestion, balance, bone and muscle strength, skin quality besides major organ disease. Inadequate diet due to multiple reasons and polypharmacy, contributes harmfully to the situation.

The consequence of these physical declines leads to a fall in confidence for activities of daily living. Presence of any chronic disease only compounds the issue, increasing dependence and the experience of loss of a role in the family. Further, inability to move about effortlessly isolates them socially, unable to carry out routine activities and meet relatives and friends. With reduction in social interaction, or when elderly live alone, depression can set in. Weight loss is noted often as a symptom indicating depression. Even with family support or elderly living with children, inadequacies are seen, as the caregiver often need to juggle their own work, family and children's responsibilities. Lack of financial stability in the aged only confounds the situation.

Elderly who live on their own, have complex practical, emotional and physical needs underlined by a desire to be

independent and maintain a sense of dignity, especially as they approach end of life.

Enter, palliative care

The time has come to realise the significance and necessity of including and integrating palliative care for a holistic assessment and support of the aged population, along with their carers. Palliative care, by definition, is the total care of a patient diagnosed with a chronic life limiting disease, along with his caregiver. It addresses the physical, psychological, social and spiritual pain of the patient and his family.

In many chronic diseases, like diabetes, high blood pressure, smoking related lung diseases, pulmonary fibrosis, stroke, neurodegenerative conditions (e.g., Parkinsons, dementia etc.) there is no cure to offer. But we can and must strive to alleviate suffering. Doctors, unfortunately, are trained towards diagnosis, curing and saving. In the process, we rarely care for our patients or comfort the relatives. Palliative care focusses on improving the quality of life of patients and their carers. It is a multi-disciplinary team with health care professionals, counsellors, physiotherapists, nurses, volunteers, dietician. The focus is the patient, and we attempt to address his total pain.

In the elderly, with or without a chronic disease, the constant thought frequently is regarding death, especially the process of dying. Although death is a certainty, most doctors, are uncomfortable to discuss this with patients or carers. Often, patients too dislike a conversation regarding their own mortality. The probability of the inevitable, increases in the elderly and those with chronic life limiting disease, so it becomes imperative to initiate difficult conversations with the patient and family before a crisis.

A personal experience

Citing from my own personal experience, I have been the primary carer for my parents since my sister moved to Australia, in 1984. With the blessings of the almighty, my parents enjoyed a healthy active life with travel, independent living, till 2010. Then the decline began, and their health deteriorated alternately, slowing them and making them dependent on additional carers at home. I noticed the difficulty with which they accepted this change. The physical slowing affected them emotionally, psychologically, socially. At that time we did all what we could. Frequent visits by my sister and family, aids to help them walk without falling, wheel chair for mobility outside the house, shower chair, bath mats, railing around the house to ensure safety were all in place.

In October 2015, my father, aged 88, suffered a stroke, despite being on blood thinners. We brought him home after the initial scan, knowing that no heroic treatment can be offered to an 88-year-old diabetic with irregular heart rate on a blood thinner. The agony, over the next three weeks, of seeing him lose consciousness, be totally at the mercy of caregivers, and become a changed person, was excruciating

to watch. At this difficult time, friends, re-assured me constantly that it was right not to hospitalise him. It took us multiple family discussions about stopping his regular medications, insulin jabs and feeding. Not feeding him became an emotional decision, and we continued that till the end.

Nobody can be prepared for the emotional trauma of losing a loving, affectionate, indulgent father, but on hindsight, our family is relieved that he suffered minimally, and we did everything in his best interest, causing him least harm. When it's not possible to continue life in a meaningful manner, prolonging life is equal to torture. Being a doctor, I needed abundant handholding, advice, reassurance and support during such a trying time. Patients and their families, with any chronic life limiting disease, requiring multiple hospital admissions must need even more support, advice and compassion.

This is the primary aim of palliative care – to offer comfort and care when cure is impossible. In order to avoid chaos during emergency, it is vital to initiate conversations with patients and their families, especially with chronic life-limiting diseases or in the elderly. These communications are difficult, needs skill and tact, and involve significant time to reach a conclusion. The multi-disciplinary palliative care team, inform details of the disease, its natural course and outcome to assist patient and his family to reach a conclusion. Documentation of the patient's wishes on how they would like to be treated in an emergency eases the stress on caregivers, and helps doctors to offer a pain and symptom free end with dignity, surrounded by loved ones, in their preferred place. India ranks amongst one of the world's worst countries to die in, according to a paper published in *The Lancet*, 2015. A good robust palliative care policy along with the able support of the government and laws enabling doctors, can help alter this depressing statistic. Palliative care is a human right and we need to work towards creating a nation wherein the citizens get timely and appropriate palliative intervention.

Today, doctors continue futile aggressive treatment due to lack of proper laws backing them. Narcotic drugs, like morphine, which is a cost-effective wonder drug especially in a terminal setting, is not easily accessible to patients. Knowledge regarding palliative care amongst the general population, especially patients, needs to be established, and the right to refuse fruitless treatment must be emphasised. Lastly, the time has come to train doctors during their graduation in the principles of palliative care, so that we produce a generation of compassionate, thoughtful doctors, capable of holistic care. ■



Dr. Rajam is a practicing palliative care and pulmonary physician, with a focus on end stage respiratory diseases, trained in Mumbai and the UK. She is presently pursuing a fellowship in palliative medicine from the Institute of Palliative Medicine, Calicut. She works at The Bhatia hospital, Mumbai, and a private clinic in Mulund. She is also part of a network, formed recently in Mumbai, to promote awareness and spread knowledge of palliative care. She loves to travel, read, music, and meet new people.

The new age homes!

Indians have long regarded old age homes with skepticism and some derision. Such homes, if well run, can provide much comfort, independence and dignity to the elderly, says Dr. Sheilu Sreenivasan.

NOTWITHSTANDING the holiness and sanctity of *vanaprasthashrams* meant for the fourth stage in Indian life, old age homes were being established in

the early part of the 20th century for the destitute. As long as joint family systems were the pulse of family life, anyone not living under their protective umbrella meant such persons were destitute, with no one to care for them. Charitable and religious institutions thus took pity on such persons who needed to be given shelter in old age homes. Images of depressed

and neglected old people waiting perennially for the visit of the non-existent son/daughter became juicy, sensational pictures for the media. Historically, therefore, old age homes have acquired a negative imagery in the Indian lexicon. There are about 5,000 registered old age homes currently.

The picture has changed since. It will be anachronistic to apply in the emerging Indian social polity a reformist social welfare approach to all old persons. Newer discoveries in ageing sciences – Gerontology and Geriatrics – have to be scientifically comprehended and integrated into public and private responses to meet the demands of the ageing population across classes. Scientific innovations continue to lead the way to a better life for older people the world over. New avenues of drug development, molecular biology, and the genome project – all these will lead the way to a healthier and longer life. Making retirement homes with insights from such sciences

befits today's India and its emerging status. We need to respond to aspirations like: "We don't want to simply retire from something; we should have something to retire to."

Retirement requires the invention of a new hedonism, not a return to the hedonism of youth, but a new meaning, a new lifestyle befitting the dignity of the old in India. For each and every class of the 60 plus.

Thus, the behavioural and perception changes of aged middle class Indians have to be taken into account – Indians who could



'Dignitarians' enjoying puchka at the Companionship Carnival; way to go!

be termed as "Independence babies" (1947 and after. From age 50 onwards a person is benchmarked the world over as the target audience for addressing ageing issues.). Business and governmental approaches must incorporate revolutionary new findings in brain/mind research.

There is no more scope for debates such as, "Is Old Age Home the route that India should take, aping the western societies?"

Old age homes with a difference

To start with, new Old Age Homes need to be called differently with a 'lifestyle' emphasis built into the living provisions, such as our own 'Dignity Lifestyle: Senior Citizens Retreat for Active Living', which opened in March 2006 at Neral, 90 km from Mumbai. Many such retirement resorts have mushroomed in Indian cities, especially in the South. Secondly, the variety of requirements

across the class segments need to give attention to aspects of elder care which will include activities that will fit the "productive ageing" norms championed by the UN.

(The following is a lament by an elderly person, which is how, unfortunately, many of them perceive themselves.)

*Akela hoon main, is duniya mein
koe saath hai, to meraa saayaa
na to parawana, aur naa diwaana, main kisee mahafil ka
soonee soonee raahen thaamatee hain baahen, gham
kise manzil ka
mai to hoon, raahee dil ka
akela hoon main
jaise kabhee pyare, jheel ke kinaare, hans akela nikale
waise hee dekho jee, ye manmaujee, maujon ke seenen
pe chale
chaand sitaaron ke tale
akelaa hoon main*

*(I'm all alone
if there is any friend to me, then it's my shadow,
I'm neither a lover nor a lunatic, of any congregation,
as these lonely paths take hold of me, who has the grief
of destination now,
I'm the traveller of heart,
I'm all alone like a lonely swan, at the banks of the lovely
lake,
see, these vagabonds, are travelling on the chests of waves,
under the light of moon and stars,
I'm all alone in this world)*

There is no more scope for debates such as, "Is Old Age Home the route that India should take, aping the Western societies?" The socio-economic realities of families in India are such that whether we like it or not, older people are looking for alternative living arrangements. The newer issues of children migrating to other cities across the globe as well as prospects of longer life after retirement are making retirees look for livelier options than spending time in unfriendly cities that are singularly non-elder friendly in terms of infrastructure, security, medical insurance and age-specific care. The nation will do well to listen to the voice of senior citizens, a la *Dignity Dialogue*, a grassroots intervention media published once a month by Dignity Foundation.

While the 21st Century may be considered as the century of elderly persons, the 22nd will experience the phenomenon of "ageing of the aged". Those over 80 years is the fastest growing segment of the population with the current 1% share in the total population expected to grow to 3.5% by the year 2050. The increase in life expectancy has resulted in a major shift in the age group of eighty years and over. During 2006-2050, while the overall population of India will rise by 40%, those over 60 years will increase by 270% and 80+ by 500%. This emerging trends calls for tremendous efforts to cope with

new demands and challenges – economic, emotional and health. According to the NSSO Report 2004, the sex ratio of ageing population in rural areas is, there are 985 females per 1000 males, while in urban India, it is 1,046 females. Similarly, the dependency ratio is 12.5 in rural and 10.3 in urban India. 67% of the rural elderly are dependent on others. It is estimated that 6.7% senior citizens are confined to bed or home, while 4.5% live alone.

The work of Dignity Foundation

Dignity Foundation has been working for senior citizens for over 21 years, and offers the 50 plus an enriching set of opportunities to lead a more dignified, secure, fun-filled and fulfilling life. Indians are living longer and healthier lives. The life expectancy of the average Indian is increasing, and the rates of mortality, morbidity, and disability among Indians over age 60 have steadily decreased. The Foundation holds customised events each year for the benefit of senior citizens, like Frontiers in medicine, Literary festival, companionship carnival and World Elders' Day which is celebrated on October 1.

The business opportunity of providing elder care can well be gleaned through state-of-art provisions in even non-western economies such as Japan, China, Singapore, Malaysia, many of whom are also family-oriented societies. Hundreds of senior citizens approaching Dignity Foundation for such options have pushed us, a mere NGO, into building elder care residential homes. We strain every resource to establish benchmarks in elder care and to demonstrate how elders can be looked after in old age homes. Far from interpretations that see homes for the old as aberrations of Indianness and of family honour, and deriding responsible children who want to see their parents comfortably settled and taken care in old age homes, one has to take note of changes in thinking, changing attitudes, and realities of difficulties in taking care of parents. It is the seniors' right to keep their head high and in self esteem. Wherever they live, senior citizens have a right to lead a life of dignity, with or without children. Retirement homes have to deliver that essential dignity. ■

Dr. Sheilu Sreenivasan, whose passion for the cause of senior citizens launched the organisation in 1995, is the Founder-President of Dignity Foundation. An M.A. in Psychiatric Social



Work from Madras University, she took her Ph.D from Mumbai University in Sociology. After a seven year period in research she joined the publishing firm, Macmillan India and became Corporate Manager in Bangalore. She then became Head of Publishing in Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, in 1987. In Feb 2004, she was instrumental in setting up the Govt. of Maharashtra's Institute of Empowered and Productive Ageing at Yashada, Pune.

Begin again

*Retirement need not spell the end of life as one knows it, says **Shyamsundar Savkur**. He describes how he brought meaning and activity back into his life, once the initial euphoria of retirement wore off.*

THE last census in India revealed that the non-working population above 60 years is steadily rising from 5.8% presently. In the rural areas, there is no mandated retirement age. The old among the self-employed or those engaged in agricultural farms continue to toil as long as they possibly can. However, for those in service, retirement on superannuation is inescapable.

Most view the dreaded date of retirement with trepidation, due to substantial reduction in income. Many often frantically seek and accept any job as long as it supplements their reduced income. A few are content with their life-time savings and prefer to hang up their boots and indulge in the luxury of living an unhurried life; waking up at leisure, without the need for setting the alarm.

Looking forward to retirement

I too, avidly looked forward to the date of retirement. While in service, I seldom found time to read the daily newspapers; post-retirement I have time to read not one, but two, in addition to completing the daily crossword and Sudoku!

The first month post-retirement was a well-deserved respite after years of a peripatetic banking service involving periodical transfers. Boredom and ennui however, slowly crept in with the routine of the morning bed coffee, glancing through the newspapers thereafter, and the continuous watching of TV, which seldom has any news to gladden the hearts and minds of viewers.



Another evocative painting by the writer



Retirement enabled the writer to go back to his hobby of painting

With everyone around scurrying about getting ready for office, I felt guilty as I lay stretched on my couch waiting for my breakfast, lunch and the irresistible siesta thereafter. I decided to bestir myself and do something, at least to appear busy.

The new routine

A daily evening stroll in the neighborhood for which I had had no time while in service, now became a routine. During such visits I saw quite a few old, retired gentlemen seated on a bench beneath an expansive shady banyan tree. I often wondered what they could be chatting about. One of them whom I had known for some years, insisted I too should join the crowd, if only to listen to what seemed to be an endless recitation of all the ills and infirmities of old age. To change this morbid discussion on ailments, I tried to elicit from each what kept them busy for most of the time when they were at home. One of them was interested in palmistry, another in astrology and matching horoscopes. An enterprising retired teacher had decided to offer free tuition to the poor and needy children of the neighborhood – a very laudable vocation. It was then that I too decided to keep myself busy and fruitfully engaged.

I had developed a school time hobby of sketching and water color painting which I had to give up while in service. I decided to resume my hobby. Now after thirty years of retirement, I keep painting well into the early hours of the morning. Nothing is more satisfying than a misty morning



The writer teaches painting to fellow senior citizens

painted on canvas, an angry sea with waves lashing on the rocks, an evening sunset with the western sky aflame with riotous peaks clad in snow, or serene valleys with streams flowing unhindered. No lover of nature who loves to paint can resist capturing on canvas its varied and constantly shifting moods.

For lovers of music, time does not hang heavy. Listening to the strains of an afternoon *raga* or a late night *Bhairavi* can have a calming – nay, even a soporific effect to induce a satisfying afternoon siesta, or even a restful night's sleep.

Photography, as a hobby can always be both exciting and rewarding. One doesn't have to travel to scenic surroundings

to capture the beauty of nature. Even a crowded city has its charms if one has the patience and diligence to locate them.

Clay modelling is yet another activity which can be satisfying – though of course it's quite messy. My late cousin, a retired mechanical engineer, had an array of tools and an imaginative mind. He designed a small electric engine with attached bogies running on tracks with a signaling system – all operated on a battery, and this kept him busy for a month. Wood-carving was another satisfying hobby which kept him engaged, with no time for boredom.

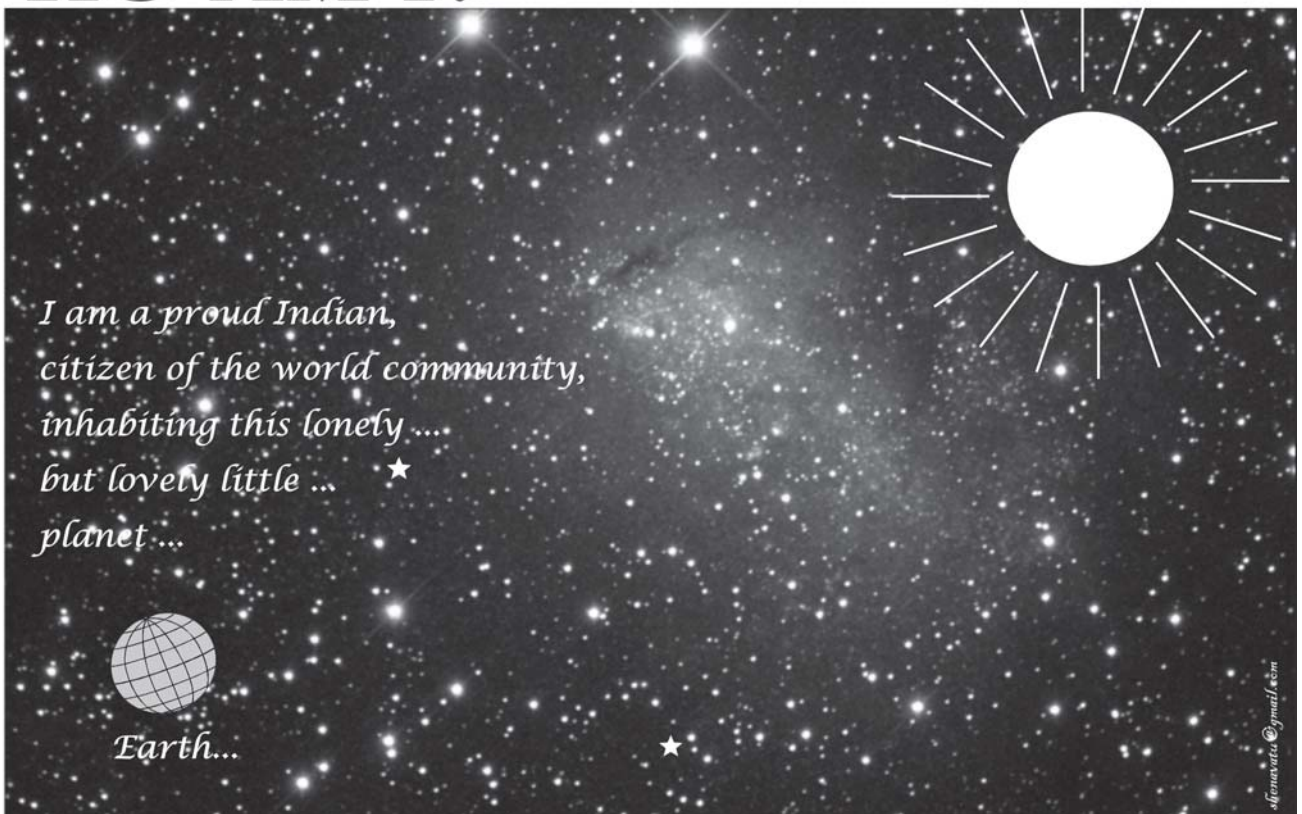
Early in life, when at school, I had read the poem by W.H Davies where the poet had lamented about the frenetic pace of life. Most of us are able to identify with that feeling during the “yearning” years where all attention and energies are focused on staying yoked to an employer. It is finally, on retirement that I have been able to address

the problem identified by him when he wrote “*What is this life, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare.*” ■



Shyamsundar Savkur retired thirty years ago on superannuation from the Union Bank of India from a senior executive position. He took to painting as a hobby. He holds painting classes for resident senior citizens of Athashri Home.

WHO AM I?



“Hum hain Angrez, lekin hamara dil hai Hindustani – maybe one day I’ll be an honorary citizen. I love Mumbai or Bombay as I call it. If it’s not London, then it’s Bombay; if it’s not UK, then it’s India.”



How do you manage your various personas?

Composing music is my passion, and you can in tandem be scoring music for films as a paid job, and writing orchestral music as a hobby. The term ‘music director’ seems to be of Indian origin. While theatre always had a music director, for films, the Western term is the ‘composer’. A typical Bollywood setup constitutes of this one person who writes the songs, and another who does the score. Thankfully, of late, a great deal of films emerging from India are not song-based, giving the composer or music director much more scope, and the score does play a more important role, supporting the story.

The secret is to, though difficult, not to wear all hats at the same time. I am doing much less orchestrating these days, apart from my own projects. I am scoring more films myself as opposed to assisting others on some of the bigger films. Producing is very much part of the composition process, although on the flip side, I produced a music-based short film, titled *La Lune Folle* (Crazy Moon), directed by Meneka Das in the UK, which got an award for Best Short at The Rajasthan International Film Festival in Jaipur in 2017.

London based **Andrew T. Mackay**, composer, producer, orchestrator, director, social activist, with his heart in Mumbai, describes himself as ‘quite chilled’, but who gets moved by injustice. He concedes that despite man’s strange penchant for darkness, there is a lot of light in the world. **A. Radhakrishnan** in conversation with the composer.

What about today’s music?

Negative comments abound, but music is continually evolving and always in a state of transition, sometimes regressing, and sometimes getting completely lost. Certain types of music have a longer shelf life, whilst some pass through in a constant state of development and vanish without a trace. With technology, anyone with a computer and the ability to switch it on can make music. How good it is, is really up to the listener to decide!

What do you consider your achievements?

I still believe I have a long way to go and a lot to learn. I am happy to have had hits across the globe with Bombay Dub Orchestra, a project I started with composer/producer Garry Hughes. It all began after doing a recording session in 1998 in South Bombay, which was engineered by the legendary Daman Sood ji.

I realised that Garry and I had a great connection with the musicians there and really wanted to do a more long term project that would feature the musicians and orchestra in India. Our last album was recorded in Bombay, Delhi, London,



Andrew with Kabir Bedi and director Katherine Kingsland

Los Angeles, Kingston – Jamaica, and Istanbul. Bringing musicians from different backgrounds together is when magic can happen!

I feel blessed to have had my work screened at some of the top film festivals worldwide, one of my favourites being the feature documentary *Monsoon*, directed by Sturla Gunnarsson, which won the People's Choice award for best Canadian Film at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Further, I have worked on some great projects recently including A.R. Rahman's orchestral composition *Flying Lotus*, which premiered in May 2017 with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. I also re-worked the music for *Sandokan* for its 40th anniversary celebration with Kabir Bedi, who became a European star, thanks to the Italian TV series. It was a surprise performance of the music at the River to River Indian Film Festival in Florence where it was amazing to see what a star Kabir is, and how impeccable his Italian is.

Another notable recording experience was the score for our short film *La Lune Folle* recorded at Abbey Road Studios in London with a Piano Quartet (Piano, Violin, Viola and Cello). I've also been writing the music for fashion shows in London, Berlin, Madrid, and Barcelona over the last few years, and feel it is always good to diversify.

I also try to do a certain amount of gratis projects. I have

scored a host of documentary films on subjects ranging from *Women and the Taliban*, *Ex Child Soldiers in Nepal*, *The Kumari*, *Homelessness* and other subjects.

Music has also taken me around the world to record. One of my favourite moments was recording a Zulu choir, mixing Zulu with Hindi, in South Africa for a film which featured an Indian family living in Durban, South Africa.

I started the first ever Composers Lab in India in 2013, the 100th anniversary of Indian cinema, as part of the Mumbai Film Festival. It's an initiative bringing together young up and coming Indian composers and mentoring them over several days with a composer from the UK or US and a team of music industry specialists.

My UK-based company *Bohemia Junction Limited* represents the Macedonian Symphonic Orchestra for India, bringing one of the best European orchestras to Indian films. We also represent the legendary Abbey Road Studios in London. Our client list is far reaching with a lot of the work coming from South India where I see a resurgence of the use of the orchestra and some great music scores.

We regularly work with the likes of A.R. Rahman, Santhosh Narayanan, Sean Roldan and many more.

Tell us about your process of composing music?

In a nutshell, I compose at the piano or the computer, but before embarking on writing a note, I let thematic ideas and arrangements manifest themselves in my head for a week or two. Often we are restricted by what we can physically play; so it is good to get the ideas first before committing it to paper or 'tape'!

I will always ask to read the script or watch the film if it's already made, and then sit with the filmmaker and hear his or her take on the story. I have to like the story and believe in the characters in order to take on projects. We all have to pay our bills, but ultimately I am inspired to work on a project if the film excites me.

How would you compare the Indian music scene and the Western/Indian classical?

I have a preference for Indian classical and semi-classical, but there is huge influence of Western music in India. Bands like F-16s in Chennai, *Advaita* in Delhi, artistes like Sandunes, Achint Thakur, Roshni Baptist in Mumbai, *Soulmate* from Shillong – the list goes on! I prefer films to stage and TV. Of course, English is great, but of the last four projects I have scored for, one was in Marathi and three in Hindi.

Are film and alternative music different?

Film music has always been a far cry from alternative music, but there are filmmakers who have actively included music in

(Continued on page 25)

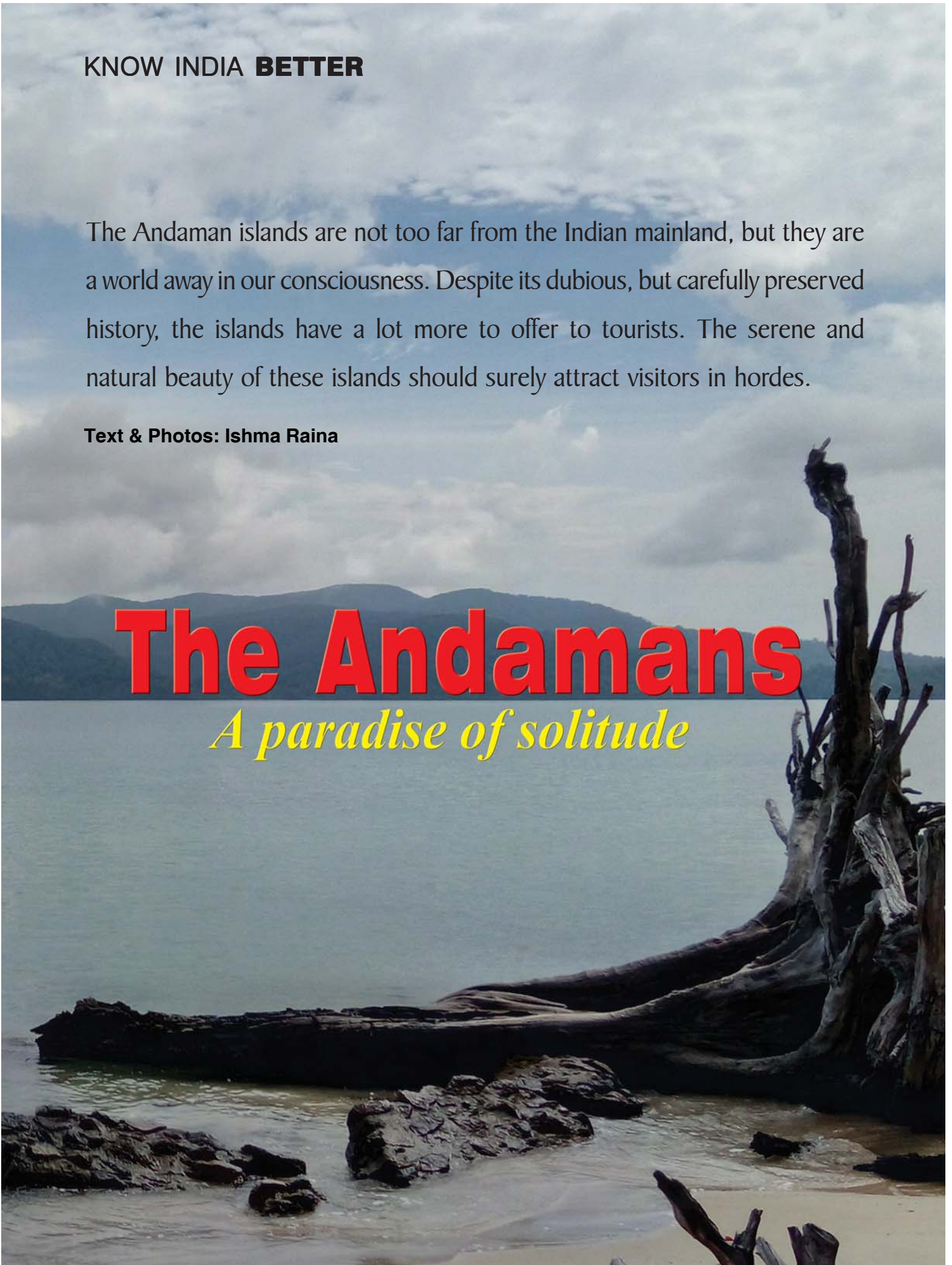
KNOW INDIA **BETTER**

The Andaman islands are not too far from the Indian mainland, but they are a world away in our consciousness. Despite its dubious, but carefully preserved history, the islands have a lot more to offer to tourists. The serene and natural beauty of these islands should surely attract visitors in hordes.

Text & Photos: Ishma Raina

The Andamans

A paradise of solitude





An aerial view of the Andaman islands

NDIA is globally known for its cultural, ethnic and geographic diversity – a tag that it holds with great pride. Amidst these immense roars of thriving cultural heterogeneities, stand quietly the island clusters of the Andaman and Nicobar, overlooked not just in our geography lessons, but also in our awareness and travels. The Andaman islands are still addressed as ‘Kaalapani’ by many – which portrays best the limelight that surrounds both its history, as well as geography. It has, however, become highly essential to learn, and more important, unlearn certain notions and ideas that we may otherwise hold of these islands – it is important to reconstruct the identity of Andamans, and look at them from a completely different light in order to know India better. When mainland India holds such diversity that can be tirelessly

explored, why should one take the effort to go to these islands so far away from the shore? Or to put it more simply – why Andamans? The answer lies in one simple statement – the Andamans are a timeless paradise of solitude.

So near, yet a world away

The closest mainland ports (both air and sea) from Port Blair are Chennai, Vishakhapatnam and Kolkata, and the entire journey by flight seems like one through a seamless canvas – the colours of the sky and the waters of the Bay of Bengal merging into a horizon-less azure. With a terraced topography, Port Blair has the capability to out-do any other city of the country when it comes to town planning and a smoothly running state machinery. The maintenance of the city is top notch, which not only reflects the efficiency of the government machinery, but also highlights the disciplined way of life that the people of Port Blair live. The beauty of Port Blair is in the fact that it chooses to live without the intervention of various multinational joints, yet lacks no amenities; there may be no KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), but there sure will be an AFC (Andaman Fried Chicken). The city is adorned with well laid out roads, and a beautifully constructed pathway by the sea, that could very well be the Marine Drive of Andamans! Port Blair also has a great sanitation and hygiene system, and can do well as the brand ambassador for the government's Swachh Bharat Mission.

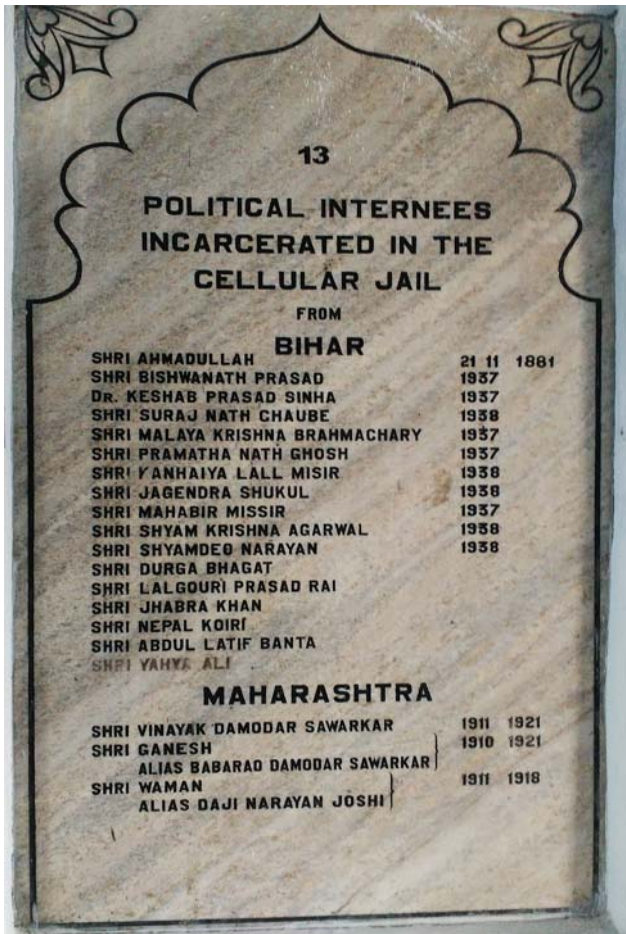
One of the most important features of Port Blair is that despite being like any other small town, the demography of the place is highly cosmopolitan. The native tribes mostly inhabit the remote interiors of the forests in the Andamans, and there are strict rules regarding interaction with these communities, prohibited in most areas. While the majority people in Port Blair are Tamilians and Bengalis from mainland India, one can find people from every corner of the country, most visible in the Aberdeen Bazaar, the central market of the city that was constructed by the British during the colonial rule; here, a Kashmiri handicrafts shop co-exists with a *Kanjeevaram sari* shop; *momo*-s and butter chicken are sold in joints right next to each other.

The Cellular Jail and its place in history

A few kilometres from the clock tower of the Aberdeen Bazaar is a steep road that does the work of a time machine – the hullabaloo of the city market is replaced with a stoic silence – a silence which leads to the place that the Andamans are most infamous for – the Cellular Jail. The outer facade of the prison complex looks like the entry to a grand fort, eclipsing brilliantly the horrific history that was written beyond the walls of that gate. The first look at the prison complex is breathtaking – not in a romanticised way, but just because of the majesty of



The Cellular Jail has witnessed horrific history



A plaque at the Cellular Jail

the complex. The Cellular Jail is an architectural marvel, a radial prison complex brilliantly laid out in seven spokes, with the outer end of each spoke walled, and all of the inner ends merging at one common watchtower, where a guard would always be on duty. This watchtower also has a large bell that was kept in order to raise an alarm. Presently, only three out of seven spokes stand in good condition. Another major characteristic of these spokes is that no two spokes have prisons facing each other – cells of one spoke face the blank rear walls of the cells in another spoke. This in itself is a sadistic sight, and as visitors, we cannot even bring themselves to



Another view of the infamous prison



Prisoners underwent torture and inhuman isolation at the Cellular Jail

fathom the level of isolation the prisoners of the jail were subjected to.

Restoration and renovation techniques used in the preservation of the Cellular Jail also play a major role in the overall impact that the first appearance of the jail has on the visitors. While the entire prison complex is spick and span; the gardens are well laid out and the hedges trimmed, the main spokes of the prison have been left in the same state as they were during the colonial role. One loses track of time right at the first look of the building – it is mighty, scary, and one is overwhelmed and stirred to the core at first glance itself. Needless to say, the idea of not painting the walls of the spokes and leaving them in its original state is a bold symbolic gesture. The ageing, moss covered prisons, weathered over years and years of heat, wind and rain seem to tell the story of ‘Kaalapani’ way better than anything else can.

The prison complex was fully built within the span of a decade, from 1896 to 1906, and the prisoners deported to Andaman were put to use for carrying out the construction. The Cellular Jail maintains an exhibition site that depicts the draconian torture methods used by the British to torment the prisoners, the inhuman and inhospitable conditions that they were made to work and live in. The prison complex also houses administrative offices as well as the gallows where many of

the inmates were executed. The Light and Sound show at the Cellular Jail narrates the heart wrenching series of events, with a *peepal* tree of the complex personified to be the narrator of the show. This *peepal* tree was planted during the construction years of the jail, and was uprooted during a massive storm. The tree was then replanted - it miraculously survived and still stands tall.

The prisons are open for visits as well, the most famous one being that of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar/Veer Savarkar. The dimension of each cell is about 15 feet in length and 9 feet in width, with only one small ventilator on one wall; this makes one wonder how the inmates managed to live their lives in such isolation. The central watchtower has the names and tenure of all the inmates of the Cellular Jail, engraved upon it. From the top of the jail are visible the islands of Ross and North Bay, which are famous for two very different reasons. Both these islands are closest to Port Blair, and smaller ships are used to ferry people to and fro between these islands. Port Blair has a top notch water sports complex where all the ships dock.

Hopping the islands

Ross Island is one of the 572 islands of the Andaman and Nicobar, and is probably one of the least known sites of the



The ruins of Ross Island; this was once a thriving settlement

colonial history of India. Situated three km to the east of Port Blair, Ross Island served as the administrative headquarters of the British from 1856 to 1941. A massive earthquake led to the destruction of the infrastructure at the Ross Island, the remnants of which still exist, however, in extremely dilapidated conditions. Currently under the Indian Navy, Ross Island is now uninhabited. It is an area of one sq.km, and holds the ruins of what was a thriving, flourishing settlement not very long ago. It becomes really easy to paint a picture of Ross Island in all its glory as one walks by the remains of the *bazaar*, bakery, secretariat, club, tennis court, swimming pool and church among other buildings of the settlement. Most buildings of the Ross Island are not only in ruins, but are also slowly being

taken over by thick foliage. In spite of having faced the wrath of many a calamity, it seems like Ross Island wishes to fight not only time, but also 'tide', and quite literally, so that it can live to tell its tale. Archaic architecture being consumed by old trees is not a sight that one gets to see every day; thereby making Ross Island a compulsory place to visit when planning a trip to Andaman (and otherwise too). One may even find a deer or two strolling through the bazaar of Ross Island (who do not entertain pictures and selfies, by the way!).

Ross Island is also special because it contains within itself a historical timeline of almost two centuries. After the earthquake of 1941, most British abandoned the island. But shortly after, Ross Island came under the control of the



The North Bay Island, which has the third largest coral reef in Asia



The North Point Lighthouse is a landmark, with a very liberating view from the top

Japanese troops in 1942, who remained there till 1945 (until Japan's surrender in the Second World War.) The Japanese too, left their mark on the island in the form of bunkers to safeguard the island.

The third vertex in the island triangle of Port Blair and Ross Island is the North Bay Island – which has the third largest coral reef in Asia, thereby making it a hot favourite for adventure junkies. The North Bay Island is easily spotted even from a distance, mainly because of the north point lighthouse, which stands at the highest point of elevation of the island. A portrait of the North Bay Island is featured at the back of twenty rupee notes, which is also how most tourist guides introduce the North Bay Island to the visitors. Situated at a distance of eight km from Port Blair, only a certain part of the island is open for exploratory purposes. While many people go in for snorkelling, scuba diving and sea walking, one can also just sit by corals on the shore, explore the small market on the island, or walk up to the North Point Lighthouse, which is about 72 m above sea level, and is regulated and maintained by the Ministry of Ports and Shipping. With a simple entry ticket, all of ten rupees, and a little bit of effort of climbing up eight floors, one can access the top floor of the lighthouse.



The sign point to the lighthouse

The view from the top of the lighthouse is very liberating. As one overlooks the islands and the vast expanse of the waters of the Bay of Bengal merging with the sky, many boundaries are transcended, and barriers broken. It feels like one has managed to embrace the infinite.

The furthest southern tip of South Andaman Island is at a distance of roughly 25 km from Port Blair, and can be accessed by road. Chidiya Tapu, also known as the “Bird Island” and “Sunset Point”, is considered to be one of the best places to see the sunset at Port Blair. The drive of about an hour takes you through most interiors of Port Blair and the countryside, and you can also stop over to grab a cup of tea from the local stalls by the sea. The beach is rather small, bordered by sea walls and mangrove trees, and is right adjacent to a biological park that houses forty six varieties of birds, white spotted deer, reptiles like crocodiles and monitor lizards, and the endemic Andaman monkey. Chidiya Tapu is the perfect spot for those who seek proximity to nature during their vacations or explorations – calm, tranquil and serene, just the right kind of view that is needed to unwind. On the shore, all one can hear is the crashing of waves, and the sounds of the birds from among the surrounding forests. For those who are mostly used to the blaring sounds of horns and loudspeakers in their everyday lives, the reduction in decibel is surely a welcome change!

Hopping to 41 km northeast of Port Blair is the island which is most famously known to be the site of the best beach in Asia – the Radhanagar Beach. Named after Sir Henry Havelock, a British General who served in India, Havelock Island is one of the few places where the Andaman and Nicobar administration has authorised for the development of tourism. Habitation on the island gained ground especially after the



Chidiya Tapu is also known as the ‘Sunset Point’

1971 Indo-Pak war, when the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi realised the proximity of Havelock to Bangladesh, thereby granting them permission to migrate to the island – which is reflected in the current demography of the island. In a population of approximately 15,000, most of the people are Bengali settlers. The islands can be reached by government ferries as well as private cruises, and take a minimum of two hours of travel time.

Havelock has an interesting mix and match of huts with thatched roofs standing right next to a resort and a *kathi* roll joint. Havelock has its share of tourists from abroad as well, and many of them have also chosen to stay back! There is one market in the island, where most of the groceries and fisheries are brought, bought and sold. The quality of amenities however,

is not as fine as it is in Port Blair, and people have to often to rush to Port Blair for something as simple as getting automobiles repaired or serviced. Havelock is most famous for its sublime beaches, Elephant Beach, Laxmanpur Beach, with the Radhanagar Beach being the most famous one, especially because of its white sand and a canopy of the surrounding rain-fed forests. The beaches at Havelock are perfect places to lounge on a hammock with a book in hand. The local cuisine and sea food adds to the holiday vibe in the best way possible.

There are other islands of the Andaman archipelago like Long Island, Viper Island, and Neil Island, which can be visited to further know the Andamans better. A running theme with all the beaches of the Andaman islands is that most beaches do not have markets right at the shore – they’re a little before



The interesting market of Havelock (above); fishing boats at Havelock



The beautiful and serene Havelock Island

the beach begins; and this has helped in maintaining the cleanliness on the beaches. The waters at the shore are so clear that one can choose the stones or corals that they want to stand on, or can see the vivid changes in the colour of the sea water at regular distances. While most administrations across the country struggle to keep the coastlines and beaches clean, the administration of Andaman has done a commendable job of maintaining the beaches.

Many believe that the geographic detachment of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is its biggest undoing. At a time when advertisement is the only way to attain promotion, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are still waiting to be found and explored by the people of its own country. Like most states have their tourism advertisements, it will be great if the department of tourism thinks of the beautiful archipelago waiting to be acknowledged for what it has to offer. Another

effort can be made by improving the amount of information available in the academic syllabi on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and not just make it synonymous to the land of infamous history and a fatal tsunami. Everyone has a different idea of a heaven, and for those who seek, you might even find your heaven in this small group of islands that breathes life into you every second of your time there. ■



Ishma Raina is a student at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences with a special fascination for Indian history. Her introduction to the diversity in India began right from her schooling days. Avid reading and travels across different parts of the world like Russia, UK and Japan have only strengthened her quest to know and showcase India better.

Our Last Six Issues

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(Continued from page 16)

their film that bridge that gap, like Anuraag Kashyap. Also, I do see, with some of the newer filmmakers, a tendency to use styles and genres outside of what was typically Bollywood, which still dominates the airwaves. Over the last few years there has been a resurgence of some really good music from across India on the 'alternative' non-Bollywood scene.

Many new music festivals and musical venues popping up have given new and established artistes the opportunity to showcase their music. Whereas in the past, it would usually stay in the musician's bedroom!

What are your views on jugalbandi?

When I first started my love affair with Indian music, I found it quite extraordinary that two musicians, who, in some cases had never met, were able to go on stage, decide which *raag* they'd be performing, and off they went. I then started to understand more about the connectivity and the way the musicians would equally be soloists. The closest reference in Western music would be Jazz, where musicians jam on a chord sequence or a melody or an idea that may not have been pre conceived. Indian classical performances are unique. At its heart is a strong sense of musicianship, storytelling, and this can really impart a feeling that is hard to explain.

Are you in favour of fusion music?

Well, my own music by Bombay Dub Orchestra is often described as fusion. What is fusion? It's varying types of regional or global music brought together. I don't like the name really, and it's more of a label for the purpose of the music listening public. Music in a way needs to have some sort of description to set it apart from other styles.

What do you think of remixes?

I am not a great fan, though there are some really good interpretations, but personally the original songs are the best, although I have also indulged in this crime. I have remixed or done reworks of songs by the likes of R.D. Burman and other older film composers, particularly as a DJ playing at Indian film festivals around the globe.

Is silence music? What do you think?

Without silence, there would be no music. It is like a gentle breath before the next note. The gaps or spaces in between music, particularly in a film, are more important than most people realise. It gives you time to take in what you are watching or listening to. Even a notes' rest or a pause in a piece of music, is so important. So often films have music relentlessly cascading out of the speakers, and much of contemporary music leaves little time for space and that all important breath or rest.

Does music help in maintaining good health?

Not if I. am. working till 5 am every day! But seriously, good music can help balance your mind and help you to feel good. What happens in the brain manifests in the rest of the body. There's music to dance to, to get fit to, to do all sorts of things to. So the right music can certainly keep you healthy, positive and blessed.

Who are your favourite English and Indian composers?

Among Western composers I like Debussy, Vaughn Williams, Ravel, Fauré, Holst, Delius, Scriabin, Shostokovich, Sibelius and many more. As for Indian composers, I like the work that some of the new breed like Aloka Dasgupta and Anjo John (both of whom came through our composers lab), and also Narendra Chandavarkar. The music coming from the South seems to have more freedom. Rahman is a genius of new wave music, and has introduced that simplistic electronic feel with space and beautiful moods, but retained the earthy Indian folk element often missing in music today. It's all about being adventurous for composers, directors and producers.

How important are awards?

Certainly, some sort of industry recognition is good and helps your career, and lets you know that maybe you are doing the right thing, and doing it well.

You are London-based. How often do you visit Mumbai?

London will always be home, but these days I find myself staying in India for longer and longer durations, even staying right through the monsoon, which has been an achievement in itself!

Hum hain Angrez, lekin hamara dil hai Hindustani – maybe one day I'll be an honorary citizen. I love Mumbai or Bombay as I call it. If it's not London, then it's Bombay; if it's not UK, then it's India. There is so much to love. Negativity exists in all countries and I never talk about it. Here, I would say the littering is excessive and done by everyone, they all feel someone else will clean it for them.

What are your hobbies?



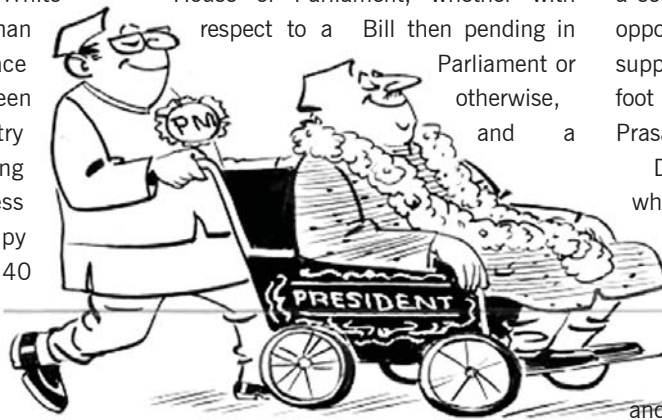
I love cricket, and earlier used to cruise around London in classic cars and motorcycles, without knowing how to fix them, enticed by its design and style. ■

A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, short story writer, poet who is gregarious and loves making the world a better place

Only in name

*The President of India is a mere figure head. Though his original envisaged role might have been more substantial, successful amendments to the Constitution have ensured his inefficacy, says **Jashwant B. Mehta**. Will things change?*

AFTER an intense power game extending over two months, the nation has once again undergone the exercise of electing the President, the ceremonial head of the State. The incumbent President, virtually an unknown figure to the people prior to his being picked up by the BJP political bosses, will be privileged to stay in a huge palatial mansion several times larger than the White House, and far bigger than the Buckingham Palace occupied by the Queen of England. In a country where poverty is still among the highest, this powerless head of the State will occupy a mansion consisting of 340 rooms (having internal corridors of 2.5 km), spread over an area of 330 acres, in one of the most prized locations of the capital city.



The front seat passenger (The illustration is from author's book *Quest For A Better Democratic Alternative*)

The original intent

Although the framers of the Indian Constitution, a large majority of whom were highly influenced by the British, had opted for the parliamentary model which provided executive powers to the Prime Minister, they still wanted the President to play an active and positive role, providing him with adequate powers to check both the executive and the legislature. Articles 74 and 86 of the Constitution dealing with the powers of the President, undoubtedly provided for this role. Article 74 says that "there shall be a Council of Ministers with a Prime Minister at its head to aid and

advise the President in the discharge of his functions". As originally worded, Article 86 provided the right of the President to address and send messages to both the Houses. It reads: "(1) The President may address either House of Parliament or both Houses assembled together, and for that purpose require the attendance of members. (2) The President may send messages to either House of Parliament, whether with respect to a Bill then pending in

Parliament or otherwise, and a

House to which any message is so sent shall with all convenient dispatch consider any matter required by the message to be taken into consideration".

Both our earlier Presidents, Dr. Rajendra Prasad (the only President to have been elected twice), and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who followed Dr. Rajendra Prasad, were undoubtedly fully aware of the powers as provided in the Constitution.

When the Bihar Zamindari bill was sent to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, he had expressed reluctance to grant his assent. He had even written to Nehru that "When I am asked to sign a document, I must satisfy myself and not

sign blindly." Even on the Hindu Code bill, Prasad had sharp differences with Nehru and had written to Nehru that he would return the bill to Parliament without his assent if he thought it was inappropriate, and he clearly stated: "My right to examine it on its merits when it is passed by Parliament before giving assent to it is there." When the election of the President was due for a second term in 1957, Nehru openly opposed Prasad. It was only due to the support of Maulana Azad who put his foot down that Nehru had to accept Prasad's nomination for a second term.

During Dr. Radhakrishnan's tenure, when General Thapar submitted his resignation, Nehru, despite the poor performance of Lt. Gen B. M. Kaul wanted him to be promoted as General. But Dr. Radhakrishnan remained firm and Nehru had to yield, and Lt. General J. N. Choudhary was promoted as General. Dr. Radhakrishnan is

also reported to have supported those who demanded the resignation of V.K. Krishna Menon (who was then Defence minister) after the Chinese aggression of 1962, and an enquiry into the corrupt administration of Pratap Singh Kairon, the then Chief Minister of Punjab. He openly blamed his ministers for "widespread incompetence and the gross mismanagement of our resources." (Not surprisingly, Dr. Radhakrishnan, despite his popularity, was not offered a second term by the ruling party).

Figure head President?

With her complete hold on both the organisational and legislature

wings of the party by virtue of the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act passed during Emergency in 1976, Indira Gandhi virtually curtailed all the powers provided to the President under the Constitution, reducing him to a mere 'rubber stamp', making it obligatory for him to act as advised by the Cabinet without any discretion. The amendment in the article is indicated in bold:

"(1) Council of Ministers to aid and advise the President – There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice".

Apart from curtailing the powers of the President, the notorious 42nd amendment had also virtually provided all the powers to the Parliament to amend Article 368 of the Constitution, making the Parliament supreme to tinker with the Constitution in any manner including the fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution, and not challengeable in any court of law. After the Janata Party assumed power in 1977, while passing the 43rd & 44th constitutional amendments, it was expected to do away with all the mischievous and notorious provisions of the 42nd amendment including the restoration of original powers as provided to the President under the Constitution.

While the power granted to the Parliament to tinker with the fundamental rights were repealed by virtue of the 43rd and 44th Constitutional Amendments Act, as regards the restoration of the powers as provided in the Constitution under Article 74 to the President, was only marginally restored to the extent of requiring the Prime Minister (Council of Ministers) to reconsider the advice tendered to him, but remained bound to follow the advice tendered thereafter. Article 74: "(1) Council of Ministers to aid and advise President. There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise

the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice. Provided that the President may require the Council of Ministers to reconsider such advice, either generally or otherwise, and the President shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration". (2) The question whether any, and if so what, advice was tendered by Ministers to the President shall not be inquired into in any court". It was very apparent that even the Janata Government too led by Morarji Desai did not want the powers of the President to be restored as originally provided for in the Constitution, and the balance of power has remained in favour of the Prime Minister, making the President for all practical purposes nothing more than a mere ceremonial head of the Government.

Our failure

Our experience of the last seven decades has clearly established that the legislature has utterly failed to provide the required checks on the executive. Enforcement of whip has further deprived the freedom to the legislatures. They are not even required to apply their mind on the legislative issues. The President has remained a mute spectator even when mind boggling corruption scams had completely shaken the faith of the people in the political system.

The success of any democracy whether Parliamentary or Presidential, ultimately depends on inbuilt checks and balances. The restoration of power as originally contemplated in Article 74, along with the direct election of the President may well provide the answer and create an institution in Indian polity to provide the checks on the Executive and Legislature. However, to play his assigned role, it may be essential to have the direct election of the President by the people as this would enable him to assert himself. In our present system of elections, the ruling party at the centre led by the Prime Minister makes all the

efforts to select a candidate who would be more amenable to the Government, and the President himself also remains obligated to the ruling party for being selected for the coveted post. Under such a scenario, even the restoration of President's powers as provided originally under Articles 74 may fail to serve this purpose.

While the Union Constitution Committee led by Nehru had recommended having the President elected by the legislature, the Provincial Union Committee led by Vallabhbhai Patel had recommended and approved that both the President and the Governors at the State level should be directly elected by the people. Patel's recommendation was even approved by the full house. In fact, "in a joint meeting of Nehru's Union Constitution Committee and Patel's Provincial Constitution Committee on 11th June, 1947, Nehru was asked by a resolution to reconsider his decision and have the President directly elected, but he refused to do so". The direct election of the Governor as suggested by Vallabhbhai would have also helped to provide the required number of checks and balances even at the state level.

In fact, the ruling party at the Centre has used the opportunity of appointing Governors, more in the nature of providing lucrative postings for the retired senior politicians belonging to their party or bureaucrats who would be willing to oblige their Delhi bosses as and when the need would arise, in case of a crisis at the State level. ■

The writer, an Architect & Consulting Engineer, is Convener of Forum For A Better Democratic Alternative which is registered as a Public Charitable Trust.



He has authored three books, *Quest For A Better Democratic Alternative, Electoral Reforms and Presidential Democracy – The Need of the Hour.*

An Indian's Berlin diary

*An Indian theatre enthusiast spends a month in Berlin interacting and learning about the ritual of theatre. **Nikhil Katara**, who embarked on this month long journey, narrates his experience.*

BERLIN is that part of Europe where art finds the artist. A global village where artists and thinkers from all over the globe come together to make meaningful work. It is in Berlin's Pankow that a small space exists. It is called Eden studios. In it is a garden, a cafeteria and many studios that harbour an emptiness. The studio has its set of rules and is home to many performers. In its studios lives a school by the name of London International School of Performance Arts (LISPA). The school of physical theatre and performance art attracts an audience from many countries.

While from the outside this theatrical experience seems performative in nature, but the processes that the school takes one through are oriented to philosophies that delve into the subconscious, thus making it a therapeutic experience. The summer school of LISPA in Berlin is a four-week period of non-linear time, which is too long and too short at the same time, and takes one through a journey, one which ends too soon, but not before taking you through a full life cycle.

The pedagogy

The pedagogical approach of LISPA finds its roots in the teachings of the late Jacques Lecoq. The artist is the creator of his or her universe and their playfulness is the impulse through which this universe unfolds. Thomas Prattki who is the founder of LISPA continues this legacy of the teachings of Lecoq, while at the same time adding his dimension of pedagogical discovery



The Eden studios in Berlin

(All photos credit: Heather Ward)

along with a brilliant set of facilitators. These facilitators include Valentina Bordenave, Cat Gerrard, Ariel Gutierrez, Kelley Soul, and Philip Schaefer. The four week summer school is just a taster into the artistic world of LISPA which is a more comprehensive journey when one takes the longer courses. But the taster is quite a full meal in itself for those who have not experienced it yet.

The journey begins with the art of embodiment and ensemble story telling. These two markedly physical experiences are conducted by Thomas Prattki, Ariel Gutierrez, Valentina Bordenave and Cat Gerrard. Embodiment is not mimicking, but is an 'as if' where a person embodies a certain physical trait of an object or an element and finds a human experience which is 'as if' it were

that object or element. The embodiment could be of fire, wind, water, earth, clay spring, or any other thing. The human experience not only embodies the movement of the object, but also adds the human feelings associated to that physical movement. While embodiment delves into experiences, ensemble storytelling goes into the dimension of devising where no one person is actually the owner or the writer of a piece of artistic work, but everyone brings their own artistic journeys forward and tell a story together. The process gets extremely chaotic, but its organic nature provides a dimension which perhaps the written stories can never achieve. The week eventually culminates with a presentation of devised pieces on a small platform.

The second week of LISPA initiates with masks and the idea of human comedy. The masks are of various kinds, namely expressive masks, neutral masks, half masks, larval masks and Krampus masks. The dynamic of mask play is interesting because it reveals many things instead of concealing them. Each mask is very different, for example, the Larval masks embody very limited movement, whereas the half masked state is highly excited. Every mask reveals a different energy and reveals a different story. The sessions on human comedy keep the masked state of the human body, but the performances themselves do not involve masks. These sessions bring forth many characters which stem from the masked state of the human body.

The first two weeks of LISPA play a markedly different part in the entire experience as compared to the other two weeks. Week three is called moving into the shadow. It delves into the Jungian concept of shadows, which is discussed through masks, rituals, essays and movement. This workshop of LISPA is an introduction to the newly formed 'Integrated movement performance praxis', which is interested in the ability of drama to engage with the Self. The Jungian concept of shadows initiates with the idea that personally and culturally, a human being has an 'Unlived self' which he or she has never experienced because society and culture have disallowed it. Through the Krampus mask and through images, rituals and human contact, one tries to live this experience. This week in the four week workshop, though does not claim to be therapeutic, but still has a deep rooted physical experience involved which dives into the realms of the subconscious and can be actually therapeutic and emotional.

The concluding week of LISPA's summer school workshop takes the process of the shadows and goes into the world of the Trickster, who is also



Every mask reveals a different energy and story

the trouble maker, bringer of madness, and wisdom. The trickster mocks all that deeply affects the human being and the trickster also heals. The week culminates with discovery of parental relationships, rituals, gestures and sacrifice. As people leave the space for the last time, each one looks back once into the eyes of the ones they shared the space with for four weeks, and leaves. The time of four weeks ends, but the experience of decades is embodied.

The four weeks extend beyond the timing of the workshop and traverse into various activities. They involve discussions with facilitators like Ariel Gutierrez, where artistic journeys are discussed. It also involves the discovery of present time through activities like 'Drifting'. The concept of drifting is well researched and it involves a walking journey in the city where participants assemble at a start point (which they aren't very conversant with). The participants make a set of rules for themselves. For example, the rule could be to walk straight for an hour or to take a right turn every time you see a yellow car. The drift eventually takes one through a non-linear time experience. The drift could be devised using a map of another country and juxtaposed, following the routes that thus emerge. The drifting experience is extremely liberating, and one can discover a lot about the city just by making ridiculous rules.

The fourth week also has sessions with Philip Schaefer who brings his experience as a percussionist. He brings a myriad number of instruments and makes music with non-musicians. The idea works with finding music in chaos. The performers are asked to play instruments chaotically until they themselves arrive to a musicality. This is done with little or no intervention by the facilitator. It stems from body of the artist, like most of the experiences in LISPA.

The Indian point of view

As an Indian theatre practitioner when I found myself in the middle of so many cultures, I naturally felt a little lost. There were Greek, Indian, American, Spanish, British, Swiss, Brazilian, French, Italian and Australian artists in the same space. The languages, the accents, the cultures were so different that one couldn't help but start making comparisons on how does one see the world so differently from the other. But as the four weeks unfolded, a rich blend of cultural exchange took place which brewed rich stories. As the founder of LISPA, Thomas Prattki said, "Theatre is one of the few spaces where ritual still exists." It was ritual, gesture and a deep sense of the other cultural shadows that made the journey even more enriching. I started reflecting on my own culture more.

(Continued on page 31)

Of Bos, Sus, Capra, Gallus and more

*To eat or not eat beef, should not be the question. The question should be – to eat or not eat any animal, says **G. Venkatesh**, who is convinced vegetarianism in toto is the best policy per se, leave religion aside.*

*They call me stupid,
some of God's sons and daughters.
Yet, I nourish them,
with beef on their platters.
Stupid yes, and thereby easy meat,
you can finish your meal and say it to
my daughter.
No qualms at all, for I am born to
serve,
and I obey the will of my heavenly
Father.
With milk and butter and beef and
hides,
urine and dung and curds and ghee.
With my sons pulling your ploughs and
carts,
...verily, it is every part of me.
Many of God's children serve like I do,
enduring, sacrificing silently.
'Stupid' is what the beneficiaries come
up with,
so, Lord God, I pray earnestly to Thee,
to support and protect Your benign
flock,
for if they lose faith in Your care, and
on your door, cease to knock,
these 'stupid' people will go away,
your world will be rent asunder one
day.*



platefuls, with Uruguay and Argentina in South America (neighbours both of them), liking their 'carne' mucho! The per-capita consumption is around 124 pounds per year in Uruguay (2016 data), while the Argentines are not far behind, with 120 pounds. In all, in year 2016, about 129 billion pounds of beef went down the alimentary canals of Homo Sapiens the world-over. India accounted for about 5 billion pounds of these (a meagre 4% of the global total), and had a very low per-capita consumption value of about 4 pounds per capita per year. The State of Meghalaya topped the list with a per-capita of around 10 pounds. The low per-capita number can be explained by the fact that only 8% of Indians consume beef.

With all this brouhaha about cow and beef raging, I suddenly recalled a movie I had watched in 2010 – *Quick*

Gun Murugan. The protagonist in this movie is a vegetarian cowboy who reincarnates to stop his arch rival – one 'Rice Plate Reddy' from starting a chain of restaurants selling beef. Hilarious and intended to be a comedy, it tackled the idea of vegetarianism, and abstinence from eating beef, on a lighter note. And it follows that it did not stir any hornet's nest, as a result. Vegetarianism is the need of the hour, believed the protagonist in the movie. (Now, I do not know if the protagonist is a vegetarian in real life). I agree. In toto. Having been a 'congenital vegetarian' and certain to continue to be one till my dying day, I think I can support this cause, without any double standards or hypocrisy. Wait a minute....vegetarianism and not eating beef are not synonymous...readers who may have supported this writer till this point, may now start having divergent views. And some may not wish to read on. You may be one of them.

And what about the pig and the goat?

Bos Taurus, yes. What about Sus and Capra Aegagrus Hircus? In other words, the pig (pork, ham, salami?), and goat (mutton)? Holy Cow yes, I agree. But why confer pariah status on the pig and goat? The affluent spend thousands on their pet canines and felines. But they would not care a damn for the pain which cows, goats and pigs face, when the scimitar of whatever it is, strikes them dead? They would not want to watch animals being slaughtered on television? Some even retch and switch

THE cow – Bos Taurus – is the most common type of large domesticated ungulate in the world. Bred for its milk, meat, hides, and byproducts – dung for biogas and urine for medicine. In India, 80 million people (about 12.5 million of them Hindus) consume beef. In all, that makes it one beef-eater for every 13 Indians. Globally, the cow is slaughtered and eaten by the



off the TV, lest they would somehow start finding eating animal flesh repulsive! No trips to the meat shops with their children, lest they start developing sympathy for the quadrupeds and start abstaining from eating meat, which happens to be indispensable for the parents! Come on, who are you trying to fool? Your affected compassion for dogs and cats and cows (those who do not eat beef for supposed religious reasons) seems like a charade. But surely, vegetarianism cannot be imposed on people. It must be a voluntary, conscious and purposeful choice... not one to fit in or 'keep up with the

Joshis'. It is a good thing, health-wise, economically and environmentally. It is one of the necessities for sustainable development. How and why, is beyond the scope of this article...the Internet is a repository of several scholarly articles on this topic. Now, I leave out the *Gallus Gallus Domesticus* (chicken) here, as I do not wish to be labelled as an extremist (note that Hitler was a vegetarian...but does that make vegetarianism evil?)

Well, the return of Quick Gun Murugan – a sequel or a handful of sequels – must address the needs of the other creations of God which are considered inferior to the Holy Cow – the goat and the pig. And maybe, in the longer run, even the chicken. Sadly, 'fish' has been redefined as a vegetable by many people....for the convenience of Bengali Brahmins?

Sample this. *Location: Trondheim, Norway. Sometime in 2013.*

Writer: Well, I am a vegetarian.

Norwegian lady: Oh okay, so you eat fish, I suppose?

Hopefully, reclassifications will not occur in the years to come...who knows, someone may come along – a Carl Linne of modern times – and decide to

classify the chicken, goat, pig and cow as 'winged and quadruped vegetables'. I am sure I would have made many enemies with this piece...but who cares? On a closing note, a poem....

*I am the King of the jungle,
fierce, feared, brave and strong.
But my subjects do not assemble,
they have not done that for long.
I thought that fear evokes respect,
but perhaps I was always wrong.*

*If a King preys on his subjects,
what respect does he expect?
My father, his own, and every lion
before them,
were all actually so abject!
I need to bring about a revolution,
have a lot of things to correct.*

*First of all, to start this year afresh,
I vow to give up eating flesh! ■*

G. Venkatesh is Senior Lecturer, Department of Engineering and Chemical Sciences, Faculty of Health, Science and Technology, Karlstad University, Sweden. He is also a freelance writer for several magazines around the world.



An Indian's Berlin diary

(Continued from page 29)

As I made my way back to India, I realised that our culture is already rich in ritual and gesture. The power of ritual, and to harness the same is within the artist. Every ritual and every gesture is a performance. This performance is authentic if the artist is aware of his 'self' and his 'shadow' and once this performance is witnessed, a deep sense of self and shadow is transferred to the audiences as well, through the ritual of theatre.

The setting of the entire experience with Berlin in the landscape adds an

additional quality to the non-linear narrative, for Berlin's own history and geography deeply influence the artistic journey. The U-bahns, the S-bahns, the bike lanes and the Alexanderplatz Tower add a dimension to the LISPA experience.

The tools that this unique school provides go beyond just the performance, and affect the life of the performer and opens up dimensions in their un-lived experience that they were not aware of. When one walks out of Eden studios into its garden for the last

time, one walks back a changed person, having experienced time in a very different way. ■

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.

Just dream on!

Who doesn't like to dream in their sleep? But what are dreams, and how do they connect to our daily lives? A. Radhakrishnan explains this common, yet much misunderstood phenomenon.

"Dreaming is an act of pure imagination, attesting in all men a creative power, which if it were available in waking, would make every man a Dante or Shakespeare".

– Mitch Hedberg

After she woke up, a woman told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for our anniversary. What do you think it means?"

"You'll know tonight," he said.

That evening, the man came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it to find a book entitled The Meaning of Dreams!

NOTHING can be more peaceful than to enjoy a deep, carefree sleep, having the most beautiful dream of your life. Dreams have fascinated and mystified humanity since the beginning of time. Though science has allowed us to learn much about the human brain, the content and purpose of dreams has been a topic of scientific and religious speculation.

The length of a dream can vary from a few seconds, to about 20–30 minutes. Most dreams are immediately or quickly forgotten. They tend to last longer as the night progresses.

If we remembered all our dreams, we might not be able to distinguish dreams from real memories, say researchers. Some say our minds don't actually forget dreams, we just don't know how to access them. Dreams may be stored in our memory, waiting to be recalled.

Interpreting dreams

Dreams, basically stories and images our mind creates while we sleep; a succession of images, ideas, emotions,

and sensations usually occurring involuntarily in the mind, can be vivid and exciting. Negative emotions are much more common than positive ones.

Some experts say dreams have no connection to our real emotions or thoughts, but just strange stories that don't relate to normal life. But they could be reflecting our own underlying thoughts and feelings, our deepest desires, fears, and concerns too.

Often, peoples' dreams of being chased, falling off a cliff, or appearing in public naked are likely caused by hidden stress or anxiety. Dreams may be similar, but the meaning behind them is unique to each person; so one should not depend on books to evaluate it.

During a full eight-hour night sleep, most vivid dreams occur in the typical two hours of deep Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep, when the brain is most active. People are more likely to remember the dream if they are awakened during this phase. Oneirology is the scientific study and attempt at drawing meaning from dreams and searching for an underlying message and used for the lucid dreamers.

A lucid dream is one *'where you have a dream where you know you were dreaming during your dream'* Such dreamers are able to influence the direction of their dream, changing the story so to speak. But many dream experts say it is better to let your dreams occur naturally.

In most other dreams, the person dreaming is not aware that they are dreaming, no matter how absurd or eccentric the dream is, perhaps because the brain's prefrontal cortex, exhibits

decreased activity. This allows the dreamer to more actively interact with the dream without thinking about what might happen, since things that would normally stand out in reality, blend in with the dream scenery.

REM sleep and the ability to dream seem to be embedded in the biology of many animals too. Studies show signs of dreaming in all mammals including monkeys, dogs, cats, rats, elephants, and shrews, as well as in birds and reptiles.

Sigmund Freud calls it an insight into hidden desires and emotions; others suggest that dreams assist in memory formation, problem solving, or simply are a product of random brain activation. In modern times it is seen as a connection to the unconscious mind, ranging from normal and ordinary, to overly surreal and bizarre.

Dreams can at times make a creative thought occur to the person or give a sense of inspiration. One school of thought feels dreams have no purpose or meaning, and are nonsensical, others feel it's necessary for mental, emotional, and physical health and a conduit of creativity.

The ancient interpretation

The ancient Greeks and Romans saw it as direct messages from deities or deceased persons, predicting the future. The Egyptians practiced dream incubation with the intention of cultivating dreams that are a prophecy. The Mesopotamians averred that the soul actually visits the places and persons, the dreamer sees in their sleep. The Chinese speak of two vital aspects

of the soul, of which one is freed from the body during slumber to journey in a dream realm, while the other remained in the body. The Indian text Upanishads, defines dreams as merely expressions of inner desires or that the soul leaves the body and is guided until awakened.

Judaism, considered it an interpretative part of the experience of the world and from which lessons can be garnered. The ancient Hebrews connected their dreams heavily with their religion. Christians mostly thought that dreams were of a supernatural character. Iain R. Edgar says that in Islam dream interpretation is the only way that Muslims can receive revelations from God. To some indigenous American tribes and Mexican civilisations, dreams are a way of visiting and having contact with their ancestors. However, the Middle Ages held dreams as evil, and the images as temptations from the Devil.

Most dreams however, are not symbolic, but straightforward and

realistic depictions of the dreamer's fears and desires. Herodotus in his *The Histories*, writes "The visions that occur to us in dreams are, more often than not, the things we have been concerned about during the day."

People who are blind from birth do not have visual dreams but are related to other senses like auditory, touch, smell and taste, present since birth. A small minority of people say that they dream only in black and white as they were only exposed to black and white television and films in childhood.

Dream content, than thought content when awake, is important to people and they are more likely to view a positive dream about a friend to be more meaningful than about whom they disliked.

Dream incorporation is a phenomenon whereby an actual sensation, such as environmental sounds, are incorporated into dreams, such as hearing a phone ringing in a

dream while it is actually ringing, or bed wetting when dreaming of urination. The mind awakens an individual however, if they are in danger or if trained to respond to certain sounds, such as a baby crying.

The recollection of dreams is a skill that can be trained. It can be recalled if a person is awakened while dreaming. Women tend to have more frequent dreams recall than men. Finally, you've probably seen a dream catcher, featuring sacred charms like feathers and beads, hanging from a tree, a porch or even in a souvenir shop. Alternately called 'Sacred Hoops', native Americans used it as a talisman to protect sleeping people, usually children, from bad dreams and nightmares. ■



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, short story writer and poet who loves to make the world happy.



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DISASTERS IN HISTORY-3

The Dust Bowl

THE Great Plains of USA – Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado and New Mexico – witnessed a prolonged drought in the 1930s. With the land getting little or no rainfall, crops failed for almost a decade. The soil turned to dust which blew over large distances in billowing dark clouds, some even reaching New York.

On April 14, 1935, known as Black Sunday, a series of dust storms hit the region, turning day into night. Visibility was so bad that people could not see five feet ahead of them! The next day, a newspaper reporter called it the Dust Bowl of the continent and the name stuck.

The Dust Bowl was primarily caused by faulty farming practices. The grasses which normally held the soil in place had been replaced by farms. When the crops failed, strong winds blew off the exposed top soil, giving rise to dust storms or Black Blizzards.

Life became very difficult. Children wore dust masks to school. Every home was covered in a thick layer of dust. The disaster left millions of acres of farms useless – farmers, rural businesses and even county governments faced financial ruin. It triggered an exodus of people from the farmlands to other states. They came to be called Okies.



Rainfall returned to normal in 1941 and the land became prosperous once more. The Dust Bowl imparted an important lesson in soil conservation and modern farming techniques.

- John Steinback's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Grapes of Wrath* described the plight of Dust Bowl migrants.
- More than 60% of India is prone to drought.
- In 1921-22, the Volga region of Russia and Ukraine suffered a drought leading to famine, killing about 5 million people.

AMAZING LIVING WORLD



Monkey Ache

The Red Colobus, so called because of its coat of red fur, is a rare herbivorous monkey. It feeds on leaves, stems, fruits and nuts, including mangoes and Indian almonds. The monkeys eat a lot of vegetation, some of which may contain toxins. Sometimes, just like humans, they get indigestion!

To cure its stomach ache, the red colobus eats charcoal, which it scrapes off from stumps of trees that have perished in forest fires. The charcoal absorbs the toxins and keeps the monkey's digestive system ticking.

The Red Colobus is known for its acrobatic stunts. It can cover a distance of 10m in one leap! It is found only in Zanzibar, an island off the coast of Tanzania in East Africa.

PANORAMA

COME Halloween and the world gears up for all that is spooky. People observe time-honoured traditions like carving pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns, trick-or-treating and dressing up for costume parties. But the biggest party of them all takes place in the city of Derry in Northern Ireland, which plays host to the Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival.

The festival is held every year during the last days of October. It features many fun-filled activities designed to make your hair stand on end, like ghost tours, creepy story-telling, visits to haunted houses, screening of horror movies etc. The Dragon Safari event is very popular with children — hunting down colourful dragons lurking behind the trees in St Columb's Park is nothing short of an adventure!



For the first time, the 2012 event is going to have a Shape Shifters Catwalk contest where participants will compete for the scariest costume, hairdo and make-up.

Thousands of people wearing witch and wizard costumes

take to the streets on the last day of the festival as part of the 'Carnival of Lights' Parade — a person dressed normally would be woefully out of place! The revellers gaily march to the beats of Samba music up to the banks of the River Foyle for the final spectacle, when a dazzling 20-minute display of fireworks sets the night sky ablaze with brilliant colours.

Derry has been designated the first ever UK City of Culture 2013.

STORY TRAP

The missing berries

Neeta hurried to Mrs. Shah's little bungalow and knocked. Mrs. Shah opened the door. Bablu and Rani, Mrs. Shah's neighbours stood beside her.

"I looked for you at the back," Neeta said. "But nobody was there."

"We don't use the lawn at the back when the wind's blowing in from the south," Mrs. Shah said. "There's an unpleasant chemical smell from the paper mill."

Neeta said, "But how can I help you? You mentioned a mystery when you called."

"Yes," Mrs. Shah said. "I put two boxes of fresh, juicy strawberries on the garden chair there. They've disappeared. Can you help find them? Bablu and Rani were playing in the front garden."

"What do you say about this, Rani?" Neeta asked the little girl sternly.

Rani said, "Bablu was here when I arrived, and I didn't notice if the boxes were there or not. We played for a while." She looked ready to cry.

"True, Bablu?" Neeta asked.

"Yes, I did arrive first," Bablu said. "And I saw the strawberries. Then I went home for a few minutes to clean the back lawn where my mom is holding a party today."

Can you help Neeta find the culprit?

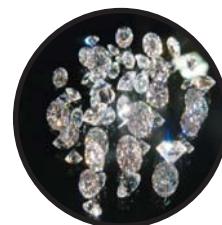


Answer: How could Bablu's mother hold a party in the back lawn when the smell from the mill would have made it impossible for anyone to sit there? Obviously, he was lying!

CURIOSITY

How are diamonds formed?

The diamonds that we get today were formed millions of years ago about 120-200 km below the earth's surface.



The rocks in the earth's upper mantle contain carbon. Due to variations in temperature this carbon gets pushed deeper down where it melts under high temperature and pressure. When the temperature reduces, the carbon again gets solidified into a new rock. Under perfect temperature and pressure conditions (a rare phenomenon) the carbon atoms in the molten rock get crystallised to form diamonds! If the temperature rises or the pressure drops then the diamond crystals may melt partially or completely.

Thousands of years after diamonds are formed, they are transported to the surface by volcanic eruptions.

Diamonds may also be formed due to the high pressure and temperature at the site of meteorite impacts.

AIR MARSHAL SYED JAFAR ZAHEER, PVSM AVSM

Principled and fearless officer (1923-2008)

SYED Jafar Zaheer was born in an aristocratic Muslim family on 14 June 1923, at Lucknow. His father, Syed Ali Zaheer, was a well known politician and served as a minister in the UP cabinet, and later as a diplomat. He joined the Allahabad University but left before graduating, to join the Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF) in 1942. He underwent flying training in Canada and was commissioned into the RIAF in the rank of Flying Officer on 27 September 1943.

He went to RAF base in UK for a conversion course. He was the only Indian officer and had noticed the chief instructor's behaviour was racist. The commanding officer probably had a similar view. Zaheer showed his steely frame of mind on his "dining in" in the Air Force officers mess by pouring a bottle of wine on the chief instructor while raising a toast. The commanding officer and the English fighter pilots were perhaps secretly pleased and the commanding officer only wanted to know whether the wine was red or white! A court martial was seriously considered but waived off. Instead, he was only asked to reimburse the officer the cost of dry cleaning the uniform.

The Second World War ended while he was travelling back to India by ship. He saw strafing in the NWFP and held various command and staff appointments. One of his officers recalls his cool and unruffled reaction when his plane with a full load of rockets and guns had an engine failure at take off at the firing range. All the officers rushed out with apprehensions of a disaster on hearing the siren. Soon his jeep reached the crash site and brought him to the hangar. He got off with a smile and dusting himself commented, "hell of a lot of dust".

Zaheer was one of a handful of IAF fighter pilots to graduate from the Institute of Armament Technology. It helped him formulate the Weapons Planning Directive of 1963 that remains the source for all such activity at Air Headquarters even today. He commanded the critical air force station at Agra during the 1971 War and was awarded

AVSM for his outstanding contribution. He was promoted to the rank of Air Marshal and served as Deputy Air Chief and AOC-in-C, Nagpur.

He retired in January 1979 and was appointed to head the Civil Aviation Directorate. He was the first IAF officer to head the chaotic Directorate General of Civil Aviation. He almost immediately earned the displeasure of corrupt politicians by refusing to agree to their demands to acquire a particular aircraft for which they were doubtless receiving favours. Dhirendra Bramhachari, a holy man, had considerable influence on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi. He imported an aircraft, claiming it to be a gift from some foreign disciple. It was allowed to be imported in defiance of all rules.

It had come to his notice that Sanjay Gandhi was carrying passengers without a valid license, and was performing stunt flying which was a danger to his own life and that of the passengers. Zaheer further put a ban on Sanjay Gandhi performing acrobatics and carrying passengers. Despite tremendous political pressure, he refused to close the case against Sanjay for flying with passengers without a valid license.

He wanted this issue to be brought to the notice of the Prime Minister quietly. Sanjay ignored the veto and continued to fly. Sanjay saw the file and demanded an apology from Zaheer who took a principled stand and resigned in June 1980. On 23 June 1980, Sanjay was not able to exit from a complex loop in the single-engine two-seater plane, and crashed. Zaheer was asked to withdraw his resignation with promise of ambassadorships and state governorships. But he declined, preferring instead to run the small Khambatta airlines in Mumbai for the next five years. He passed away in New Delhi on 23 January 2008. Steeliness and principled stand were the hallmarks of his career. They do not make them like that anymore. ■



– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)

PRABHAKAR PANSHIKAR

Actor par excellence (1931-2011)

PRABHAKAR Panshikar, born on 14 March 1931, was a renowned Marathi stage actor and thespian, whose role as Lakhoba Lokhande in the Marathi stage drama *To Mee Navhech* is considered to be one of the most memorable roles ever. He had the distinction of performing as an actor and producer on screen, stage and television. He spent 53 tireless years on stage with over 8,000 performances in various languages like Marathi, Hindi, English, Kannada and Gujarati.

Born into a family of Karhade Brahmins in Phanaswadi, Mumbai, his forefathers, originally from Pernem Taluka, Goa, had been Sanskrit, Vedas and astrology scholars. Despite inheriting this legacy, Panshikar discovered early in his life that he was cut out for different things.

At age 15, on an impulse, Panshikar acted in a play, *Me Ubha Aahey*, based on municipal elections, during his school annual gathering without his parents' knowledge, and the appreciation he received drew him closer to stage. His passion for acting, and weakness in Math resulted in his failing his matriculation in 1949 and dropping out of school. "My family was sternly against my entering into Marathi theatre," he recollected in an interview. Leaving home when young to realise his dream of becoming an 'actor', he practically lived on the streets for nearly six years, and struggled on with help from friends and acquaintances.

The first break in professional theatre came by accident in 1955. He replaced an artiste for the play *Ranicha Baug*, and thus got acquainted with the proprietor of Natya Niketan, M.G. Rangnekar. Bit roles in commercial shows of popular plays later, as manager of the troupe, he mastered all aspects of theatre production and honed his skills as an actor by 'standing in' in the absence of other actors. Fifteen years of relentless struggle was finally rewarded in 1962 with a lead role in a new play called *To Mee Navhech*, written by eminent Marathi literary giant Acharya P.K. Atre.

The play demanded him to do five contrasting characters,

ranging from a flirtatious tobacco merchant to the elite naval officer, all within a span of three hours, not merely to add to the novelty value or as a stunt, but because the story demanded it. The play used 'a revolving stage' for the first time in Marathi theatre. It was about the character of *Lakhoba Lokhande* (based on Madhav Kazi, an active criminal of the 1950s), who tries to prove he is not the accused in court cases, and was full of sarcastic dialogues and satirical reflections, still relevant today, and performed over 3,000 shows over 52 years.

In 1963, teaming up with Mohan Wagh, and Vasudev Kolhatkar, he started 'Natya Sampada', a theatre production house which developed local artistes and launched them in cities like Pune, Mumbai, Kolhapur, etc. Its first commercial success *Ashruchi Zaali Phule* completed 1,111 shows in 36 years. Panshikar also with close friend and actor-director from Gujarati theatre Kanti Madia, staged the Gujarati version of *Ashruchi Zaali Phule* (*Aatamne Ojhalma Raakhma*). He also produced a musical play *Katyar Kaljat Ghusli*, an all-time classic.

When once asked why he chose theatre over films, he responded "I was never interested in films, and craved neither for money or fame." He received many awards, among them are the Sangeet Natak Akademi

Award for Theatre – Acting (Language Theatre-wise) – Marathi, Vishnudas Bhave Suvarnapadak, Rajarshee Shahu Suvarnapadak, Natyagaurav Puraskar, Natasamrat Bal Gandharva Smriti Puraskar, etc. He was the first recipient of the Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar of Maharashtra government (it was later renamed the Prabhakar Panshikar Award).

Despite being in critical condition, Panshikar was very much in his elements. "I got to do a patient's role now which I had never enacted in my acting career," he told the cardiologist in his last days. Panshikar died at age 79, in Pune on 13 January 2011 from cardiac arrest and renal failure, survived by his wife Vijaya, three children and seven grandchildren. ■

– A.Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short story writer, insomniac and social media lover who loves to make people happy.



GAURI LANKESH

Doughty fighter (1962-2017)

A strident voice that always spoke out for the marginalised sections of society, a vibrant personality who was always in the thick of social causes, a valiant journalist whose writings stung corrupt politicians like a whiplash and also lambasted moth eaten beliefs, has been silenced forever. Gauri Lankesh, the 55-year-old editor of the Kannada tabloid *Gauri Lankesh Pathrike* was shot dead by unidentified assailants in front of her house in Bengaluru on 5 September 2017, and her killing evoked protests all over the country.

The Karnataka government has since formed a Special Investigation Team to probe her killing. Armed with a post graduate degree in journalism, Gauri worked with a leading English newspaper chain, a pioneering weekly published from Kolkata and then a leading Telugu news channel, before she took over the reins of the Kannada tabloid *Lankesh Patrike* started by her father P. Lankesh. Lankesh was a phenomenon in Kannada literature and was a revolutionary poet and an acclaimed writer. The weekly tabloid had a history of unbiased, investigative reporting and was dreaded by politicians who had skeletons in their cupboards.

After Lankesh's death in 2000, Gauri edited the weekly for some time till a tiff with her brother saw her relinquish her post and start a new tabloid *Gauri Lankesh Patrike* which she helmed till her death. The tabloid however had a limited reach, had financial problems due to the dearth of ads and circulation, and like all tabloids, often indulged in sensationalism. At the time of her death Gauri had been released on bail after having been sentenced to six months in jail in a defamation suit filed against her by a BJP MP and others whom she had accused of unlawful activities.

Gauri Lankesh was however a multi-faceted personality. Not only did she make the switchover from English to Kannada journalism with ease, she also dabbled in other activities like poetry, writing books etc. But it was her relentless crusade against exploitation of the poor and the

downtrodden, and her uncompromising stance on issues she believed in that catapulted her to centre stage. She also made common cause with student leaders of institutions like the JNU who found in her a kindred spirit. She not only lent them a sympathetic ear, but also guided and mentored them and made them channelise their energies in the right direction.

Gauri's leftist leanings turned her into a fierce critic of right-wing politics and she minced no words while writing or orating on organisations like the RSS and its affiliates, and this earned her the wrath of the Sangh Parivar in no small measure.

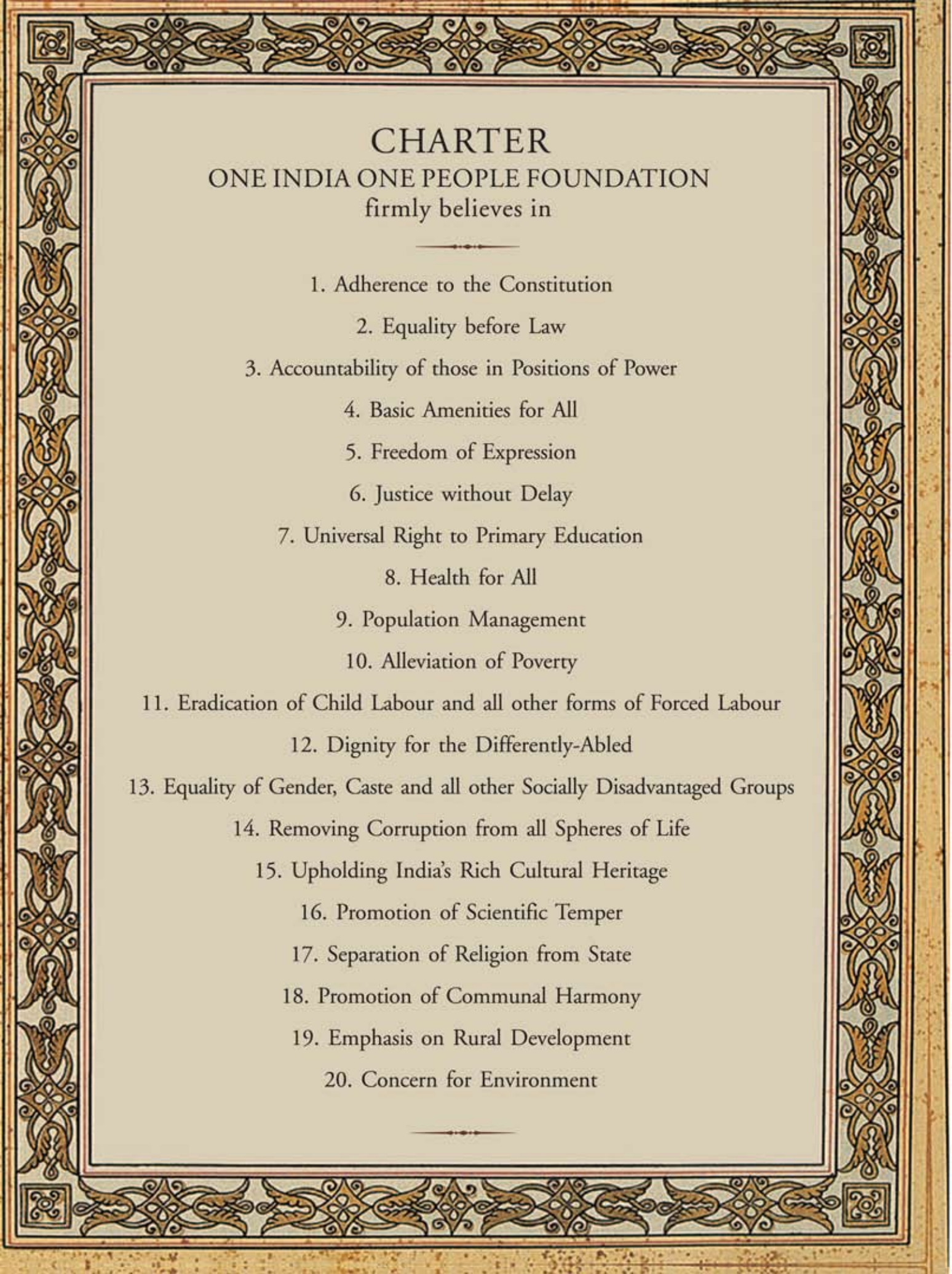
The activist however carried on undaunted, and used every forum available to her to train her guns on the right wing zealots. She remained faithful to her ideology till the very end, highly critical of the caste system, stood up for the freedom of speech and a free press, abhorred gender discrimination, and was unflinching in her denunciation of the totalitarian politics of the BJP.

Gauri always believed that naxalism was a product of economic inequalities, and worked tirelessly towards ensuring that naxalites gave up their violent ways and returned to the mainstream. She coordinated with like-minded sympathisers of the extremist cause and was successful in rehabilitating a few leaders of the movement. In the process she had antagonised some hard core members resulting in some bad blood between her and them.

The firebrand activist was a rationalist at heart, and in deference to her irreligious nature, she was laid to rest without any kind of rituals. The Karnataka state government however accorded her full state honours. The story of Gauri Lankesh is that of a woman with an independent mind, courageous even in the face of continuous threats, driven with a passion to serve as a voice for the voiceless, a doughty fighter for the causes she believed in and espoused, and a fearless journalist who had unwavering faith in the power of the pen. ■

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





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-

WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

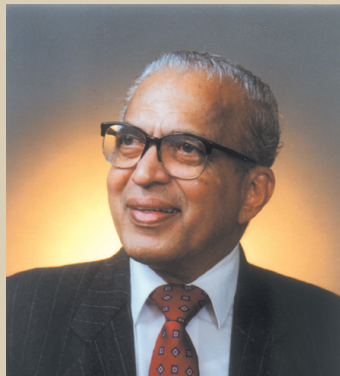
Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

*In all cases you are Indian First, Last and Always.
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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

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

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE