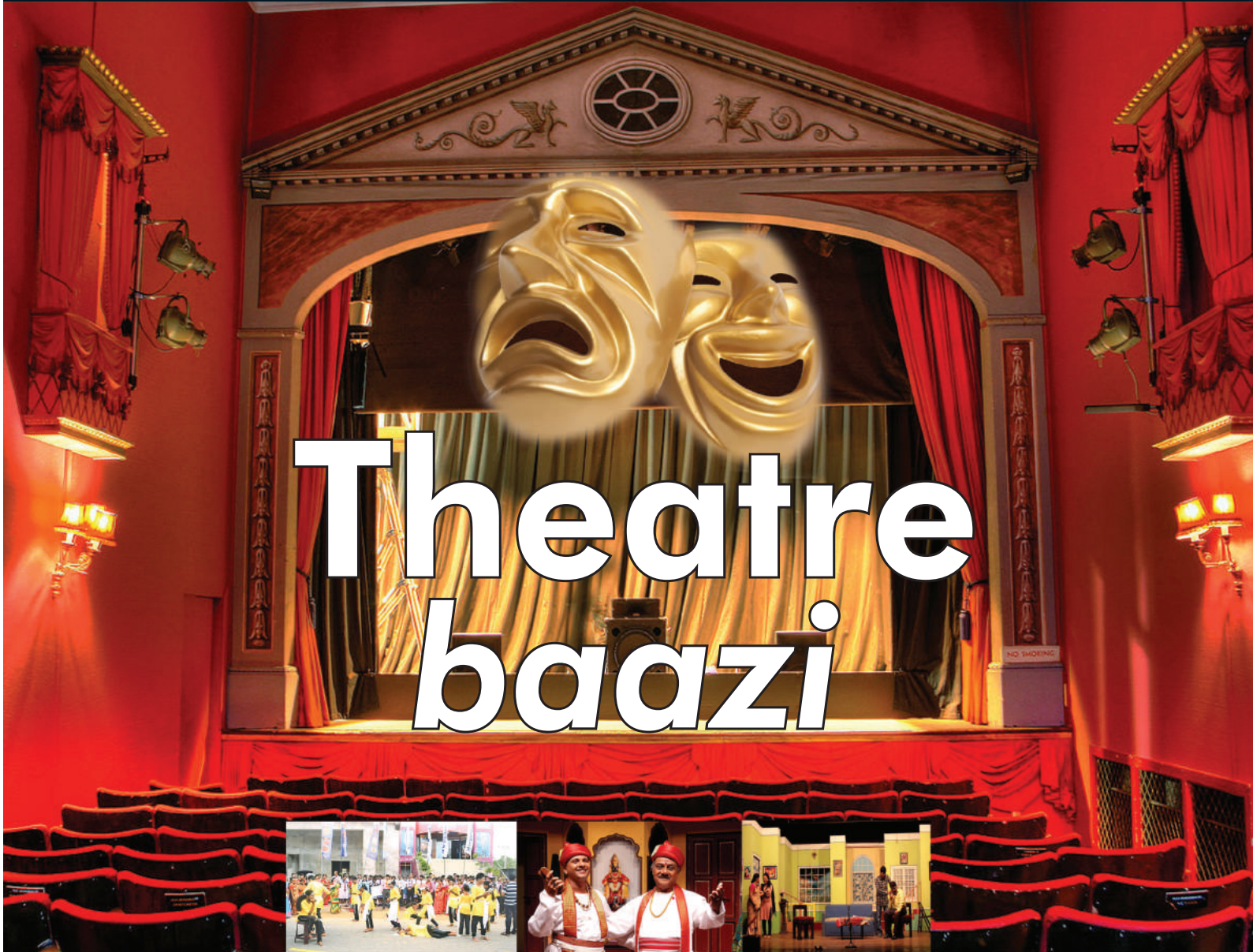


# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined



**Is theatre relevant?**

**All the world's a stage!**

**In good company!**

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**

**Goa:**

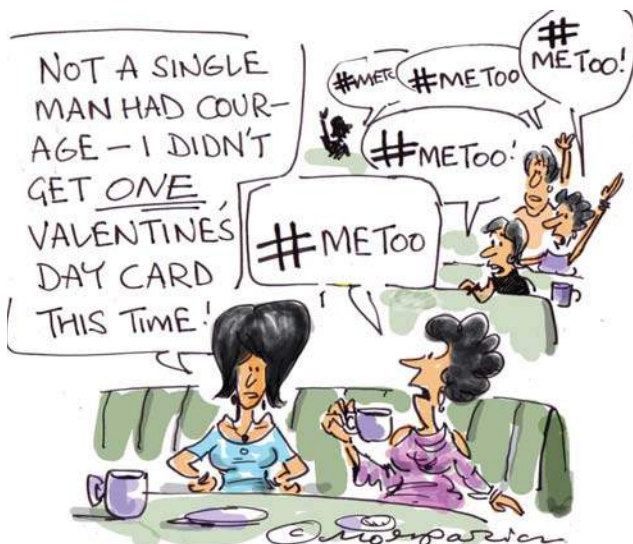
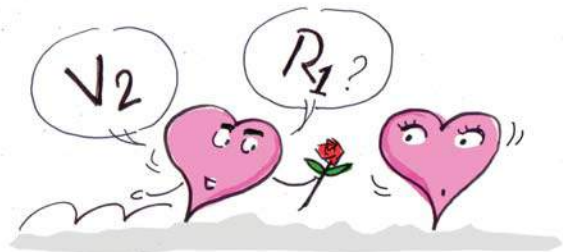
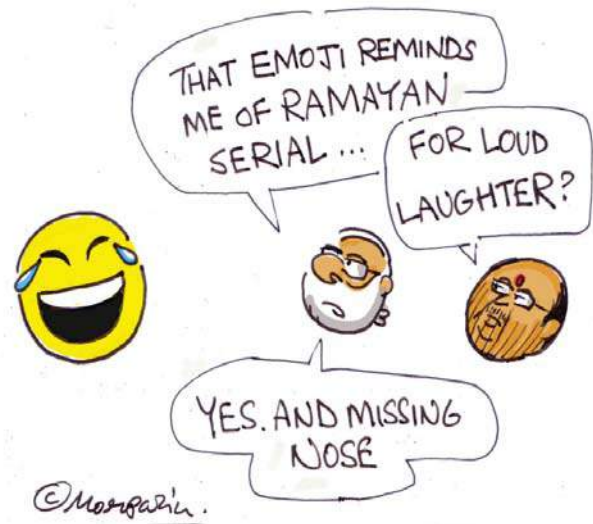
*Where beaches, nature and culture  
blend into a harmonious melody*

**FACE TO FACE**

**Ajanta M. Iyer**

**Great Indians: Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay / Ustad Amir Khan / Brig. Arun Bhimrao Harolikar, MVC**

# MORPARIA'S PAGE





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# Is theatre relevant?

*Theatre doomsdayers have often rung the 'theatre is finished' gong, only to realise that despite the craze for other mediums like TV, cinema and movie streaming sites, theatre has steadily grown in its quiet popularity in India. **Nikhil Katara** pooh-poohs those who denigrate theatre and says, the experience that theatre provides to its audience, is absolutely unique and irreplaceable.*

**T**HE world today has many options. Content, which not too long ago was sparse, has become voluminous and has found its way into many mediums. Each medium has its own mechanism, its own processes, and its own consumption. The many people who consume this content become associated with, not only the thought that the content deals with, but also the medium through which they are conveyed. If one were to go back in time and see where all of this began, one might have to go to theatre. Cinema, television, YouTube, Netflix and other mediums followed suit to increase the possibilities of telling a story. But theatre finds its roots in ancient times, be it the Natya Shastra or the Aristotelian poetics. Greeks, Indians and all the world have associated with this medium right from the beginning of our journey as humans. But ironically, this medium is considered 'passé' for the millennials, post millennials, or generation Z, for there are so many options to choose from, so why would you go to the theatre, when you can lay down so comfortably in your couch, put the air conditioning on and watch Netflix and chill? After all, Netflix has stories, people are acting, it is way more fast paced, there is state of the art technology



**A still from Krishnan's Dairy; theatre is very much alive in India (Photo credit: Indian ink theatre company/facebook)**

involved in telling the story, and all of this is available at the click of a button. So why would anyone want to look anywhere else?

The questions, investigations and thoughts relevant to Netflix as a medium are applicable to Cinema and YouTube as well. Each medium is so different compared to the other. In the book titled *And then you act*, Anne Bogart deals with many questions, one among them is, 'What are you tempting?' In our attempt to achieve a particular end, we need to 'do' something that fits into our attempt like a puzzle. While encountering this question, Bogart raised some critical points. One being, 'I would like to make theatre that would look ridiculous on film and television.' Now that is a funny statement to make, isn't it? How can that be possible? Isn't theatre telling a story, why would that look ridiculous on television or film or Netflix for example? It is a story after all. The answer to that question is – 'It can look ridiculous on film and television'. This is because the mediums of film, television,



**A performance of Girish Karnad's iconic Tughlaq (Photo credit: Bengaluru city/facebook)**

Netflix, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and all the myriad ways in which we share content these days is different, and the most important way in which an audience will get engaged in the content, is if they get it through the right medium.

### Theatre as a relevant medium

So doesn't that make the ancient medium of theatre still relevant? How is it different from the other mediums? Let's examine:

**Space:** Theatre deals with a space that exists in three dimensions, literally, you don't need to wear 3 D glasses to see the length, breadth and height of the stage. It stands right near you.

**Time:** There are no cuts of scenes in a play, though the experience of time can be altered, and a whole life time can be experienced near one's eyes without a camera assisting you or a screen near you.

**Imagination:** The imagination of the individual, actor or audience is a fundamental tool in theatre to create the space in which the events of the performance occur. This makes the audience an active participant in the performance itself, and not distant observers. Theatre or 'plays' use the fundamental human instinct, i.e., to 'play' as a tool to create performances. The instinct is so undeniably in the genetic make-up of us as a species that it transcends the stage, and is a part of our everyday life. Wait a minute, so does that mean our life itself is an act on stage, and does it also mean that all men and women are merely players? I wonder who said that.

Looking at these one might assume that theatre or the act of 'play' is a fundamental part of life itself. We act our genders, our personalities, our emotions, and our experiences all the time. The performances are improvisations, and thus it makes theatre 'a fundamental part of our lived experience'. How can that ever go out of fashion?

Even if one were to see the various other mediums and the way they unveil their content, every medium has its own method, and if one were to apply one to the other, it might not work. Let's take Netflix for example; the entire idea of 'binge watching' a series of episodes of a single television show, is a method in which Netflix grew as a medium. In fact, Netflix regularly releases all the episodes of a given season so that the audiences could watch them all together. This method of engaging with content can sound ridiculous in cinema, or any other medium.

Theatre as a medium has many forms, and many devices. If one were to name a few, theatre of the oppressed, physical theatre, clowning, theatre of the absurd and object theatre are some examples in which the stage has expressed its ideas, which are unique to it. Many of these performances have moved people in a way that they did not know was possible. If one were to recreate them in the medium of Netflix or cinema, it would look rather ridiculous. Just like how certain



Plays like *Death of a Salesman*, give hope for theatre's future  
(Photo credit: Rael padamsee's ace/facebook)

books find themselves into being made into ridiculous movies. If one were to adapt the book into a movie one might have to rewrite the book in the form of a screenplay that suits the style of cinema. Similarly, what works for theatre might not work for film, or Netflix or YouTube. Hence the idea that theatre is 'passé' just because other mediums are available is rather ridiculous itself. It is a unique form of experience where human individuals come into contact using their bodies, with the environment and with other selves while being witnessed by other selves. Thus making the entire experience a ritual in itself, where human experience and life experiences are felt through the medium of our intelligence and our bodies. Isn't that meaningful? Perhaps that is why a lot of India's freedom struggle used the medium of theatre to express its angst. Even today, Mumbai is a multicultural, multilingual hub where hundreds of performances from various parts of the country are showcased. Would that be possible if it were not relevant?

So the question of whether or not theatre is relevant in this day and age of 'Netflix and chill'?, is answered with a simple, unequivocal and definitive 'Yes.' And so it shall remain till humans walk the Earth. ■

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.





# All the world's a stage!

*Just as theatre has evolved, theatre spaces have evolved too, and in so many exciting ways. **Himali Kothari** talks about the sheer adaptability of theatre, and exults that a play can be performed almost anywhere!*

**T**IER after tier of plush red velvet seats. Lofty balconies suspended between the floor and the domed ceiling. Elaborate, gilded, skirtings. An elevated stage framed by thick satin drapes.

Horseshoe-shaped rows of stone steps ascend high towards the open sky. The wind rustles through the trees beyond. Down, below, in the pit, a round space is lit by halogen lamps.

A square room, large. Black walls. A vacant rectangle space along one length of the room. Chairs lined up to point into the rectangle. Spotlights above.

A dusty side street. Passersby milling on the pavement.

A resto-pub at happy hours. Cocktails whirring at the open bar. A susurrus of muted conversations. Clusters of tables facing a 10 feet x 5 feet one-step stage.

Though drastically different from each other in almost all aspects, all the above spaces have one thing in common – they host drama. Theatre space is non-conforming. It is infinite, unrestricted by definition, and unconfined by the *diktat*-s of shape, size and scale. It is any space that lends itself to a performance. From a mime standing at a busy street corner, to an ensemble cast of a hundred plus on a stage with changing backdrops... and everything in-between, falls within the realm of theatre space. Over centuries it has evolved and synced its form with the demands of the prevailing times. During wars and revolutions, it took to the streets. When peace prevailed, it flourished in playhouses both grand and unadorned. It shrinks to fit into small boxes in cramped urban areas, and spills out

into *maidan*-s in the rural vastness.

While there are many theories, there is no single established view regarding the origin of theatre as a performance. But, it would be safe to say that performance has probably existed since man learnt to coordinate the movement of his limbs. Perhaps, the first performance was in a cave as prehistoric man recreated the events of his day's hunt for his family's eyes. Over centuries, speech developed

and led to the creation of language, the performances became more detailed and nuanced. The audience size grew and performance spaces emerged.

## Through the ages

As far back as 700 BC, the Greeks had realised that all they needed to host a dramatic performance was a place for the

artists to stand, and a place for the audience to sit. Benches were built in tiers on slopes of hills, and performers took their place at the base of the hill. These theatres may have been carved out of hillsides, but with a seating capacity of thousands, their scale was not limited. These *theatrons* hosted plays, musical concerts, political speeches, sporting contests and more. They were not looked upon merely as entertainment; they were an integral part of the citizens' civic life which made the theatrons living, throbbing centres of the cities.

From mainland Europe, theatre travelled to England. By the medieval times it had taken on the shape of travelling theatre known as 'Mummers' Plays'. Actors and performers travelled from one town to another staging folk plays on streets or in yards of inns. But, it was in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I, that dramatic arts started



Remembering Safdar Hashmi with a play

to blossom. This was the period when the first playhouses were built. Three to four-storeyed structures with thatched roofs were built around courtyards. An elevated stage jutted into the centre of the courtyard, the rear of which was used by performers to enter and exit, and the other three sides were surrounded by the audience.

Today, the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, a replica of the original Globe Theatre, recreates the same atmosphere for visitors. During summer, Shakespearean plays are staged here with audiences seated in the galleries as well as standing around the stage in the "pit", much like their counterparts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Over the years, productions grew more elaborate and so did their arenas. Theatre moved indoors and sets, backdrops, lights and sound gained importance. Since the earliest enclosed theatres were open only to royalty and those of higher social stature, the interiors of the playhouses became grander. Theatres became a place to be seen. Men in coattails and women in silk gowns and diamonds sipped wine in the elaborate foyers, before making their way to their plush seats. While plays continued to be performed in town centres and inns for the masses, it was at this time that theatre gained reputation as entertainment for the elite, a reputation that persisted over the years.

### Moving with the times

Recent times have seen a change. Theatre is turning a curve and expanding its scope. This has led to the development of new kinds of spaces and mediums or, perhaps it is these spaces which are enabling the influx of new audiences. It is a chicken and egg scenario.

While the term 'black box theatre' has come in regular parlance in more recent times, experimentation with the model started way back in the 1920s. But, it was in the 1960s that the concept took root prompted by the finite nature and rising costs of urban space. All that is needed to create a black box theatre is a large room with bare walls, usually painted black. It is flexible in shape, size and audience-stage orientation, and can thus mould to any genre and scale of performance. The lack of a formal stage allows for a more intimate connection between the audience and the performers. The low cost of creating this kind of a space has brought a wider spectrum of creatives into the folds of theatre and thus, led to a revolution of sorts in the field of dramatic arts.

One of the main constraints in expanding the accessibility of theatre is the cost and logistics of transporting. Unlike films, theatre cannot be boxed and shipped. Or, it could not be. In 2009, London's Royal National Theatre launched its initiative National Theatre Live (NTL) to broadcast its plays via satellite. French tragedy *Phedre*, authored by Jean Racine and performed

by Helen Mirren was the first to be aired live on screens across the UK. In less than a decade NTL has spread its net to include more than 2,000 screening venues across the globe. The purist may arch a cynical eyebrow at this 'cinemafication' of theatre, but for theatre lovers it is a treat to have access to the best of West End, just around the corner.

### The Indian context

The theatrical arts were established in the Indian subcontinent as early as 1 BC. Sanskrit was the preferred language of theatre and performances were staged on sacred grounds by priests. Over the next few centuries, some great dramatists like Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti among others, took centrestage. At the time, the role of theatre extended beyond entertainment, they were meant to carry a socio-cultural relevance for the audiences. It was only natural then that temples, as cultural centres, became the setting for these performances.

The British brought their theatre culture with them, not just their stories, but also their playhouses. The Gaiety Theatre in Shimla, constructed in the Gothic style at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, housed VIP boxes which were monopolised by the 'Who's Who' of the region. The renovated theatre continues to use the traditional curtain system of pulleys and sandbags, and hosts the occasional performance during summertime.

In the 1970s, playwright Safdar Hashmi took theatre to the streets. Through his company, JANAM, Hashmi performed his works in the streets, in trade union meetings for factory workers, in the fields for peasants. His writing projected his communist views, and for him "street theatre was a mode to make art available to the people".

Recent years have seen many developments in the theatre space, especially in urban India. The theatre scene in Mumbai is as varied as the city's populace. Elegant auditoriums like the Tata Theatre, Rang Sharda and the refurbished Royal Opera House are jostled for space by contemporary and minimalist spaces like Tamaasha Studio, the Cuckoo Club and half a dozen others. Add to that, street theatre during art festivals and college fests, and performances in restaurants and bars, the open-ended definition of theatre space is playing a vital role in elevating the city's drama culture.

### Space and the art of theatre

At Mumbai's NCPA Experimental Theatre, a black box theatre, a group of clowns take centrestage. It is a play within a play, as a company of clowns decide to stage their version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The Bard's English gives way to gibberish in this production, and the clown skilfully turns the

(Continued on page 10)

# In good company!

While it may seem that theatre is not flourishing as well as it should, initiatives like The Company Theatre hold a ray of hope. **Prof. Avinash Kolhe** talks about this group which has shown unique skills in raising funds and performing plays from across cultures.

**A**BOUT twenty five years ago, Atul Kumar, 50, and his like-minded friends decided to set up their own theatre group and this is how and why The Company Theatre (TCT) was born in 1993. Since then TCT, as it is popularly known, has come a long way, mounting brilliant performances, travelling abroad with their best shows, and earning plaudits along the way. Their single-minded focus on searching for the truth of human experience makes them take up Shakespeare's plays on one hand, and on the other, physical mimes and absurdist plays. The year 2018 happens to be their silver jubilee year!

## The plays they staged

A cursory look at the plays produced by TCT reads like a 'Who's Who' of world theatre. Here one finds *The Chairs* by Eugene Ionesco (1994), *The Lover* by Harold Pinter (1995), *The Flying Doctor* by Moliere (1999), and *Noises Off* by Michael Frayn (2002). This however does not mean that TCT only mounts plays from abroad. It has also presented *Stopover* by Krishna Bihari (1999), *Sangeet Debuchya Muli* by Paresh Mokashi (2000), *Hair* by Ajay Krishnan (2008), with the



TCT's Artist Residency at Kamshet



TCT has mounted brilliant plays

latest being *Travel Disasters* by Ajay Krishnan (2014). It seems that the team at TCT is madly in love with Shakespeare and has been adapting his plays to Indian conditions and locales. Take the case of *Piya Baharupiya* based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. It presents itself almost like an Indian play taking place in Indian milieu. This play is a big hit and soon would be staging its 200<sup>th</sup> show!

The professionals assembled under the flag of the TCT have a strong inter-disciplinary approach, which they feel, is necessary for the overall artistic growth. No wonder they get architects, engineers, scientists, environmentalists and from other fields of expertise. This creative search led them to collaborate with Benjamin Juhel, a visual artist from France, Mustafa Murat, director, Tiyyatro 0.2 from Turkey, etc. Such activities add a lot to the vitality of theatre as an art form.

## Go to the people!

But then TCT was not confined to inviting scholars from abroad only. Early in its *avatar* it realised that it must break





**TCT has run the full gamut of staging interesting performances, while experimenting with lights, music and props**

out of the confines of conventional theatre and reach out to the people at large. It is almost like the Mountain going to Muhammad. In the year 2000, TCT started performing plays in people's drawing rooms, terraces and gardens. These were invariably short plays written by Indian as well as international writers, and directed by various directors. To further this approach, TCT also realised that meaningful theatre could not be created only by performing at various places and hence every fortnight it organised an evening of theatre performance at someone's residence in Mumbai where a show would be performed with minimal lights, music, costumes, etc. The performance would be followed by a discussion where people from different walks of life would interact with each other. This is how 'Theatre at Home' became famous, and soon moved to other cities like Vadodara, Pune and Delhi. This lasted for about four years.

Over a period of 25 years, TCT has mounted plays involving the best that was and is available in the country. It's been a fantastic journey for their ensemble where it has had the opportunity to bring together fantastic artistes like Rajat Kapoor, Konkona Sen Sharma, Vinay Pathak, Sheeba Chadha, Kalki Koechin and

**For TCT, the big leap came in 2012 when it decided to start an artist residency at Kamshet, near Lonavla, for research and performances. It is located on a five-acre land and can host more than 50 people. It has been crucial to making contemporary performances work by ensembles from around the world.**

many others, through many of their theatre productions. It has been part of many international festivals like the Shared History Art Festival, South Africa (2012), Globe to Globe Shakespeare Theatre Festival (2012), Ome Entertainment, Dubai (2010), Port Louis International Theatre Festival (2002), and many more. Similar TCT has been an integral part of many Indian festivals like the Prithvi Festival, Mumbai; the Hindu Festival, Chennai; META Theatre Festival, New Delhi; Abhinaya National Theatre Festival, Hyderabad, etc. It has been showcasing its best in these festivals all the time. The group does not believe in resting on its laurels.

#### **The artist residency**

For TCT, the big leap came in 2012 when it decided to start an artist residency at Kamshet, near Lonavla, for research and performances. It is located on a five-acre land and can host more than 50 people. It has been crucial to making contemporary performances work by ensembles from around the world. It has an outstanding library, a vast archive of photos, press clipping, videos and interviews. Atul Kumar has modeled it along the lines of Ariane Mnouchkine's Theatre du Soleil located



**Actors like Kalki Koechlin (above) have acted in TCT plays**

in an abandoned munitions factory in the woods outside Paris, France.

Starting a residency needs a lot of money. In 2007 Atul Kumar was introduced to Bangalore-based artists Yusuf Arakkal and S. G. Vasudev, each of whom gave Atul Kumar a painting to raise funds - these two works alone got him ₹ 7 lakh! Atul got an idea and decided to take this further. He came back to

Mumbai and asked his team to make a list of country's top artists. He called up and met many artists. In six months, Atul Kumar collected 196 works from 159 artists. Later he exhibited these works at Tao Gallery, Mumbai, sold them, and bought a piece of land at Kamshet where the Workspace is housed.

In March 2014, TCT in collaboration with Sandbox Collective, Bangalore, hosted its first ever festival (Kamshet Arts Festival) under the stars with allnight array of performances at Workspace. The performances included *Samajswasthyat*,

a Marathi play on the life of social reformer R.D. Karve; Odissi dance recital by Bijayani Satpathy from Nrityagram, Karnataka; Hindustani vocal recital by Manjusha Patil, Pune; *Dastangoi*, a dramatic story telling performance by Danish Husain, and many more. Since then it has become an annual feature held normally in the month of February. This sunset-to-sunrise programme was attended by over 600 audience members from across India, including the village local community.

This being TCT's silver jubilee year, its special focus would be on contemporary dance and movement. These days 'Contact Improvisation' (CI) is the most talked-about topic among the theatre practitioners, and TCT is excited about exploring contemporary and other forms of dance and more and more people are looking into this practice that stems out of dance disciplines. TCT is likely to organise a fabulous festival of CI in Kamshet very soon, inviting teachers from Italy, USA and India.

So, in a nutshell, this is the story of TCT, founded exactly 25 years ago. It is a well-established group today, but always



busy in doing theatre and theatre-related activities on its own, or in any collaboration with like-minded people/groups. May their tribe multiply so that Indian theatre continues to scale new heights! ■

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

## All the world's a stage!

(Continued from page 7)

tragedy into a comedy. The audience is at eye level with the actors and privy to every expression that flashes across their faces. Across the seas, in the Queen's land, Benedict Cumberbatch takes on the role of Hamlet. Staged at the Barbican Theatre, one of the largest playhouses of London's Westend, this production is replete with true-to-its-times costumes, and larger than life sets and backdrops. The scale of the production complements the grandeur of the arena, anything less would underwhelm.

And then there is the Kronborg Castle in the Danish town of Elsinore, where Shakespeare presumably set *Hamlet*. During summers, the grand Renaissance style castle becomes the backdrop for Hamlet's lore. Hamlet woos Ophelia in the sunlit courtyard, moves to the ramparts for the ghost scene, and later to the Grand Hall for a duel. The visitors follow the actors through the castle rooms as the saga unfolds. Seeing the play in the same setting that Shakespeare visualised it in, adds a different layer to his words.

The role of the space in a performance cannot be marginalised. The same story changes form as it travels from one space to another, and feeds off its setting. The performance and the space are not independent of each other, they work hand in glove. For the theatre lover, the evolution of the space is exciting as it adds another dimension to the multi-sensory experience of an evening at the theatre. ■

Himali Kothari dappled in various professions before she turned to her childhood hobby of writing. Since then, she has written



on travel, business & finance, food, design, architecture and general interest topics. She also conducts creative writing workshops for old and young adults at Xavier's Institute of Communication, Mumbai, and has developed a Writing Skills Lab for schools and corporate organisations. What she loves most about writing is the opportunity to express herself without any interruptions.



# Theatre that thrives

*Bengali theatre has a rich tradition and history of theatre, and the contemporary theatre groups are doing their best to pay homage to it by adapting plays of all colour and hues, says **Shoma A. Chatterji**. She discusses some of the big influencers of Bengali theatre.*

CONTEMPORARY" is a very significant adjective to qualify Bengali theatre because this theatre has evolved enormously over time and space. The acting has changed from theatrical mannerisms to natural acting brought into vogue by theatre stalwarts like Sombhu Mitra and Manoj Mitra, among others. Subjects chosen have expanded the parameters of theatre, creating distinct genres from biographies to history through political plays with clear leanings towards the Left, famous literary works, translations and adaptations of internationally renowned playwrights from Shakespeare to Bertolt Brecht, and so on. So has the platform extended from the proscenium and the *jatra* – theatre on the round popular in the small towns and villages, to street theatre performed anywhere and everywhere which was created mainly by the Indian People's Theatre Association to use theatre to raise awareness among the audience on the fact that India was under the colonial rule of the British. Today, street performances are very popular for their easy accessibility and performances, mostly without an entry fee. The *jatra* is now called the "One-Wall Theatre" and it has been glamourised by including film stars among the cast that draws a huge audience with repeated encores after each show. It also draws in a good revenue in terms of ticket money so during winter months, One-Wall Theatre rules the roost.

The manner of performance and presentation has also changed radically where some theatre groups focus on the entire body as the medium of expression, some stick to conventional acting modes, while many bring it down to simpler strategies to address every kind of audience. The technicality has changed with brilliant light effects introduced by stalwarts like the late Tapas Sen, who reportedly lighted up the stage that created the effect of a river on the stage for the play *Titash*, and in another play, he created lighting to produce the effect of a coal mine on stage.

## The influencers

Costume dramas are not as popular as they once were except for the works of Rabindranath Tagore, whose plays



The Bengali version (above) of Vijay Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan* (Photo courtesy: Pronab Basu)

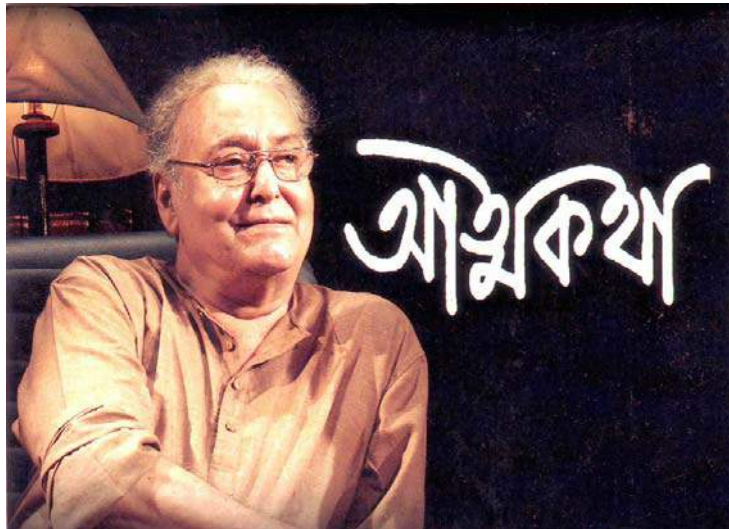
remain both a hot favourite and a challenge for most theatre groups and personalities. Contemporary politics has also been dealt with by the younger theatre personalities like Saoli Mitra, daughter of the late Sombu Mitra, and Koushik Sen, son of veteran actress Gita Sen. Now, his son is also into theatre and films in a big way. Koushik Sen's group 'Swapna Sandhani' has presented the theatre loving audience in Kolkata and beyond with many wonderful plays over the 30 years of its existence.

Few outside West Bengal know that Dadasaheb Phalke winner Soumitra Chatterjee is not only an outstanding performing artiste who has portrayed different characters in 14 films of Satyajit Ray, or has acted in around 300 films over his more than 50-year-old career in films, but has also contributed to the public theatre in West Bengal like few have in contemporary times.

He has directed and acted in more than a dozen plays and according to director-actor Meghnad Bhattacharya, "is the only public theatre director whose innovative planning for stage production and his thought-provoking style of presenting different sequences on the stage hardly has any difference with the group theatre director's mode of working. He has given public theatre a completely different look from many



**The play *Manasi* showcases four notable women from Tagore's works**



**Soumitra Chatterjee is not just a noted cinema actor, but has also contributed to public theatre in West Bengal**

standpoints. His plays focus on contemporary life mixed with crisis and confrontation." His first play was *Mukhosh*, the Bengali adaptation of W.W. Jacob's *The Monkey's Paw*, which he directed while doing his Masters at Calcutta University. The play won the first prize at the Inter-University Drama Contest in Delhi in 1956. He met Ahindra Choudhury, a great name on Bengali stage, who was invited to polish the work of student actors. Chatterjee requested the great lighting master, the late Tapas Sen to create and orchestrate the lighting for the play.

"Acting in theatre is acting in real time. It is continuous, sequential and chronological. The rehearsals for a play take care of the actor's preparation for his role. The response too, is immediate. Cinema however, is not acting in real time. It is discontinuous, not sequential and not chronological either. There are no rehearsals for cinema. So, it is very important that the actor prepares for his role through discussions with the director, by reading and re-reading the draft of the script," explains Chatterjee. Chatterjee also acted in and directed *Atmakatha* (1988), the Bengali translation of Mahesh Elkunchwar's original Marathi play. Twenty years later, it remains timeless. Elkunchwar is an influential figure in contemporary Indian theatre for three decades.

Vijay Tendulkar is not often seen in Bengali translations in Kolkata. Recently, Ballygunge Swapnasuchana staged a Bengali translation of Tendulkar's *Kanyadaan*. Written in 1983, *Kanyadaan* is as topical as it was when Tendulkar wrote it. Nath Deolalkar (Meghnath Bhattacharya) and his wife Seva (Swatilekha Sengupta) have worked hard to destroy casteism in principle, in practice and in real life. Their daughter Jyoti's (Sohini Sengupta) choice of the young and budding poet Arun Athole (Bratya Basu) who is a Dalit, comes like an answer to Nath to prove his ideology of a casteless society. Seva and Jyoti's brother Jyotiprakash (Bijoy Mukherjee), have reservations about Jyoti's choice. Their objections are overruled

by Nath and Jyoti, who puts her foot down for the first time in her life. Director Bratya Basu's brilliant exposition illustrates with great conviction that *Kanyadaan* is about exploitation in varied manifestations.

Rangakarmee, a theatre group founded and directed by Usha Ganguly, specialised in presenting Hindi theatre in Kolkata for many years. But it stepped into Bengali with *Manasi*, which brought out four notable women from Tagore's works. Directed, conceived and created by Usha Ganguli, *Manasi* contemporises the women instead of presenting period pieces as they exist in Tagore's original works. The curtain goes up to reveal four or five women of different ages collected to rehearse a play based on a Tagore literary piece. Dipti (Usha Ganguly) is the director of the play. Frustrated by the absence of the lead actress, the others begin to rehearse their play with another actress standing in for the absentee. But as the rehearsal proceeds, the actress slips in and out of the character she is to portray, without really being aware of what she is doing. This unwitting mingling between the real and the fictional not only surprises the other women, but also makes them react in the way Indrani does. They keep switching from one Tagore character to another, from Ela of *Chaar Adhyay* to Kumudini of *Jogajog*, Sudarshana and Surangama of *Raja* and Mrinalini of *Streer Patra*. The actresses keep flashing back and forth between the tragedies of each of Tagore's women characters and the tragedy of their personal lives filled with stories of domestic violence, desertion by the husband, insecurities stemming from the wife's success on stage and so on till the differences between the real women and the characters they are rehearsing blur beyond recognition. The five women of different ages relive their personal lives with each play they begin to rehearse, while the others console the one who breaks down from time to time.

Nandikar, founded by Rudraprasad Sengupta and later joined by wife Swatilekha Sengupta now practically run by their daughter Sohini Sengupta, began with adaptations of



great playwrights from abroad, and also ventured in tales from the classics and the Vedas. Nandikar is also known for hosting and organising a National Theatre Festival every year in Kolkata, drawing the best of stage talent from across the country and even from neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh. Swatilekha is an active actress, music-director and occasional director of this group.

*Shanu Roy Chowdhury*, the one-woman play Swatilekha Sengupta performs to packed audiences in Kolkata, is like the realisation of a dream, the culmination of two decades of dedicated and committed theatre. Having performed in many productions of Nandikar like *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Football*, *Nagar Keertan* and *Shesh Shakshatkar* (adapted from *The Last Appointment*) and directed some of its offbeat productions, Swatilekha seems to have finally found her own mettle in a production like *Shanu Roy Chowdhury*. Inspired by and adapted from a Willy Russell play called *Shirley Valentine*, the play opens on a woman, 42-year-old Shanu Roy Chowdhury. She has two grown-up children who have moved away from home, and a husband who wants his dinner served just so.

Sayak, a group founded by Meghnad Bhattacharya has been giving us plays for the past three decades and is still going strong. His son Sayandeb has started his own group to

produce and direct new plays: *Passing Show* is Sayak's new play. Based on a story by Amar Mitra turned into a play by Ujjal Chattopadhyay, the name *Passing Show* is inspired by a brand of cigarette earlier made in London and commonly used in India sometime in the 1940s. But the "passing show" is also a phrase that signifies the passage of time that comes back in memory broken up into slices of nostalgia, relationships, emotions and expressions. The play is a journey in a time-capsule into which the protagonist Atin Dutta (Meghnad Bhattacharya) pours himself to embark on a physical journey to discover the only song his father Dhurjoti Dutta wrote and Dutta's close friend Atulananda sang, that was cut into a gramophone record.

Many groups are born only to fade away soon for lack of performance space in Kolkata which small and new groups cannot afford. But the show, to repeat the cliché, goes on.....■



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



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# Celebrating Marathi pride

*The Marathi Baana is indeed a little gem of an entertainment show celebrating Marathi culture, language and pride on stage, and is extremely popular, says Prof. Avinash Kolhe.*

**A**SHOK Hande's entertainment show *Marathi Baana* (Marathi pride) is a one-of-a-kind cultural carnival which brings to life the rich treasures of Marathi culture. It has been running to packed houses for over a decade and refuses to stop attracting the crowd. The show, as the name suggests, sings the paeans of popular Marathi literature and cultural icons.

Hande felt that there would be an interesting programme by weaving together the history, traditions, music and dance and present it with the latest and modern technical support, to bring back to Maharashtrians, their Marathi pride. Interestingly the *Marathi Baana* is written, directed, narrated, conceived and produced by Hande himself.

## Paying homage

*Marathi Baana* pays homage to singers and composers like Sudhir Phadke, humourists like P.L. Deshpande, lyricists like Suresh Bhat, sportsmen like Ajit Wadekar, politicians like Bal Thackeray, film personalities like V. Shantaram, Shreeram Lagoo, etc. It is a brainchild of Hande and comprises 125 artistes who perform ritualistic dances right from *Gondhal*, *jogwa*, and other traditional art forms like *koli* dance and *lawani*. It is full scale celebration of Maharashtrian culture for nearly

two and a half hours.

The maiden show of *Marathi Baana* was presented at Gagangiri Maharaj Ashram, Manori, Malad (W), in October

2005. The show was received with unprecedented applause and prompted Hande to make it a commercial venture. And the rest is history. The first commercial show was presented on 1 November 2006 at Dinanath Mangeshkar Auditorium, Vile



Ashok Hande (extreme left), whose *Marathi Baana* is a unique show

Parle (E), as *Diwali Pahat* (morning celebrations of Diwali festival). The Dinanath Hall show was an instant hit and displayed 'house full' board. The show is presented by Ashok Hande's 'Chaurang'. Hande's Chaurang has presented many other programmes like *Mangalgani-Dangalgani*, *Amrut Lata*, *Madhubala*, etc. Hande established Chaurang (a Sanskrit word for three colours mixed to form a fourth), in 1987.

*Marathi Baana* starts with *Uthi uthi gopala*, a *bhupali* song that is sung in the early hours of the morning. Several songs like *Vasudevaala* and *abhangas* explained the rural life, followed by the farmer's dance *Shetkari Dada Ale*. Then comes a *thakar* dance based on the song *Amhithakarthakar* that explains

**Marathi Baana pays homage to singers and composers like Sudhir Phadke, humourists like P.L. Deshpande, lyricists like Suresh Bhat, sportsmen like Ajit Wadekar, politicians like Bal Thackeray, film personalities like OV. Shantaram, Shreeram Lagoo, etc.**

(Continued on page 16)



# An icon called Prithvi

*Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai is iconic for several reasons. It has become a coveted space for Hindi and English theatre, encouraging drama of diverse sensibilities and hues. The cafeteria there is also no less a legend, exclaims **Nikhil Katara**, as he describes Prithvi's journey.*

**T**HE Prithvi theatre in the small *gullies* inside a residential complex of Juhu, is an unassuming space when someone walks past it in the morning. But if one were to walk past the same space when the sun goes down, a certain transformation occurs. Just like a fantasy, the place transforms into the signature of art. A myriad number of lights paint the walls, and the cafeteria is abuzz with food and people, and as all of this happens a small bell rings at the back. What is that sound? Is it a call? But who is calling? What happens inside? Is it a performance that is about to begin? There are many questions. Perhaps the answers lie in the story of the space itself.

## A journey of passion

The theatre began its journey well before the foundation was laid. Prithviraj Kapoor established the Prithvi theatre traveling company in the 1940s. With a small ensemble he toured and played multiple roles, while keeping a small dream inside him. The dream was to find a home for his company. In the troupe was his own son who saw the dream grow. Shashi Kapoor, the youngest of Prithviraj's children grew his skills and talents as an actor as the wheels of Prithvi theatre travelled. In his traves he met Jessica Kendal, and found a

partner for life. There joined another protagonist in the story of Prithvi theatre. As Prithviraj Kapoor grew older, his dream of finding a home for the theatre led him to book a piece of land in Juhu. But that land remained silent for a decade till Prithviraj breathed his last. But that was not the end of Prithvi's story, on the contrary, it was just about to begin. For, Shashi and Jennifer took on the dream of their father, just when the lease of the space had expired. They bought it, built it, and grew it with- passion.

Through this tiny wormhole of time that made Prithvi grow in its legacy, hundreds of plays were staged, hundreds of performers found home for their talents, and hundreds of voices were heard. But then the protagonist passed away. Jennifer Kapoor had left and Prithvi's stage was empty in the year 1982. But did the show stop that day? The answer is a simple, unequivocal, 'No'. The lights lit up, the sound geared up, and the bell rang to usher in the audiences that came and witnessed another night of the Prithvi dream. For now, the reverie had found its way from one generation to the second and from the second to the third. Each generation bringing in a new vigour, fighting a new conflict, and bringing in a new resolution as the passage of time went on. Kunal Kapoor, Shashi and Jennifer's son took over the reins and



The iconic Prithvi Theatre

was then followed by Sanjana Kapoor, his sister, as the Prithvi story, turned into a legend.

### Also, food for the soul!

The legend of Prithvi still survives, and is perhaps one amongst the few who grow every night as its lights light the stage. But is that all there is to the Prithvi story? Is it all about theatre? The answer to that is also 'No'. Believe it or not, but there are many people who have made their way all the way to Prithvi but have never entered inside to watch a play. Why would anyone do that? Perhaps the answer lies in Prithvi's cafeteria. Its food and its drink has satiated many, so much so that they'd come to the theatre with the sole and single minded purpose of feeding themselves.

Prithvi also harbours a small bookshop, and while not much is usually spoken about it, it needs a mention in this narrative of Prithvi. It is one amongst the few bookshops in the country which boasts of a rich collection of plays. These plays aren't easily found, not even in the biggest bookstores of Mumbai, and hence this small shack of books is a vital addition.

**The theatre began its journey well before the foundation was laid. Prithviraj Kapoor established the Prithvi theatre traveling company in the 1940s. With a small ensemble he toured and played multiple roles, while keeping a small dream inside him.**

The story of Prithvi is important in the cultural context of Mumbai as a city. The slow shaping of the cultural landscape of India happens after every performance. That the performances happen in Hindi, English, and a host of other languages, makes Prithvi's story not just one man's dream, but a beautiful gift for the entire humanity, and as the lights go out in the night sky of Mumbai. A certain small road in the twists and turns of Juhu lights up, and in the shadows one can see the stories of all the generations that watch another night of theatre. One sees the dreams of an artist, still alive on the stage. ■

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.



## Celebrating Marathi pride

(Continued from page 14)



**Hande's shows have *lavani*, but never any obscenity**

the tribal life in Maharashtra. In the dance item *Lingobacha dongar aabhalala gela*, artists made a human pyramid with flawless skill and speed, which brought audiences to their feet. Other festivals like *Ganapati*, *Namankhele* and *Diwali* are presented through eye-catching dances. A large number of ladies dances and games were showcased through

*Mangalagaur pooja* and ladies games like *zimma*, *fugdi* and interesting songs like *nach ghuma*, *lakh lakhchanderi* were performed with lighted lamps. As Shivaji Maharaj is the idol and inspiration of Maharashtra, the show concludes with the vigorous notes of *Prabho Shivaji Raja*.

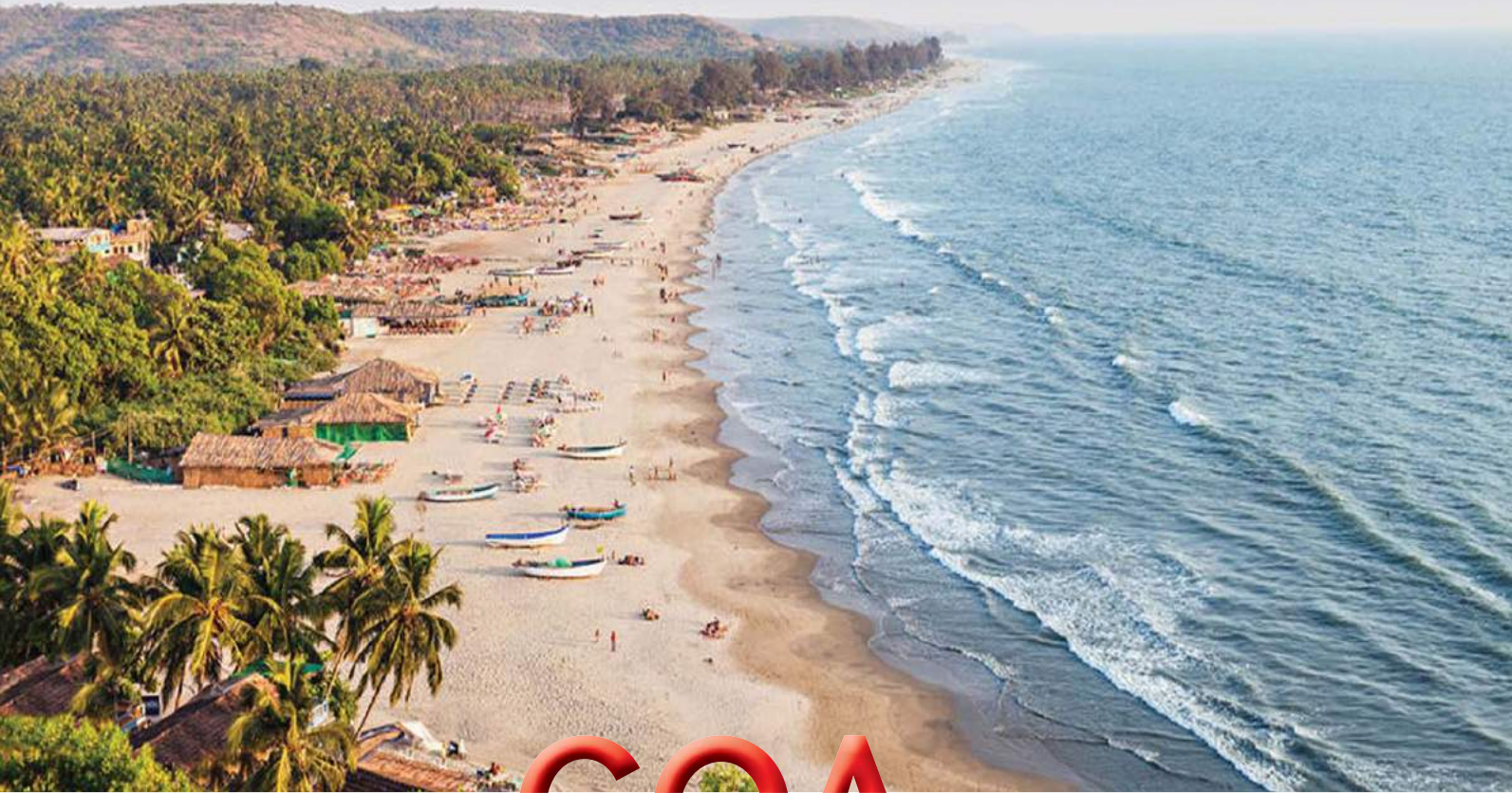
Hande ensures that there is no vulgarity in the show. Though his shows have *lavani* performances, they do not have an iota of obscenity. This is precisely why he gets women audiences in record number. There are families who have seen his shows more than a dozen times. Before mounting

any new show, Hande's team takes the pain to do thorough research of the topic, and only then is it taken further. No wonder the show has already crossed the famed 1000-shows mark. ■



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





# GOA

***Where beaches, nature and culture blend into a harmonious melody***

Did you think Goa's leitmotif is its beaches and rave parties? Well, think again. The sheer range of history, nature and culture that Goa offers, can potentially cast a shadow on its beaches and famed bohemian tourist scene. Get acquainted with another side of Goa, where culture meets nationalism, temples meet churches, and waterfalls and wildlife sanctuaries offer balm to the soul.

**Text & photos: Manu Shrivastava**





**The Brahma Karmali temple, which has interesting folklore**

**G**OA, the smallest state in India, is also one of the most favourite tourist destinations in the country for Indian and foreign tourists. The very mention of Goa fetches to one's mind images of beaches, churches, bohemian tourists, alcohol and rave parties. However, there is much more to Goa that never makes to the front page of travel magazines, trip advisories, 'things to do in Goa' articles, or even official portals for tourist information.

Not many are aware that Goa has a majority Hindu population, a significant 66% as per 2011 Census, as opposed to 25% Christians. Still, the tourist itineraries spill over with places and structures by Portuguese 'invaders', and almost neglect the older and significant history of Goa – a Goa that is obscured from public view and hidden away amidst the ruined structures and faceless towns.

Goa holds, surprisingly, a significant place in Indian history and Hindu mythology. And, it comes as no surprise that within the tiny state of Goa, like almost every other colony, the Portuguese destroyed everything that existed or was constructed before they arrived. You may find it surprising to note that Goa is mentioned in the Hindu epic poem Mahabharat, dated back to 1,000 BC-500 BC, as *Gomanta* or *Gomantak* – a 'pure' land piece created by Lord Parashuram. This patch of land was created specifically to

perform sacrificial rituals by the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Goa is not only blessed with a rich history, but also a culture and natural heritage that makes it a traveller's paradise. The state is home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, oldest temples, the most exquisite churches, national parks, petroglyphs, forts and settlements, replete with history and legends.

### **Ancient temples**

The Portuguese conquest was followed by the systematic destruction of Hindu temples. Ancient temples built in wood or stone and in traditional mould were completely lost after destruction as the rebuilding, over the years, led to a mix of contemporary architectural styles, ruining the ethnic historicity of the structures. One of the oldest temples in Goa, the Brahma temple, houses a tall and exquisitely-carved idol believed to be created in the 12<sup>th</sup> century Kadamba period. The temple is situated in a remote village of Nagargao in Valpoi, and the Brahma idol was carved intricately out of a single black stone. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, fearing the predictable destruction from the Portuguese, Brahma devotees escaped with the idol from its original location at Karmali village, and after several halts, rendered dangerous owing to increased





**The Dudhsagar Falls form a thrilling background to this train journey**

Portuguese control, finally rested it in the dense jungles of Nagargao. The village is now known as Brahma Karmali, the term derived from its original location.

Another beautiful temple entrenched in the serene greenery is the Mahadev Temple located at Tambdi Surla, approximately 65 km from Panjim, considered to be the oldest Goan temple that survived the Portuguese influence. The Kadamba dynasty built this 'small' temple within a dense forest near river Surla, carved out of grey-black basalt rock. The temple houses statues of a headless Nandi and a Shiv *linga* accompanied by a legendary King Cobra inside the temple. The otherwise dimly-lit temple comes to life during 'Mahashivratri', which is celebrated with pomp and fervour.

### **Nature's child, Goa**

Few may be aware of the fact that Goa is home to six wildlife sanctuaries and one national park, namely, Mollem National Park, Bhagwan Mahavir Sanctuary, Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Chorao Island (Dr. Salim Ali) Wildlife Sanctuary, Cotigaon Wildlife Sanctuary, Madei Wildlife Sanctuary, and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary.

Mollem National Park, earlier called Mollem Game Sanctuary, is spread over 240 sqkms of Western Ghats in the Sanguemtaluka in South Goa. This area is not only rich

in natural heritage, but is also home to famous temples of the Kadamba dynasty, the glorious Dudhsagar Waterfalls, Mormugao-Londa railway line, etc. A variety of birds such as Golden Oriole, Great Indian Hornbill, Drongo, Three-toed Kingfisher, and many more can be seen in the park along with several rare species of butterflies and snakes.

### **Dudhsagar Waterfalls, the 'sea of milk'**

One of the most famous waterfalls in the country is in Goa, the breath-taking Dudhsagar Waterfalls. Dudhsagar translates to 'sea of milk', and provides tourists a sight of a lifetime. And, Bollywood surely couldn't have missed it. In the blockbuster movie *Chennai Express*, a train scene between Deepika Padukone and Shahrukh Khan has been shot at the spectacular Dudhsagar Falls.

Located inside Bhagwan Mahavir Sanctuary (Mollem National Park) near Karnataka, the waterfalls are frequented by tourists from all over the world. Locally, the four-tiered falls are also known as Vajra Sakala Falls or Tambdi Surla Falls. The wondrous view of trains chugging on the bridge with the milky-white water falling down more than a thousand feet in the background, provides memories of a lifetime and surpasses the beauty of some of the most landscape-rich regions.





Fontainhas, the Old Latin Quarters in Panjim

### Old Patto Bridge

When the Portuguese invaded Goa, they not only destroyed what existed before but also constructed settlements, churches and structures of their own. The Old Patto Bridge in Panjim, for one, has also been captured in several Bollywood movies. The walk along the bridge, particularly during nights is an experience worth cherishing. The ambience offers the most romantic and picturesque setting for tourists. Built in laterite stone between the years 1632-35, the 3.2 km long Old Patto Bridge, also known as 'Ponte Conde de Linhares', is a fine architectural piece inspired by Roman designs. The then Viceroy of Portuguese India had ordered the construction of the bridge for movement of horse-drawn carriages. Now at nights, it is frequented by local fishermen angling for their daily catch.

**The Old Patto Bridge in Panjim, for one, has also been captured in several Bollywood movies. The walk along the bridge, particularly during nights is an experience worth cherishing. The ambience offers the most romantic and picturesque setting for tourists.**

Fontainhas is a piece of Latin settlement marked by bright colour-painted quarters constructed in Portuguese style. The area maintains its heavy colonial influence – narrow lanes, winding streets, colourful houses with quintessential balconies, and even more colourful flowering plants hanging from the balconies. The old villas are painted in bright tones of green, blue, yellow, and are a huge draw for history and art lovers. The zone's colours can be derived from the fact that in the days of yore, the colour white was reserved for the Church, leaving the other hues available for residential structures. The quarters are flagged by the Ourem Creek on the east, and Altinho Hill on the west.

### Casinos of Goa

It's here, in Goa, that gambling is legal, and that is a great draw for tourists not just from India, but all over the world. So, in Panjim along the Mandovi River can be seen casinos on boats anchored even a few onshore in some upmarket hotels. A lot of action happens on the floating

### Fontainhas, the Latin settlement

The Old Latin Quarters in Panjim, also known as





**The popular Calangute beach**

casinos, a huge hit with local tourists, who are known to visit the tiny state only for this piece of entertainment. According to Goan law, the legendary betting takes place on floating casinos, while online casinos can only sport electronic games.

The Deltin Group has classy casinos with hefty entry fees as they attract a specific group of revellers, mostly foreigners, keen on popular games of their choice. The other player, the Pride Group, has lower entry fees catering to masses and the Indian market.

### **Beaches of Goa**

Goa is synonymous with beaches. Some of the most famous ones include Baga, Calangute, Colva, Arambol, Anjuna and many more. Baga beach was made famous by the hippies during the late sixties, but even now it remains among the most visited beaches in Goa. Located in North Goa, Baga is located 16km from Panjim and is flanked by Calangute and Anjuna beaches, also very popular. The most famous features of these places are the shallow beaches, plenty of sun, flea markets, restaurants and cafes, exciting nightlife and water sports. Nightlife in Baga and the surrounding beaches are sought after by

tourists who can be seen strolling along the ever-crowded zones hopping bars and 'shacks'. Some of the most famous rave parties happen at these beaches accompanied by options for great food, live bands, markets, shopping outlets and more!



**The interesting Anjuna flea market**





**Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church, the 'white church', was built in 1871**

### **Shopping at Goa**

Shopping for a visitor in Goa is unique. The Baga beach market, Anjuna flea market, and Ingo market of Arpora are a few known to charm regular tourists, who bargain hard for clothes, handicrafts, trinkets, jewellery, etc., and frequent tattoo-making, hair-styling, tarot card readers and palmist shops too. And, of course, for those who are accompanied by their children, the beaches offer para-sailing, water surfing, jet-ski and other water and adventure sports opportunities.

### **Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception**

The famous 'white church' that we see in almost every movie shot in Goa is the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Panjim. Also known as the Crown of the City, the church yet has the famous bell that was retrieved from the ruins of Church of Our Lady of Grace, supposed to be the second-largest in Goa, after the Se Cathedral's Golden Bell.

In the year 1541, this structure was a chapel for sailors to offer prayers before heading out into the sea.

A few years later in 1619 the structure was rebuilt as a church with mixed architectural styles – that of Goan and Portuguese-Baroque styles. The façade of the church has two towers and a bell tower in between, arched above the two. The church, in full white, sports a series of steps where tourists and locals can be seen sitting through the day to seek peace or, simply, soak in the beauty and serenity of the church built in 1871.

### **Terekhol or Tiracol Fort**

The northern tip of Goa is marked by a beautiful 17<sup>th</sup> century fort called the Terekhol Fort. The breath taking views of Keri or Querim beach and the overlooking Tiracol River are a travellers' delight. Built by Maharaja Khem Sawant Bhonsle of Sawantwadi, the fort was rebuilt after the Portuguese invasion and capture in 1764. The fort also



**Dona Paula is a huge tourist attraction**

houses a 100-year-old church inside. The fort has been a witness to important landmarks in Goan history. In 1788, it was legally incorporated in Goa. The failed rebellion against the Portuguese by Bernardo Peres sa Silva, first Viceroy born in Goa, happened here. The fort also witnessed its share of violence when, in 1954, Goans trying to hoist an Indian flag at the fort to announce freedom from Portuguese control, were killed.

### **Dona Paula**

Dona Paula was a philanthropist known to have helped local villagers in that area. The site, named after her, is a famous tourist destination in the suburbs of Panjim. The road going to Dona Paula takes you to a completely different world, to a small structure in the middle of the sea. The woman, whose original name was Paula Amaral Antonio de Souto Maior lived in the area called Oddavell, and an important figure in Portuguese history, was the daughter of the Portuguese Viceroy of Jaffnapatnam in Sri Lanka, who arrived in Goa in 1644. The iconic movie *Ek Duje Ke Liye* made Dona Paula even more famous, and a place to go for those romantically inclined.

### **Old Goa also known as Velha Goa**

A fascinating example of Goa's Portuguese history is Old Goa, the once-spectacular capital of Portuguese Goa. The city was constructed by the Bijapur Sultanate in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and served as the Portuguese capital from 16<sup>th</sup>



**The Basilica of Bom Jesus, that has the preserved remains of St. Francis Xavier**





**The Church of St. Augustine, which is in ruins**

century till the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was finally abandoned owing to plague. The remains of the city are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The site is home to some of Asia's largest churches and cathedrals such as the 1521-built Convent and Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Basilica of Bom Jesus, that has the preserved remains of the body of St. Francis Xavier, the patron saint of Goa. The body of this revered missionary is shown to public every 10 years, the last time being in the year 2015.

### **The Church of St. Augustine**

If there is one image that has become an icon of Goa, it is the Church of St. Augustine built in 1573 by twelve Augustinians. The grand complex, which is now in ruins is



**Goa has several spice plantations**

that of a church with a convent beside it. The entire complex that lies in Old Goa was later deserted and what remains now is a massive bell tower standing 46 metres high. This complex is one of the most visited sites in Goa. The church originally had eight chapels and four altars, but now only the ruined altars can be seen along with some cells of the convent.

### **Spice plantations**

Goa is also known for its spice plantations, particularly in Ponda area, where tourists could pluck and taste a range of spices like pepper, periperi, and other farm spices. A visit



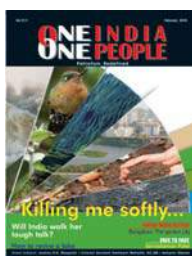
to a spice plantation is touted as the next best thing to do in Goa, besides the beaches. ■

Manu Shrivastava is a Media Legal Researcher with DraftCraft International, and co-convenor of 'The Woman Survivor' initiative that documents abuse of women and children within families.

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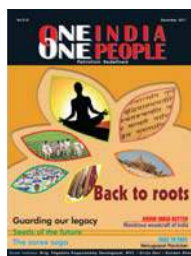
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*“Being mute doesn’t bother them, but they most certainly don’t like being called dumb. They are deaf and mute; not dumb.”*



**Ajanta Mukherjee Iyer** has spent 38 years as a hardworking and passionate Special Educator devoted to the well-being of the hearing impaired and mentally challenged, educable slow learners, and high functioning autistic children.

During her college years at Wilson College, Chowpatty, following the school bus of the Stephen High School for the Deaf and Aphasic at Babulnath, kindled an interest in her to want to teach the hearing impaired. Money not being an attraction to her, teaching the deaf-mute seemed more attractive than a well-paying corporate job. Wanting to do something for these kids was her only motivation. Ajanta Iyer in conversation with **A.Radhakrishnan**.

**How long did you teach? Are you still involved in teaching?**

I taught the hearing impaired for 25 years, and am now guiding educable slow learners for the last 13 years. I did my Dip. Ed. (Deaf) from Mumbai University, and PGLD (PG in Learning Disabilities) from SNDT University. I am a licensed Special Educator. I was a teacher, not ‘interpreter’ for the deaf and hard of hearing.

**What are your views on deaf and mute children?**

We use the terms hearing challenged and mute. ‘All are not deaf and mute. Some can speak with the advent of new technology in hearing aids. They are affectionate and understanding, and compassionate with others having different handicaps.

**What did you discover in these children? What did you learn from them? Are they naughty, mischievous?**

All of the hearing impaired are educable up to SSC. Those using better hearing aids with resource teaching and mainstream education, can go into any stream of education. Some of my students are engineers, bank employees, and teachers, and in the IT field. Patience, hardwork and due diligence works

wonders. Yes, they play pranks, are boisterous at times, and enjoy life to the fullest.

**What level of communication can they attain?**

Initially, not much. But with good hearing aids, they can attain a fairly good level of communication, and also through lip reading. The senior ones using sign language, haven’t progressed as much as they would have wanted to.

**How do you communicate with deaf people? Is it only about using sign language? Does being mute make a difference?**

One should speak normally, in simple language, slowly and at times through gestures and body language. Some use gestures, total communication, sign language, of which there are many forms. Some of the senior students can’t communicate without sign language.

Being mute doesn’t bother them, but they most certainly don’t like being called dumb. They are deaf and mute; not dumb. They are very emotional about being called ‘dumb’. I deal with them as I would deal with a normal person. I don’t treat them differently.





**Ajanta's get together with ex-students on Children's Day**

**Do we know what life is like inside their minds with only touch/taste/smell sight senses of the world?**

It is a silent world for most of them. Everything is visual, and they expect others to communicate through body language. Being part of their world is the best way to understand and deal with them.

**How do you deal with the 'only mute' students?**

I have taught the deaf-mute, and not only mutes. The mutes need a speech therapist and special educators well equipped to teach them. They use the Indian Sign Language (ISL) as most of our students don't understand American Sign Language.

**Are deaf and mute kids good at languages, especially English?**

Not the earlier ones who used ordinary hearing aids, but with new powerful hearing aids available, they can. I however don't think it is true that many deaf kids can learn to read in a completely different language than the one they learned to speak in. Depending on the level of hearing-loss, some kids who are just mostly deaf, i.e., can hear with strong hearing aids, have a fairly good knowledge of spoken English.

**Fully deaf kids who learned sign learn a completely new language when they learn to read. Depending how this is taught, can this be a major impediment to further schooling?**

**Do deaf kids also have problems with pronouns?**

Even with signing, they learn simple reading. Only if they sign read, can they do further schooling in the same stream. Other streams would be difficult. With simple pronouns... initially yes, but later they overcome it.

**Can a deaf person speak normally? How significant a role do gestures play in a deaf-mute's life?**

Gestures play an important role. They can speak almost normally with good hearing aids, especially those who have

been trained and fitted with hearing aids from a very young age, between 2 and 5.

**Is it a personal preference whether the deaf person prefers to use his/her voice or not. Do all deaf people take speech class, want to speak, feel comfortable speaking or have ever used their voice?**

Yes. Some don't like to use their voice. Speech class is only at the school level. But those with good hearing aids, who continue for some more time and those whose education started 30 years back, understand the importance. The earlier senior students are happier not speaking. They are comfortable with signing.

**Do these kids have other heightened senses, as a result? Are they able to think and communicate through touch, most commonly by tapping another person's hand?**

Some of them have. They touch a lot and convey their thoughts through touch (especially those who are now at the age of 40 and above).

**How much confidence do they inherently have?**

Initially very little, but it develops gradually over at least 10 years through education, guidance, counselling and experience.

**What do you call a person who speaks sign language? What is the deaf-mute sign language?**

I would call them a normal person but communicating in a different way. I wouldn't label them for their disability. In India, they mostly use the Indian Sign Language (ISL), Cued Speech, Finger Spelling etc.

**Have you taught someone who is blind, deaf and mute? How do people communicate if they are deaf and blind? Is a deaf-mute better off than the blind?**

Yes I have taught a child who was deaf-mute and going progressively blind. People who are deaf and blind communicate through signs and touch. Impairments are always bad. One can't compare one impairment with another. Deaf-mute is a silent impairment – not visible, but blindness is a visual impairment. Both have their own issues with their own set of problems.

**Famous people who were mute and deaf and are successes?**

Alan T. Hurwitz – the current President of Gallaudet College; Andrew Foster, Bernard Bragg – actors, directors, playwrights; Gabriel Faure, French Composer; Georgia Horsley – Miss England 2007 and Miss World Contestant 2007; Hellen Keller; Ludwig Von Beethoven; Marlee Matlin – the first deaf



woman to win an Academy Award for *Children of a Lesser God*, etc.

### **Any success stories among your students?**

Yes, many, like Priyanka Patil, who did her Computer Engineering from VJTI and worked in an IT firm for three years, and is now currently doing her Masters in the USA. Sharmishtha Valame, graduated in Elementary Education and taught for two years in the USA. She has also done her PG in Computer Education and is currently with an IT firm in USA. Dr. Nivedita Barve is a vet posted in a Government Veterinary Hospital in the Konkan. Her work is being well appreciated. Rajeev Bagga, who won at the Silent Olympics in badminton as well as a lot of national and international tournaments. As a coach in the United Kingdom, he still participates in international badminton tournaments abroad.

Tarun Manchanda did a comprehensive graduation course from Gallaudet University, USA, and is working in an IT Company in the USA. In his free time he also travels all over the US for the betterment of the hearing impaired.

Sanjay D'Souza is a much sought after independent architect and interior designer. The late Hemant Jain independently started a channel for the deaf called Newz Hook (Google application, You tube) and was awarded the Mphasis Universal Design Award from NCPEDP. A sad Moosa, graduated in science from Gallaudet University, USA, and is settled in Canada, working for a large firm there.

Abedali who did his Engineering from Government Engineering Institute, works for a large organisation in Mumbai. He also participates in the marathon every year. Many others are employed in banks, and some have started their own small enterprises.

### **What do you feel about Helen Keller?**

She was a great personality who changed the world's perception of how they saw the deaf-mute and deaf-blind. She proved that though she had multiple handicaps, nothing could stop her. A fighter to the core and the ideal of many like me, she is a guiding force and inspiration.

### **What is the attitude of Indians towards deaf and mute? Compare it to conditions abroad.**

Indians look at them with mixed feelings – some understand them, some don't, some just don't care, and some just stare at them as though they are from outer space. People sometimes don't understand them as it is a silent impairment.

Abroad, there are more working options, more facilities, a greater understanding of their problems, and institutions are more friendly and understanding to their needs. They have better expertise in dealing with their specific needs. We in

India however, have excellent teachers, who are selflessly dedicated to the cause of the speech and hearing impaired.

### **What are the feelings of parents of such children?**

There is initially a sense of despondency, helplessness and inability to deal with it. They refuse to accept the fact that their child is hearing impaired. They ask God, "Why me?". They are under tremendous stress and have a low self-esteem, and are worried how the world will accept their child, how he/she will cope with what the future throws at them. They worry whether the child will be able to lead an independent life.

Once they are counselled, talk to other parents of the deaf, and see other hearing impaired children progress in life and doing well, their confidence returns. Now they feel their worries were not justified. Positive thoughts push them to push their child on the path to happiness and progress.

### **Can government give more support to the cause of these children?**

Yes they can by way of grants to such institutes, funding their establishment, providing jobs and generally being proactive. More important, ensure that schools and colleges admit the hearing impaired who are capable of further studies.

### **How supportive was your family to your decision?**

Very supportive. But for my husband Raghu's support, this would not have been easy.

### **Your message to the community?**

Empathise with them; don't sympathise. They need your encouragement and not your pity. They want inputs from you and the society at large to understand them and their needs, and come up with solutions that improve their lot. They don't need "lip-service" but for you to "read their lips" and understand what they are trying to communicate.

Understand their gestures, because they are communicating their feelings straight from their heart. Just because they can't speak doesn't mean they can't communicate. Just because they can't hear, doesn't mean they can't listen to you and understand you. Have more awareness about who they are,

what they are, their needs, better understanding of their insecurities, to make the world a better place for them to be in.

Give it a try will you? ■



**A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance writer, short story writer and poet, who loves to make friends and elicit a chuckle from others.**

# Shame!

*To a nation inured to daily news of molestations and other atrocities, it was still a massive jolt to read about the rape of a tiny infant by her cousin in Delhi. How do we deal with such dregs of the society, and how do we console ourselves after we have failed to protect the most vulnerable amongst us? G. Venkatesh introspects.*

**E**ARLY this year, towards the end of January, a 28-year-old father-of-two raped his father's younger brother's 8-month old baby girl in Delhi. Such rapes and incestuous acts are not unprecedented or unheard of in our glorious country. For that matter, they may be happening even as I pen these words, in many parts of India, and of course, all over in this great world of ours. You sense frustration as you read these lines? Well, yes, you are not mistaken. After discussing about what had happened on WhatsApp with my classmates from 1987, I hit the gym, pumped iron in utter disgust at the inability and ineffectiveness of our overstuffed police force, of course with some rare gems in it who do not see eye to eye with the burgeoning governing bodies – both in the city where this shameful event happened and all over the country, and the hopefully well-meaning-but-encumbered judiciary. I returned home and could not resist writing down this piece late into the night.

## If man dares, God supports

Many victims carry dark secrets which they do not wish to reveal, not so much to shield the criminal who may be a close relative, but to avoid being shamed by society for the rest of their lives. And the perpetrators? Well, they go on from strength to strength, eat, drink, make merry, and live to ripe old ages, and pass away and become 'dear departed'. After all, in a world like the one we live in, a good man and a

worthless rascal are one and the same when their bodies are cremated and reduced to ashes! Correct me if I am wrong.

One may say that there is a law of Karma which takes hold and Lord Krishna said so in the Mahabharata. But for this law to manifest itself, one needs brave and virtuous (tricky combo) Pandavas to declare war on Kauravas so that God can lead the former to victory. And talking of law, here, if the lawmakers and the law-keepers do not do their bit diligently, as Krishna advised Arjuna to do, the lawbreakers will have a whale of a time! Twenty years ago, if I said or wrote such things, I always said, '*Chotimuh, badibaa!*'. But I am 46 years old now and know what I am saying, all the more clearly than I did when I was 26. And it is always better anyway not to at least have a '*Badimuh, chotibaa!*'...if you get the drift. Referring back, by 'lawmakers' I mean our honourable politicians, who drive around in comfort, escorted by their Z-security officers (I cannot but help think about that photograph of the Norwegian king – not the current one but his father – travelling by tram with commoners in winters to ski). By law-keepers, I refer to the policemen and the judiciary.

When things like the one referred to, at the beginning of this article, happen, uproar is witnessed, anger aired, and news channels work overtime. Readers may read, nod, and turn over to the next article, which may be about a woman who has transformed an entire village

by organising the inhabitants into forces of good. The invisible and unstated link between this story and the next one would never be comprehended.

This brings us to the thought-word-deed trio, which for me is verily the Trinity of existence – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; or Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva. One needs all three for sure. There cannot (and should not) be Deed without careful Thought. Thought and Word are ineffective if the Deed does not follow. How many of us can claim to consistently – 24 by 7, week after week – be doing what we say, and saying what we think. In other words, displaying a tremendous sense of integrity, both to ourselves and the outside world? Honestly. None, I would say?

## Thought and word futile without deed

Thought and emotion may trigger anger. Verbal venom is spewed against injustice – as one sees the thespian Nana Patekar do in his movies. Graduating from the former to the latter itself is a great step forward. But if things come to a halt there, and the embers cool off, well, the thought was unnecessary and the words had better not been uttered. It is the last jump to focused action which completes the series. Policymaking is on the thought-word level. Sans implementation, it is useless. The sheets of paper on which the policies are typed are better off being recycled as toilet paper and put to some use at least. As sheets of paper, on which policy statements are typed



and documented, they are meant to be aids in cleaning up and restoring order, sustaining welfare, and facilitating development. If they do not serve those purposes, cleaning some other muck would be a much better option!

### Strength in numbers

Actions set precedents. Consistent actions set stronger precedents. I write about things because I feel that the pen can be mightier than the sword as they say. Is it true? I do not know. Sometimes, I feel that I am just a helpless and neutered individual whiling away time by writing my thoughts down. But is it difficult to pledge that every citizen will look out for every other citizen's back? That way, miscreants will be deterred. If the police force cannot deter them, we civilians can. We need the strength of numbers and this is where, 'One India One People' comes in. If we count out all the potential rapists and criminals, we would still be well above a billion! Do not get me wrong. I am not implying that there are 300 million potential rapists in India. When I say 'above a billion', I am counting out little children, but including youngsters in high school, who could play a significant role in fighting crime.

However, let me ask you something. If I take on some eve-teasers (who could 'graduate' to becoming molesters in due course of time) in Mumbai – who are harassing a girl who is not known to me, but could be a friend's daughter – and a fight ensues, how probable is it that a nice, neatly-aligned crowd forms around me, with numerous photographs being taken and forwarded on WhatsApp... perhaps making me a hero instantly? Most probable, right? How probable is it that a dozen men who care for their sisters, wives and daughters, would come to my aid and outnumber the eve-teasers and scare them away, or pin them down? Perhaps not many? How probable is that the policemen who may

be summoned onto the scene thank me? Not much, right? I may well be locked up in jail for a night. I stay in Sweden. In Scandinavia, women are well-respected. Gender equality prevails. No doubt the Nordic countries rank among the top ten when it comes to the Global Happiness Index. A country in which women are respected is bound to develop into a happy one, over time...slowly, but surely.

### India waits for the verdict

What is going to be the verdict then, in the rape case? Surely, the rapist would get his lawyer...who may perhaps argue that his client may have suffered molestation himself when he was a child at the hands of an uncle and the dear-departed uncle must be punished posthumously. Perhaps, it may be proved that he is a schizophrenic; and Personality B raped the child, while Personality A was not even aware of this (Am I giving the lawyer ideas here?) Human rights activists may come forward to defend the rapist's right to be pardoned. As if the 8-month old girl was not a human being!

If this rapist is put away for life or for several years at least, in the hope that he would reform himself in jail, after eating and surviving thanks to the tax payers of the country, would that be agreeable to many of us? Recidivist crime, let me remind you, is as common here as in the USA. Is our judiciary well-equipped to deal with extraordinary crimes – perhaps without a clear precedent – with extraordinary efficiency? 'Hang him', was the response of many who were interviewed on television. Would that be an effective deterrent? Then, the police force and the judiciary need to demonstrate that they are consistent and would not discriminate between Indian citizens in this regard! An imported-whisky-drinking son of a bigwig must be considered as guilty as a common cabbie. Even if the former is

able to hire a clever lawyer who has no values beyond earning dollops of cash, the judge needs to go by precedent, in a clear-headed manner.

### Safety first

Yes, India may be saddled with many challenges now, but want of safety and security trumps all other concerns. Health, education and employment make no sense in the absence of security. How do we ensure that the politicians and policemen share our agony? The ballot box has proved to be a dud. Same stories are repeated again and again, quite like film-scripts in the 1980s and 1990s.

Am I provoking my countrymen? Am I inciting them to rebel? Does this make me some kind of an insurgent? Will the blue pencil get to work on my piece, if it is considered publishable? I do not know. Perhaps, this will not be read at all by anyone. Perhaps, those who read it will nod and flip the page. Perhaps, some will be motivated to seek the cooperation of others and build up an army of do-gooders. I would not know.

I rest my pen now, but hope that a strong deterrent will emerge in the next few weeks. At least within this year. There is still a fond hope that the pen with which I wrote this article before typing it in, may be at least as mighty as a sword, if not mightier...and that Lord Krishna blesses it and destines that it contributes a bit at least along with many other pieces which would have been published already. Jai Hind!■

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# Challenges of the Indian Army

*We depend on our army for not just defending the country's borders, but also keeping peace within it, and sometimes even for carrying out civilian works, which is very unfair, says **Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi**. He reviews the year that was.*

**T**HE year 2017 started on a somewhat controversial note when General Bipin Rawat assumed command of the Indian Army, superseding two army commanders senior to him. Considerable discussion followed, as barring exceptions, the government usually stays on the straight and narrow path of seniority. There was considerable scepticism in the media, including the social media.

Army Day rolled by on 15 January, and the Prime Minister (PM) graciously tweeted: "We remember with great pride all the sacrifices made by our Army. They put their lives at risk so that 125 crore Indians live peacefully." However, a couple of months later his government swooped down on a peaceful gathering of protesting veterans demanding removal of anomalies of OROP (One Rank One Pension)!

## Defence ministers aplenty!

The present government seems to like juggling Defence Ministers! In three years we have had four, including one incumbent twice, but in name only, as his first charge was the Ministry of Finance. Manohar Parrikar, after taking over on 9 November 2014, remained in office for just about two years and returned to Goa – his state. Arun Jaitley became a caretaker defence minister again for about six months, thus completing nearly one wasted year for an important ministry!

Parrikar, despite being a lightweight in his party, tried to learn the ropes of the Ministry and bring badly needed



The Indian Army faces many challenges today

changes, but could not get the better of the entrenched MoD (Ministry of Defence) bureaucrats. He could neither satisfy the veterans fully in their long-standing demand of OROP, nor the serving personnel, as there was no progress in the much-needed modernisation of the armed forces. He could not resolve anomalies in pay and allowances either. He fell into the bureaucrat trap of setting a host of committees, whose recommendations are mostly languishing in the MoD cupboards. These include the Reddy Committee for OROP anomalies, Promotion Policy Committee, and many others. Even the high-powered Shekatkar Committee's recommendations have been only partially accepted, while the real hard-nosed ones have been quietly buried.

## The Kashmir conundrum

The end of severe winter coincided

with an upsurge in violence in the Valley. The state government was visibly helpless and was more concerned with the upcoming elections in Srinagar and Anantnag. The police and CAPF also had their constraints and failed to take strong action. It was left to the army to contain the local violence, as well as neutralise the insurgents.

In mid April, the so-called 'human shield' episode occupied the media for weeks, if not months. It was actually an innovative and a spur of the moment action by a junior army officer for saving personnel on election duty from a mob bent on assaulting, if not killing them. It did not deserve the kind of publicity it received! Around the same time, a young Kashmiri officer of the army, Lt. Ummer Fayaz Parry, was abducted and brutally killed by militants in Shopian district, while he was visiting his village, on leave, to attend a wedding. The media, the state government, and the human



rights groups hardly took cognisance of this brutal act; proving the one-sided reality of violence in Kashmir!

In J&K, Operation Sadhbhavna of the army continued to be a resounding success. In a situation where the state government does nothing to provide good governance, it is only Sadhbhavna that brings hope and succour to the people. Its effect on the hearts and minds of the people is starkly visible when thousands of Kashmiri youth come for the army's recruitment rallies.

### **A 'hollow' army?**

India's unresolved territorial disputes with both China and Pakistan continued unabated during 2017. Along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, a major standoff that lasted over 72 days in the Doka La area, near the southern tip of the Chumbi Valley, was handled with aplomb by the Indian Army, especially as it had major politico-diplomatic-military facets, as a third country – Bhutan – was also involved.

In J&K, the Line of Control (LoC) ostensibly under a mutually agreed ceasefire for nearly two decades, remained active on account of Pakistan continuing to infiltrate Jihadi insurgents and terrorists across it. Deployment of army continues in the north-eastern states too.

Thus, instead of reduction of operational tasks, the army keeps getting deeper in both the morass of counter insurgency operations, and border defence at the same time. Although Indian Army soldiers are well trained, well led, and are physically and mentally tough, these repetitive tasks are taking their toll, and do affect morale adversely. The political leadership seems to have no plans to change this situation by other means, although the strength of all types of police forces, administrators, and subordinate staff keep increasing, as do their pay and allowances, while the army plods on

with antiquated equipment, reduced emoluments, and ever-increasing tasks.

Despite its high numerical strength, the Indian Army continues to be a hollow army. Consequently, its' ability to undertake various types of military operations on the modern battlefield stands greatly reduced. There are three major reasons for this state of affairs. The first is the abysmally low defence budget that has been dwindling every year and now stands reduced to just 1.5 percent of the GDP. The second is our complicated procurement procedures. Despite eight Defence Procurement Plans (DPPs) having been issued in nine years, there is no change in the situation.

The third reason is that while 'Make in India' policy of the PM resonates in discussions, media reports, committees, election *bhashans* (speeches), and the like, precious little action is visible on the ground. The PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) carry on in their lethargic ways as in the past; the DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) has produced little that could be called satisfactory by the users, despite huge time delays and cost over-runs.

The army's shortage of weapons and equipments keep mounting. In broad terms, bulk of its weapons and equipment are either in an obsolescence or obsolete state. As an example, the largest arm, the infantry that is the backbone of counter insurgency operations as well as for fighting battles and wars, has no modern weapons and equipment. All Arms and Corps are in a similar state. Reserves of ammunition of all types are also at a record low.

Despite the above, talk of wars on two fronts and even two and a half fronts have been articulated by highly senior persons, who should know better!

### **Do we value our army?**

A most peculiar order was passed

within a few days of the new Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman taking over (the fourth change in three years of the present government!). The army was ordered to clear garbage left by tourists. While the army hierarchy, acting as the proverbial sacrificial lambs, meekly accepted it, there was furore among the veterans, and in the social media. They rightly stated that at no given moment should the country's military be deployed to tackle something as opposite to their line of duties as garbage collection. Why are local civil government institutions/officials shirking their responsibility?

A month or so later, the Defence Minister again tasked the army on a non-military task, to construct four foot bridges across local train lines in Mumbai, when elaborate and better expertise is available with the Railways, and it is their job. It was a political move to bail out both the Railways and the BJP-led government in Maharashtra, who were twiddling their thumbs after an accident on a pedestrian bridge. It is a mystery why the army accepted it!

There has been an inconclusive debate on the selection system currently prevailing for officers of flag ranks. Although the selection system for promotions in the army is as fair and comprehensive as is possible, yet aberrations came in when promotions based strictly on command vacancies falling vacant for a particular batch were changed/tweaked for extraneous reasons. There is a move now to cut out the anomalies, but a formal decision is yet to be taken.

As the year was approaching its end, two important announcements were made, but the media reported only one. The planned upgradation of rank structures of nearly 1.5 lakh JCOs and Jawans over the next five years was well

**(Continued on page 33)**

# We, the equal

*India's 69<sup>th</sup> Republic Day celebrations in Delhi in January had some new attractions and guests. It was also an occasion to reflect on the path we have chosen as a republic, says **Rashmi Oberoi**.*

INDIA marked its 69<sup>th</sup> Republic Day this year. Republic Day honours the date on which the Constitution of India came into effect on 26 January 1950, replacing the Government of India Act (1935) as the governing document of India.

The Constitution was adopted by the Indian Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949, and came into effect on 26 January 1950 with a democratic government system, completing the country's transition towards becoming an independent republic. 26 January was chosen as the Republic day because it was on this day in 1930 that the declaration of Indian Independence (Purna Swaraj) was proclaimed by the Indian National Congress, as opposed to the Dominion status offered by the ruling British.

## A special day

This year's Republic Day was special in a way that there was not one, but 10 chief guests at the event, as all the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) leaders had been invited to be a part of celebrations. The national capital was wrapped in a thick security blanket to ensure peaceful celebrations. Special teams, anti-aircraft guns and snipers were deployed to keep a vigil on the eight-km parade route from Rajpath to Red Fort. Hundreds of CCTV cameras as well as drones were watching people's movements along the parade route. Nearly 60,000 security personnel from the Delhi Police, and central security forces had been deployed in central Delhi.



**The impressive Republic Day parade at New Delhi**

The parade was presided over by President Ram Nath Kovind. This ceremonial parade also displays the rich heritage and culture of the country along with its distinct diversity. The Republic Day parade began at the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate where Prime Minister Modi paid homage to the soldiers who died in the line of duty. The national anthem was played with a 21-gun salute after the unfurling of the tricolour.

India flaunted its military prowess and cultural diversity at the parade in the presence of the ASEAN leaders. The highlight of the iconic parade was a team of Border Security Force (BSF) women who performed daredevil stunts on motorcycles, receiving a standing ovation from the spectators. President Kovind took his first Republic Day salute from various wings of the armed forces.

## The bravehearts

The Ashoka Chakra, India's

highest peacetime military award, was posthumously conferred on Indian Air Force's Garud Commando Corporal Jyoti Prakash Nirala, who single-handedly shot down three terrorists during an anti-terror operation in Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora on November 18, 2017. President Ram Nath Kovind handed over the Ashoka Chakra to Jyoti Prakash Nirala's mother Malti Singh, and wife Sushma. Corporal Nirala became the first Indian Air Force Commando to receive the award posthumously. Kirti Chakra, the second highest peacetime military award, was conferred on Major Vijayant Bisht of the Army who led an ambush in the Chorgali forest of Jammu and Kashmir's Uri district, killed two terrorists and saved the life of another soldier during an ambush.

President Kovind had approved 390 gallantry awards and other Defence decorations for the Armed Forces personnel and others. The awards included



one Ashok Chakra, one Kirti Chakra, 14 Shaurya Chakras and 28 Param Vishisht Seva Medals among others.

### Let's show more respect!

Every year, as an army daughter, I am compelled to write about the protocol laid down at the Republic Day parade, and the lack of etiquette shown to the widows of our brave martyrs. It is rather dismal and upsetting to see only the President and the three Service Chiefs stand up in respect during the solemn award ceremony, while the other dignitaries watch the whole show, sitting comfortably in their seats. Decency demands that everyone stands up respectfully when the martyred soldier's family member comes up on the dais to receive the award. There is a huge difference in my opinion between

protocol and respect for the dead. It is of prime importance that at such solemn occasions we must look after our war widows and the dependents of martyrs with compassion.

One cannot forget the sacrifices of the fallen soldier which has been made not only for their country, but for each one of us as well. For there is nothing greater than this. It is only the soldier who displays exemplary courage while facing the toughest of situations and fighting for their country.

Let us also not forget that this day is celebrated to emphasise the fact that no person, law, rule or government is bigger than the constitution, as the latter is the sole governing manual of our country. May we always have freedom to choose, freedom to live and freedom to dream... Let us salute the sacrifices made by

freedom fighters and soldiers who made us realise the dream of an independent and unified India.

Long live: Justice, Equality, Liberty and Fraternity! ■

**Rashmi Oberoi an army officer's daughter, Rashmi Oberoi was lucky to travel and live all over India, as also a few years in Malaysia and U.S.A. Keenly interested in writing for children, she wrote two story books - *My Friends At Sonnenshine*, which was published in 1999 by Writer's Workshop, Kolkata, India and *Cherie: The Cocker Spaniel*, which was published in 2009 by the same publishers. For a few years she moved into the corporate world of HR, but her love for writing took precedence, and she pursued her passion by writing articles and middles for newspapers, print and online magazines, including a children's magazine abroad.**



## Challenges of the Indian Army

(Continued from page 31)

received. Essentially, it is a cadre review, which was last carried out in 1984. While benefitting individuals, it has some negative connotations too. Cadre reviews only succeed when additional slots are created within and outside the army, otherwise there will be severe command and control problems on the one hand, and stagnation in different ranks at different times.

The second decision was the declaration of 2018 as the 'Year of the War Disabled' by the Army Chief. The proposal for this was mooted by this writer at a War Disabled Personnel Rally at Pune in May this year, in his capacity as the President of the War Wounded Foundation, an NGO functioning for all war disabled personnel of the army, navy and air force. May be the media is waiting for a formal announcement!

The induction of women in the ranks, initially in the Corps of Military Police

(CMP), came in for a lot of criticism, as it was rightly read as a political sop and not needed for a country that has hordes of male volunteers waiting to be recruited. This move is also likely to create adverse management problems, without any tangible gains.

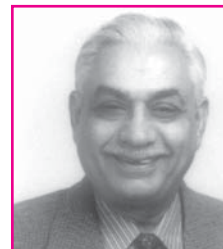
### A military litfest

An event widely reported in some sections of the media was the first Military Literature Festival (MILFEST) of the nation held at Chandigarh. It was a joint venture between the State of Punjab and Headquarters Western Command. Both the Governor and Chief Minister of Punjab were fully involved in its planning and execution. The MILFEST was preceded by many army teams performing and showing their skills, much to the delight of the people of Chandigarh and nearby cities. Besides highlighting wars fought by the

armed forces, lessons learnt, military history of the Punjab and so on, the MILFEST proved that 'military literature' is not an oxymoron!

The bottom line is that no real change has taken place in the army in 2017. However, because of efforts of the army and not the government, there is better appreciation of the army and the tasks it performs for the nation. There is a definite need to reduce deploying the army on internal tasks, so that they get adequate time to train for their primary task, and also have a better quality of life.

As India rises in stature economically and technologically towards a more eminent position in the region and the world, it has to concurrently build on its military power. The political leadership must take this issue seriously, lest the



country is found napping when 'push comes to shove'! ■

**Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi is a former Vice Chief of the Army Staff.**

# This fire still burns

*The film Padmaavat faced controversies galore before it was released, with many cuts and changes, including in its title. Should the events showcased in the film be seen through the prism of the era it is set in, or do we critique the movie according to our current sensibilities, ponders Nikhil Katara.*

**T**O say that the movie *Padmaavat* faced controversy, is an understatement. As a matter of fact, it wasn't even meant to be called *Padmaavat*, for its title was supposed to be *Padmavati*. It went through a typhoon of certification board objections and threats of mob attacks, and still managed to get released, albeit a few hundred cuts and changes later. The film stars the names that have become synonymous with modern Bollywood. Deepika Padukone, Shahid Kapoor and the shape shifter – Ranveer Singh – grace the screens. So much has been said about the film that one wonders – is there need for another review of the film?

Perhaps a review of the content of the film doesn't matter as much as a review of the India today, and its thoughts. For, what is a movie by itself? Can a film ever be anything alone? Unless it meets an intelligent mind, it is nothing. Which brings us to the topic of this article, which is not to judge the film's aesthetics, but to read the complex thoughts of India today. For those who still are to watch the film, please read ahead only if you don't want to encounter any spoilers.

## The story

Jalaluddin Khilji is the emperor of Hindustan. His army is slowly taking over all that surrounds them, and the one who is instrumental in all this success is Alauddin Khilji, the Mad Max warrior and nephew to the emperor. Alauddin, along with his faithful servant



A still from the movie *Padmaavat*

Malik Kafur, successfully assassinates the emperor and takes over the rule of the land. In the parallel world of Chittorgarh, King Ratan Singh weds and brings home one of the most beautiful woman in the world – Padmavati of Sinhala. Every person in Chittorgarh is in awe of Padmavati's beauty. This also includes the high priest Raghav Chetan,

who gets caught watching Ratan Singh and Padmavati in a moment of intimacy, and gets banished. Chetan journeys to meet Alauddin Khilji and tells him about Padmavati's beauty. Khilji, who wishes to achieve every beautiful and rare 'object' in the world, invites the Rajput king and his wife to Delhi, but his invitation is rejected, following which he lays siege on Chittorgarh, but cannot break through its walls. He spends months outside its gates, until he decides to send his army back to Delhi and offer peace. Alauddin gets invited into the kingdom and is graced by the Rajput hospitality.

He eventually requests Ratan Singh that he be allowed to see Padmavati, but every Rajput takes objection to that. Eventually, Alauddin witnesses only Padmavati's reflection and leaves, but before leaving he requests Ratan Singh to come to his tents for a meal. Ratan Singh accepts and is trapped

**Perhaps a review of the content of the film doesn't matter as much as a review of the India today, and its thoughts. For, what is a movie by itself?**



and taken away to Delhi. Allauddin sends a message to Chittorgarh that he will release Ratan Singh only when Padmavati comes to Delhi herself. Padmavati accepts but on certain conditions, one being that Allauddin decapitate Raghav Chetan and send his head across to Chittor. Allauddin happily agrees. Padmavati travels with a retinue of *ghoonghat* clad Rajput men, who lay siege on Delhi and rescue Ratan Singh. Allauddin's own wife helps Padmavati, to the ire of the emperor.

Allauddin returns to Chittorgarh with weapons that break through the powerful walls of Chittorgarh. Ratan Singh is forced to take the field and gets executed, again by Allauddin's treacherous ways. Following the mass execution of all the Rajput men on the field, every woman in Chittorgarh decides to commit *Jauhar* (self-immolation). Leaving the emperor Allauddin with a victory that means nothing, as he fails to achieve what he set out for, leaving only an image in his mind, and an ego that is destroyed.

### The controversy

The Rajput Karni Sena attacked the sets of *Padmaavat* claiming that the film had factual inaccuracies and hurt Rajput sentiments. There were death threats issued to the film's cast that included the director Sanjay Leela Bhansali and the lead actress Deepika Padukone. Many of these threats were issued on live television, and none of the members of the Sena had any qualms in stating them unapologetically. On the other hand, film actress Swara Bhaskar wrote an open letter to Sanjay Leela Bhansali stating she felt she was just a 'vagina' after watching the film, and questioned it for showcasing *jauhar*.

From the far right to the far left, from the Sena's lack of judgement to Bhaskar's ideological feminism, the film has stirred many questions. There is a saying that any good film lasts

much beyond its run time. If one were to analyse the ideas that *Padmaavat* deals with, it seems like a movie of an empowered woman who 'chose' to die after her husband was murdered. This is the sole premise of the movie, but what caused the controversy was for example, the supposed dream sequence between Khilji and Padmavati, where they were apparently intimate. The Karni Sena took it upon themselves to save the Rajput honour, and the mobs were out on the street destroying property while protecting their queen's image.

**The Rajput Karni Sena attacked the sets of *Padmaavat* claiming that the film had factual inaccuracies and hurt Rajput sentiments.**

But not once did we as a society, critique the decision of 'Rani Padmavati' to kill herself. The woman who was fully capable, battle trained, and a much more powerful ruler than her husband, denied herself the right to exist once her husband died. The same husband who made many errors in war, and whom she had to save from Delhi almost single handedly, had to burn herself to ash once he had been killed, was never critiqued save in an open letter by Bhaskar. The quality of critique was intriguing. Bhaskar used the pen in the open space and Sena used their violence in public space. The Sena used their mobs so that no one could be identified, Bhaskar used her name, loud and bold, so that no one could miss her. Now when we as a society watch *Padmaavat*, the primary question is which way do we go? And how do we read our history?

Ironically, in the film, there is a scene where Khilji destroys history as he becomes the emperor, and as he does so he wishes to create new history,

so that people will read him in the way he wants them to. The Karni Sena, and many others intend to write and read history in the same dogmatic fashion of Khilji, making the people see history only from a certain lens. But is history an isolated event? Isn't the act of *jauhar* that 'Rani Padmavati', committed still an act of our present? Its violence is still running in the glorious manner in which Padukone graces the fire along with all the women in Chittorgarh, including a pregnant woman and a child. Can't our intelligent minds read the event through our own lens? So that these regressive acts can be seen for what they are, not symbols of glory, but of destruction.

The way society thinks is evident after the entire controversy. We shiver at the sight of faceless mobs, find justifications for the showcasing of an already regressive thought, we change the titles of movies and ask film makers to make cuts in a film that already has glorious regressive acts in them to further and perfect our version of history. But when an empowered person showcases their point openly in a public space, the way any critique should, the way in which a society learns, the way in which a society sees itself in a mirror, then we criticise, not their thoughts or their ideas, but their right to have an opinion. The ancient fire still burns, Khilji still wins. ■

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.



# KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAY

The gutsy freedom fighter (1903-1988)

**K**AMALADEVI Chattopadhyay was a freedom fighter, an artist, social activist, not to mention, gutsy, full of life, and passionate about Indian art, heritage and culture. She was born in a Saraswat Brahmin family in Mangalore in 1903, and was the youngest child. Both her mother and her grandmother, who were rather strong ladies, were her early influencers. Her love for books was influenced by them. At her maternal uncle's home, where she grew up, Kamaladevi came in contact with political leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Annie Besant's speeches inspired her and she wished to get involved in the freedom movement of the country. She was frequently taken to Gandhi's meetings. All this set the tone for her political career that began much later.

She was married at an early age, but became a widow at 15. Her father-in-law encouraged her to pursue her studies. Thus she finished her schooling in Mangalore, and went to Queen Mary's College in Madras. There she met Harindranath Chattopadhyay, who was a poet and an actor. She fell in love with him and married him. Along with her husband, she acted in theatre and in films. She also went to London to pursue a diploma in Sociology.

In 1924 she joined the Seva Dal unit of the Congress that involved itself with the economically weaker sections of the society. In 1926, she contested in elections for the Madras Legislative Assembly. Though Kamaladevi lost, she was one of the first Indian women to contest assembly elections.

In 1927 she started the All India Women's Organisation that worked towards education and women's empowerment. In 1930, she was one of the women volunteers who participated in the salt satyagraha at Bombay, defying the law by boiling seawater, making salt and selling it in the market to the highest bidder to collect money for the Satyagraha movement. She was arrested several times and experienced prison at Yerawada, Belgaum, Vellore and at Arthur Road Jail. Everywhere she went, she tried bringing in reforms to the jail inmates. In Belgaum, for example, she organised a medical

clinic for the inmates. She also started a weekly Kannada publication to bring about public awareness of the freedom struggle. She was offered the position of Governor for Tamil Nadu and Orissa, the ambassador for Cairo, and the coveted position of becoming the Vice President of India. She refused, and instead chose to work at grassroots campaigns.

The partition saw refugees pouring into the country. With no home to call their own they had set up tents in the city. The new government was still dealing with governance issues of the country. And this is where the feisty Kamaladevi took matter into her hands. She gave hope to some 50,000

refugees. She founded the Indian Cooperative Union for creating a township. She procured waste land outside Delhi, took permission, and encouraged them to build homes-brick by brick. Thus she managed to set up the Faridabad Industrial Township through community effort.

She was one of those rare women who made hand-spun, hand woven craft fashionable. She engaged in debates and discussions with leaders, scientists, went on world tours, participated in movements, rescued stranded children – all, wearing a saree. Not only this her love for all things Indian led her to create institutions like the Central

Cottage Industries Emporia, All India Handicrafts Board etc. The National School of Drama in Delhi and the Sangeet Natak Academy were set up to encourage and support dance and drama. Kamaladevi was an author of several books and speeches that were published over a period of five decades – *In war torn China*, *In Uncle Sam's Empire*, *Indian Women's Battle for Freedom*, to name a few. She received several awards in her lifetime – Padmabhushan, Magsaysay International Award for community service, UNESCO award for her work in handicrafts, and Padmavibhushan for her writings. She died on 29 October 1988. ■

– Usha Hariprasad is a freelancer who is fond of travelling, discovering new places and writing about travel related destinations around Bangalore at Citizen Matters. Currently, she works in a trekking organisation.





# USTAAD AMIR KHAN

Classical musician par excellence (1912-1974)

USTAD Amir Khan, born on 15 August 1912, was a well-known Indian Hindustani classical vocalist in the *khyal* and *tarana* genres. He was also known as Sur Rang. Regarded as one of the most dominant figures, and founders of the Indore *gharana*, he is known for his intellectual approach in fostering raga melodies, his favourite being *Marwa*, *Darbari Kanada* and *Malkauns*.

He gained the approval of critics and connoisseurs alike, disregarding the age-old, conventional traditions, and evolving an entirely original style. With his ancestors being musicians in Mughal courts, music was in his blood. His father, noting Amir's interest, let him devote more time to vocal training, focusing on the *merukhand* technique. Exposed at an early age to many different styles, thanks to the regular *mehfil*-s at his home, he also learned the basics of *tabla* playing from one of his maternal uncles.

Shifting to Bombay in 1934, he gave a few concerts and cut about half a dozen 78-rpm records. Not well received, he heeded his father's advice, and in 1936 joined the services of Maharaj Chakradhar Singh of Raigadh Sansthan in Madhya Pradesh.

He was once hooted off the stage after only 15 minutes or so at a music conference in Mirzapur, with many illustrious musicians present. After Partition, he moved back to Bombay. Yet, Amir's presentation was always thoughtful and methodical, and he rarely indulged in repetitive phrases. His *mehfil* was always a pleasant experience. He had a very impressive and magnetic personality and would always sit in a yogic posture doing *tapasya*, at his concerts, with closed eyes and in deep meditation.

Solemnity and tranquility, almost puritanical, highbrow style was his hallmark, in striking contrast to some singers who entertain listeners with acrobatics, rather than providing them with aesthetic delight. He could move equally effortlessly in any octave with his rich baritone open-throated voice with a three-octave range. While presenting a *raga* he

unfolded it with extreme skill, delicacy and purity, gave each a thorough treatment. He also introduced an uninterrupted concert style where one *raga* would flow into the next.

He popularised the *tarana*, as well as *khyalnuma* compositions in the Dari variant of Persian. He was very keen on establishing this theory that it was the Persian scholar Amir Khusro who had invented the *tarana* by carrying out research to unravel its hidden meanings, but cruel destiny denied him that.

To him, poetry was important in *khyal* compositions, and left several compositions with his pen name, *Sur Rang*

(coloured in swara). He advocated competition between classical music genres, film and other popular music, and opined that classical renderings needed to be made more beautiful while remaining faithful to the spirit and grammar of the *raga*'.

Though of the Indore *gharana*, he was a firm believer of absorbing elements from various *gharanas*. He had a global following, captivating the crowd everywhere. Introducing classical music to the masses through films significantly boosted his visibility and popularity. He sang purely classical style film songs in ragas, for films *Baiju Bawra*, *Shabaab*, *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje*, and *Goonj Uthi Shehnai*.

He also sang a ghazal, *Rahiy Ab Aisi Jagah*, for a documentary on Ghalib. He was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 1967, the Padma Bhushan in 1971, and a Swar Vilas from Sur Singar Sansad in 1971. Khan's disciples include many greats like Pandit Amarnath, Kishori Amonkar, Hridaynath Mangeshkar, Munir Khan, and Kamal Bose.

The premature death of the Ustad on 13 February 1974 aged 61, in a tragic motor accident in Calcutta, created a void, an irreparable loss to the world of Hindustani classical music. As a critic spelt it, 'His music combined the massive dignity of the *dhruwad* with the ornate vividness of *khayal*'. ■

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



## BRIG. ARUN BHIMRAO HAROLIKAR, MVC

Courageous and patriotic officer (1934-2008)

**B**RIG. Arun Harollikar was born on 6 December 1934. He studied at New High School, Kolhapur, and Rajaram College, Kolhapur. He was commissioned into 3/5 GR (Gorkha Rifles). Three months after joining the unit, he was wounded in an attack on a strongly held Naga position. It was in this action that Ran Bahadur Thapa was awarded Kirti Chakra, the first gallantry award won by the unit after Independence.

Arun was looking forward to commanding this unit, when to his surprise, he received orders in August 1971 to take over command of 4/5 GR at Zakhama in Nagaland. A week later, the unit was moved to Panchgram, West of Silchar. His disappointment in not getting the command of his old unit was soon overcome as 4/5 GR had earned a name for itself in counter-insurgency operations by capturing well known insurgency leaders. In the second week of November, orders were received to capture an enemy defended locality at Atgram which was about five km inside the Pakistan territory. It had been developed by the Pakistan Army as a strong point to deny approach to the strategically important town of Sylhet, and was being used by them for sabotage activities. It had cement concrete bunkers supported by machine guns and RCL guns. River Surma was the international border, and there were a string of border posts manned by military and para-military troops about a kilometre deep.

The unit infiltrated through the border posts, arrived at the bank of River Surma at 8 pm on 20 November, and crossed over in inflatable boats without alerting the enemy. Arun had a few rounds of artillery fired on the objective, and the enemy opened up with Medium Machine Guns, thus revealing their location. The Gorkhas charged with their *khukri*-s and the famous nerve chilling war cry *Āyo Gorkhali*. There was blood bath all over with the Gorkhas flashing their *khukri*-s. Arun entered one of the big bunkers and realised that the enemy company commander was lying

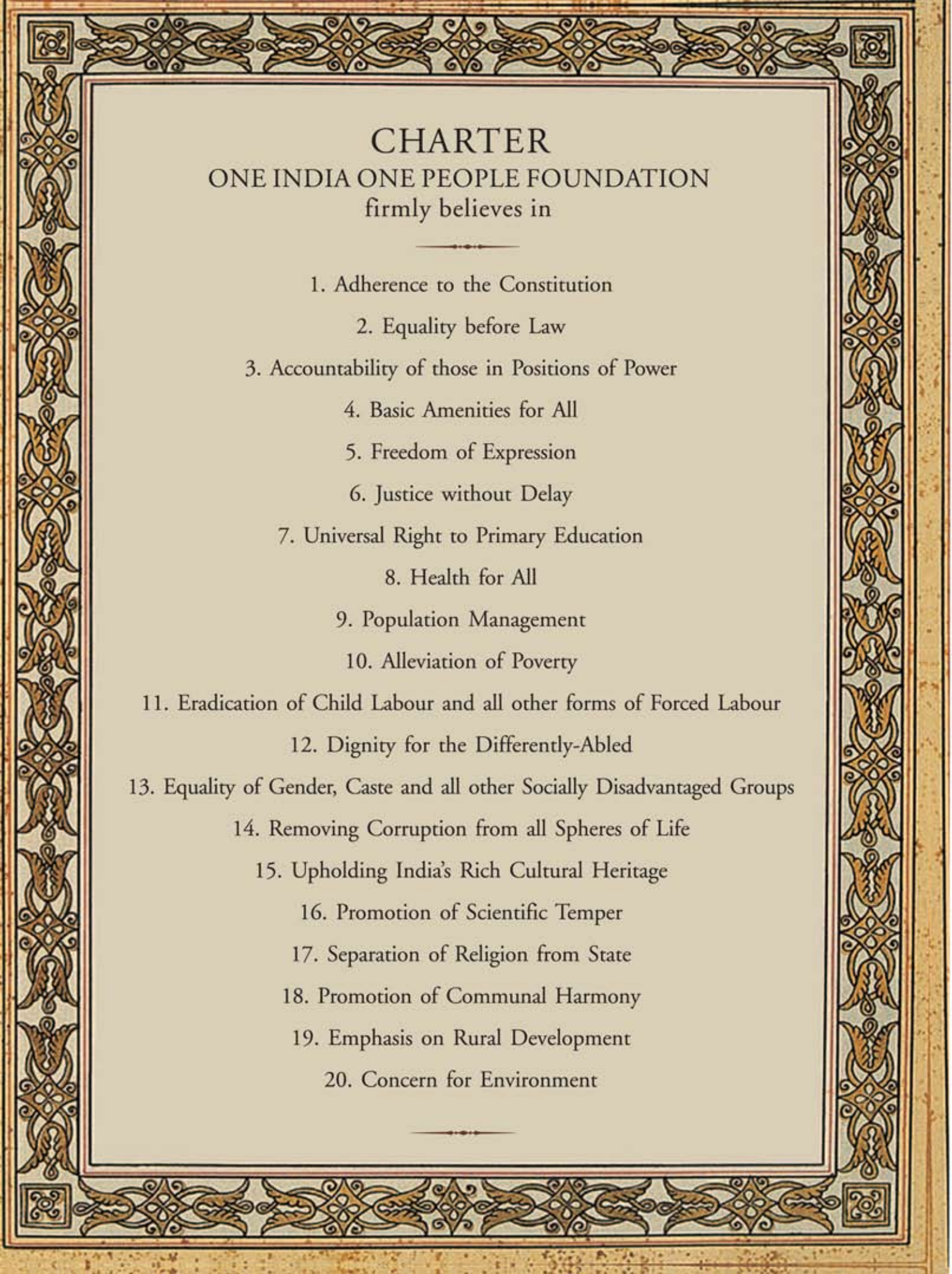
there. Posing as dead. As Arun went closer to him, one of the officers shouted a warning that the rival officer was trying to pick up a gun lying next to him. Arun rushed forward and grappled with the enemy company commander, Major Alvi. Alvi was overcome and killed. The unit lost two officers, one JCO and three soldiers. The enemy company of 31 Punjab Regiment was wiped out. Rifleman Dil Bahadur Chhetri was awarded MVC and Lt Hawa Singh was decorated with Vir Chakra (VrC) (posthumous).

The battalion, part of 59 Mountain Brigade, occupied Sagarnal. Attack by 6 Rajput on Ghazipur on 3 December failed, and 4/5 GR was ordered to attack Ghazipur on 4 December. The Pakistanis had become alert due to the attack on 3 December. It was a tough battle and the Ghazipur Tea Estate was captured early morning. One officer and ten soldiers were killed. Pakistan had suffered heavy casualties. 4/5 GR had a depleted strength of 50 to 60 soldiers in place of 120. But their spirit was high due to the recent victories, and they got ready for the next task of Sylhet, which had been developed as a fortress by the Pakistan Army.

Sylhet appeared to be unoccupied and a heli-borne operation was planned. 4/5 GR was heli-lifted on 7 December and were welcomed by enemy fire and shouts of their war cry – *Allah-o-Akbar*. The response of *Ayo Gorkhali* kept them away, and they did not even try to evict the Gorkhas. The Brigade Commander ensured supply of urgent medicines and one helicopter flown by Flying Officer Sharma took a few casualties. He had a brush with Pakistani soldiers, and was awarded the VrC. On 16 December, Pakistani soldiers approached with a white flag and details of surrender were discussed. 107 officers, 219 JCOs and 6190 soldiers surrendered. Lt. Col. (later brigadier) Harollikar was awarded Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) for outstanding courage and leadership. He settled down in Pune and passed away in 2008. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)





# CHARTER

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firmly believes in

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



# WHO AM I?

*Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?*

*Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1930 – February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE