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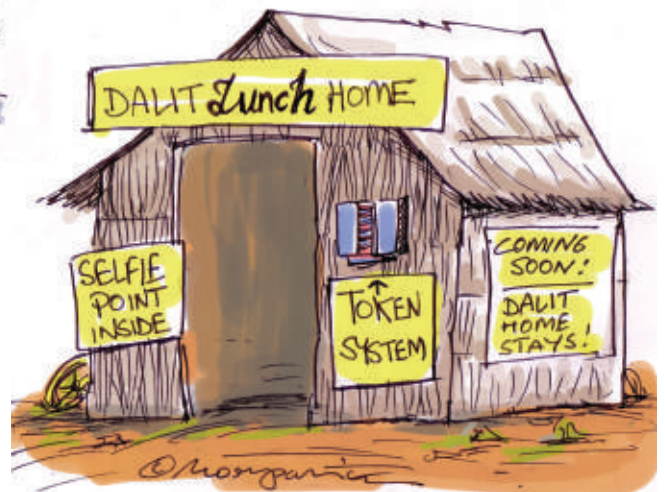
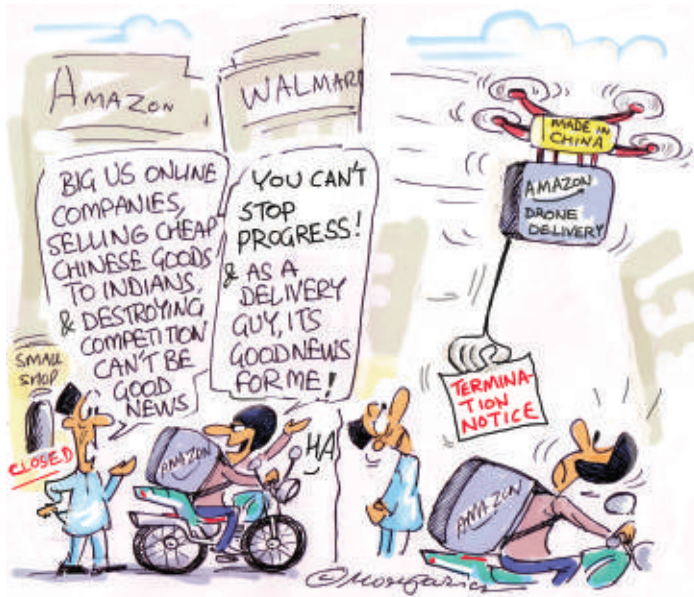
THE FRUIT OF SUMMER

GOING TO THE CAMP

SUMMER HUES, PERFECT PALETTES!

FACE TO FACE

**BHAGYASHRI VARTAK**





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# Summer blooms in Bangalore

*Come summer, and the garden city of Bangalore is ablaze with flowers of various trees blooming and shedding their flowers, often carpeting the roads and avenues.*

**Usha Hariprasad** chronicles some of the most common trees.



The 'Pride of India' is the state tree of Maharashtra

**B**ANGALORE is beautiful. The streets in the city have bright-coloured blooms throughout the year. Perhaps it starts with the golden yellow Tabebuia, followed by the Brazilian mauve Jacaranda, and bursts of flamboyant red Gulmohar in April-May. The sweet smelling Magnolia Champaca and the fragrant Frangipani fill the air just before the rains and even after that, not to mention bright yellow Copper Pods that spill over the streets. The city also sees spells of Peltophorum, Dolichandrone in between. Till recently I assumed that these blooms were very much part of the urban landscape of the city. It is then that I came across the term 'arborist', and their role in designing a city.

Wikipedia defines Arboriculture as the study and management of trees and woody plants. An arboriculturist or an arborist has a thorough information of trees alongside having specialised knowledge about landscape architecture, forestry etc. The arborist plays an important role in designing cities. Here is why.

## Selection of trees for cities

Trees are an integral part of the urban landscape. They beautify a city, attract birds, insects, and add to a city's charm. As they improve air quality and provide shade, they play a vital role in climate proofing the locality. However, trees cannot be haphazardly planted in a townscape. Not all trees survive well in streets, some may not tolerate pollution, while some canopy trees may interfere with wiring. There are some trees that can become invasive and replace the native vegetation as well. An arborist takes all this into account.

Randomly introducing foreign plants for ornamental purposes can also create havoc. Exotic varieties though add to the charm, greatly fail when chosen for avenues. Their root system is not strong and easily fall during monsoon. Thus, native trees are more favourable. They withstand the onslaught of monsoons, provide shade and fruits, nectar for birds and insects. Native trees like jackfruit, mango, pongamia, neem, banyan and peepal





**Copper Pod**

make good candidates. In divided highways smaller trees fare better like singapore cherry, paarijat (Coral Jasmine).

#### **Serial blossoming in Bangalore**

The greening of Bangalore, especially the serial blossoming in Bangalore, is all thanks to the vision of these arborists. Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel was one such horticulturist with a vision. He was a German horticulturist who worked in the Royal Botanical Gardens of Kew. From 1908 to 1932 he worked for Mysore Maharaja and contributed a lot to the green cover in Bangalore - he was Superintendent of Lalbagh during this period. Prior to that he had worked at the Botanical Gardens at Baroda and Ooty. Until his death in 1956, he worked in the city, planting flowering and avenue trees. He is buried at a cemetery in Hosur Road. The serial blossoming in the city was his vision. He selected seasonal flowering trees that bloomed sequentially so the city avenues were never bereft of blooms during any season.

Here are some of the summer blooms in the city that continue to survive in the city.

**Pride of India:** The botanical name of the plant is *Lagerstroemia speciosa*. Other names of this tree are Jarul, Queen Crape Myrtle. It is the state tree of Maharashtra. Quite a number of these trees are present in the Lalbagh Park in Bangalore. Though its natural habitat seems to be in swamps, it grows quite well in the city putting out pink, purple flowers. If you observe the tree in full bloom you will notice that the older flowers have a bleached look and turn pale, while the younger flowers at the tip are fresh pink. Thus you see the tree in different hues. In Bangalore it works well as an avenue tree, providing shade and flowering during the hot months from March to June. The wood is resistant to water, tolerant to drought, and is often harvested for its timber. As the roots are dense, it is quite effective in preventing soil erosion.

**Rusty Shield Bearer:** The botanical name of this



**Tulip Tree**

tree is *Peltophorum pterocarpum*, while the common name of is Copper Pod, Yellow Gulmohar etc. The flowering season is between March to September. The yellow flower bunches bloom at the end of branches and is a welcome sight. As it forms a huge canopy and also lets grass grow beneath it, it is a popular choice for gardens and avenues. The flower sprays however are very fragile, and do not stay in the tree for long. A slight wind or rain, and you can see a carpet of flowers beneath the tree.

**Golden Shower tree:** This tree lives up to its name - the rich golden yellow flowers are quite an attractive sight in the city. The common name of this tree is Amaltas, and it flowers in the months between March to May in Bangalore. Apart from providing shade it is said to decrease temperature and bring improvements in air quality. The cylindrical pods hang in clusters and contain round seeds in them.

**Tulip Tree:** The botanical name of the tree is *Spathodea Campanulata*. The Tulip tree is a well-known avenue tree in the city. The bell shaped red-orange flowers never go unnoticed in the streets. The other common names of the tree are Fountain tree, Flame tree, etc. Though it is of African origin, it has adapted well in the city and commonly flowers and fruits between October to January, and August to September. The tree is also known as Squirt tree, children are often found pressing the hollow flower buds that are filled with liquid, and hence the name. It is said that Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel is buried beneath this tree, as he was quite fond of the tulips.

**Temple tree:** The botanical names are *Plumeria alba* and *Rubra*. This tree is known by multiple names - Pagoda tree, Frangipani. The white, yellow and pink fragrant flowers are most often planted near temples. It is also a symbol of immortality - the tree blooms even when uprooted. Thus it is often planted near tombs. They have a flowering period that could last from February to October.

**“The greening of Bangalore, especially the serial blossoming in Bangalore, is all thanks to the vision of these arborists. Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel was one such horticulturist with a vision.”**



**The Botanical Garden in Bangalore**

**Gulmohar:** The botanical name is *Delonix regia*. This tree from Madagascar is very much a part of the Bangalore landscape. Come April, the Gulmohar bursts forth in red flowers. The petals of this flower are spoon shaped and the bigger petals have yellow and white stripes.

**Flame of the Forest:** The botanical name of this tree is *Butea monosperma*. The tree lives up to its name, bursting out in orange flames in the hot months. Commonly known as Muttuga or Palash, it attracts a number of birds and butterflies into its vicinity. The flowers have a curved keel - hence the tree is popularly known as Parrot tree as well. The bright orange flowers are also used to make colours played during Holi.



**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.



# The fruit of summer

**Mamta Chitnis Sen** deciphers the popularity of the summer fruit mango, and its distinct cult status in the eastern and western regions of India.

As summer approaches the Indian continent, the first question on everyone's mind is 'When are the mangoes coming?' For, every Indian firmly believes that summers are all about mangoes and mangoes alone. The essence of a perfect Indian summer lies in the number of mangoes consumed!

Every summer, mango markets across the country go on an overdrive, sourcing and selling the fruit to its avid consumers. Although the Alphonso variety tops the list, other commercially bred kinds of mangoes too boast of their own following. Though it is popular knowledge that the Alphonso mango or *hapus* (as it's called in Maharashtra) is the king of mangoes, there are also several other varieties of mangoes in the country that too demand equal recognition and respect.

While steering away from controversy over which mango is the best in which state, it would be much easier, for now, to narrow down and make a fair comparison between the fruit in the two opposite regions of the country, namely, the western (the Konkan area of Maharashtra from where the famed Alphonso hails), and the eastern region of Bengal which lays claim to having cultivated the famed Himsagar and Malda mangoes.

To begin with, mangoes bred in both the western and eastern part of India boast of a distinct taste and flavour, each different and unique in its own way.



The famed *hapus* of Maharashtra

## The tale of Alphonso

We have all heard about the history of the making and the naming of the Alphonso mango after Alfonso De Alburquerque, the Portuguese military general who led several invasions in the 1600s, including that to Goa which was occupied by Portugal for a long time. The fruit first came to Goa and from here travelled further down to the districts of Konkan, Ratnagiri and to various southern parts of India. Interestingly, several parts of the Konkan region now boast of their own Alphonso or *hapus*, the Devgad *hapus*, the Sindhudurg *hapus*, the Ratnagiri *hapus* etc.

According to a recent news report, the long ongoing battle over acquiring of the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the Alphonso was put to rest by the Patents Office when the latter convinced the districts of Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri to share the tags between them than fighting over its exclusivity. The GI is a sign that is put on products that originate from a specific region and possesses specific qualities and repute prominent to that region alone. Although the regions have agreed for now, it remains to be seen whether they plan to work together in this effort.

Interestingly in the Konkan region, as per reports published in the media, the market for the Alphonso mango is massive and huge. Reports suggest that annually, the Konkan region which has nearly over a crore of hectares of mango orchards produces mangoes worth ₹30 billion, half of which are exported.

Not many are aware that within the interiors of Konkan region alone, there are a variety of mangoes being bred by non-commercial horticulturists in their own backyard, which are later on sold in the weekly village markets or beside the national highways to travellers. The figures for the sale of these remains unaccounted for — especially of the sale of varieties of the Rajapuri which is available towards the beginning of the monsoons across the state. The unripe ones are used mostly in sweet pickles.



A tree laden with mangoes in the Konkan

### The eastern story

Interestingly, towards the east of India too, mango remains one of the most sought after fruits in the state after the sweet and pulpy lychee. In West Bengal, the famed Himsagar mango enjoys cult status among other breeds of the fruit. According to authors S.K. Mitra, S. Mitra, B. Ghosh and P.K. Pathak who have penned the book *Mango Cultivars and Hybrids Grown in West Bengal*, mango is the most important fruit of West Bengal state, occupying about 80.90 thousand hectares, which is more than 41 per cent of the total area under fruits. Unlike the Alphonso which entered Indian shores only about the 16th century, mangoes in Bengal have found prominence from as early as the seventh century, courtesy the many nawabs and zamindars who ruled here.

The district of Murshidabad is known to have introduced and nurtured over 100 varieties of mangoes, (many grafted) under the eye of the Nawabs who dominated the area until the colonial rule took over. The Nawabs were known to cultivate mango orchards as part of their culture, and even today one can find these mango orchards spread across some of their properties that lie empty and forgotten.

In Murshidabad district alone, mangoes are grown over 26,000 hectares. The ones sold include the commercially grown varieties of Langra, Fazli, Champa, Bhabani

and many more. The Lakshman Bhog mango which is attractive in colour and having a sweet taste tops the list of the most coveted mangoes in the state. Bengal's famed Himsagar though is considered to be the most superior of all the fruits, both in terms of taste and the exquisite aroma it generates. Interestingly, Himsagar here is regarded as the king of mangoes.

Devoid of fibre, the pulpy fruit which is golden yellow in colour, has inspired several poets to pen down poetry and dedicate songs to it too. The fruit is known to be ripe and rich for consumption only in the second week of May, till the end of June. It is grown in the districts of Hooghly, Nadia and North and South 24 Parganas, and interestingly, enjoys the GI tag as well.

Similarly, mangoes cultivated in the district of Malda, specially the famed Malda mango, enjoys equal prominence amongst mango lovers. And every summer, local markets in the district are brimming with buyers of the fruit from all corners of the country.

Last but not the least, irrespective of which region the mango hails from, the fact remains that this summer fruit is an integral part of our culture. Without the Indian mango, one surely cannot get through the long and hot Indian summer for sure!



A mango orchard in Senbadi in Hooghly district West Bengal



A journalist for over 15 years, Mamta Chitnis Sen has worked with reputed publications like *Mid-Day*, *Society* and her writings and columns have been published in *The Sunday Observer* and *The Daily*. She also worked with the Sunday Guardian and handled their Mumbai bureau for eight years reporting not only extensively on various political parties but also on crime, politics, religion, art, community, human interest, and general news. She headed *Dignity Dialogue*, India's foremost magazine exclusively for the 50 plus age group as the Executive Editor. She presently handles Media Advocacy for *Child Rights and You (CRY)* – an NGO working for the rights of underprivileged children in India covering the states of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat. Mamta is also an artist having studied painting and ceramics from Sir J J School of Art, and has exhibited in various groups shows in India and abroad.



# Oh, those summers!

**Mamta Chitnis Sen** reminisces about the good old days when summer vacations meant visiting relatives, and creating memories for a lifetime.

SUMMER holidays as I recall, were all about temporary migration to the homes of relatives residing faraway. An out-of-town trip to a village or a city, depending on the residence of the host, was on the agenda of every Indian family. Unfortunately, times have changed.

With the slow decline of the joint family system, families today are spending their Indian summers in overpriced and overhyped crowded hill stations in the country and abroad. Today, nuclear families flush with dual incomes, are opting to vacation in exotic destinations. So much so that families prefer showcasing their tailor-made holidays complete with picturesque movie-like locales, on social media.

Interestingly, summer vacationing in India has become more of a competitive affair. Vacationing in the homes of your near and dear ones has become passé. Renting out someone else's home via Airbnb and Homestays appear to be much more fashionable and in demand.

## Visiting the 'native place'

I still recall the time when as children we used to visit the homes of our relatives in the summer holidays to bond with family members over games, afternoon siestas, and of course enjoying the many seasonal fruits that grew in the backyard. While I would spend one part of my summer with my maternal family, the remaining would be spent with my paternal ones. Believe it or not, it was later in life that I realised that these visits unknowingly laid the foundation for my love for travel, good food and good conversation. My summer vacations groomed me, bit by bit, into adulthood. They also helped in understanding life when things often didn't go as planned.

My strongest memories of my summer vacations remain those spent with two men who influenced my life to a great deal. Gaja (short for Gajanan) *mama* was a strapping handsome young man in his early forties, who had given up a flourishing career in photography due to an asthma problem that refused to go as he grew older. Gaja *mama* was in fact my mother's uncle. The second amongst four siblings (three brothers and a sister), he spent most of his time at home taking care of his siblings who were well into their thirties, which included a visually challenged younger brother, and a sister who suffered from minor health issues every

now and then. None of the siblings married and hence found companionship with each other, waltzing happily through life. They lived in a middle-class nondescript neighbourhood next to the ruins of the legendary Vasai Fort.

Their home was simple and wasn't much to look at except for the large balconies at the entrance and the exit. In the summers, when I would visit Gaja *mama*, I would see him lovingly take care of this home - he cooked, he cleaned, he gardened, he sewed and embroidered the curtains and bedsheets. His place of pride was the garden he nurtured, with different varieties of plants and flowers.

Gaja *mama* remained a bachelor his whole life, but he took good care of my cousins and I, like a seasoned parent. In the evenings, after treating us to the local delicacy, the *golas* (ice candies), he took us for walks at the fort. Here he would explain the history behind each and every stone in the ruins that lay around. The desolate fort, against the backdrop of the sunset, and the stories he told, would appear to come to life.

He also made it necessary for us to learn to stitch small handkerchiefs on his old, hand-operated Singer sewing machine. He saw to it that we had our meals on time, and that we made it a point to read every classic English novel before the vacation ended. He introduced me to the art of gardening and the pleasure that comes in seeing the first bud of plant that shoots up to the sky.

Gaja *mama* who loved his job immensely and had to give it all up at a young age, instead of being bitter with life, tried to find joy in the simple daily rituals of life. He believed that when life pushes you to a corner, you mustn't

believe it to be the end. There will always be something else to live for and look forward to.

The other man who was a great influence on me during my visits every summer was my father's younger brother, Ashok, whom we all fondly called Bhaiyya *kaka*. A banker whose main job was sanctioning loans to farmers, Bhaiyya *kaka*, bored with the red tape he was subjected to in his line of work, quit his job one fine day, only to retreat into the jungles of the Western Ghats to convert a 26-acre mountain into a paradise.

For someone who had never farmed in his life, he soon began to grow mangoes, cashews, chickoos, jackfruits, lemons and every other fruit and vegetable one



The Vasai Fort ruins hold many memories

could think of, on his farm. Not only did he experiment in creating new varieties of mangoes, but he also tried his hand at landscaping his farm in different hues and designs. It wasn't long before agriculture experts and students from agriculture colleges began making a beeline to his farm and him to study and witness his magic first hand.

Bhaiyya *kaka* too cooked, cleaned and gardened. He also took care to see that the many lands left by his ancestors to the family were not encroached upon by anti-social elements. He read voraciously and had an impeccable taste for music – every morning we were woken up to the mesmerising voice of classical singer Kishori Amonkar. A bachelor till the end, and though he largely lived alone on the huge farm with only his music and books for company, he never seemed lonely. He familiarised me with the writings of William Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and believe it or not, the songs of pop singer Samantha Fox too.

My time spent each summer with these two single men was an education in itself. Despite not having women by their side, they ran their lives effortlessly, at the same time lending a helping hand to whoever approached them.

They did not believe in mediocrity, and excelled in whatever they did. These two men -- one young and one old, defied their age and societal norms to live the life the way they wanted to, while not forgetting to pass on the values and experiences they had learnt from the generation before them, to us. Both men passed away in their mid-seventies, and their death left a void in me.

### The ravages of time

Meanwhile Bhaiyya *kaka's* farm is overgrown and is a jungle again. Ironically a court battle is now raging amongst his heirs for ownership of the land he cultivated his dream on. On the other hand Gaja *mama's* Vasai home lies empty, shut and forgotten by the family, surrounded by tall, ugly, concrete skyscrapers.

I finally had a chance to visit Gaja *mama's* home with my two teenage daughters this summer, after a gap of decades. Strangely, it wasn't what I had been describing to them over the years. The house was derelict and falling in places, while the garden, which he had cherished, had long died. The only thing remaining were the memories he had left behind.



A journalist for over 15 years, Mamta Chitnis Sen has worked with reputed publications like *Mid-Day*, *Society* and her writings and columns have been published in *The Sunday Observer* and *The Daily*. She also worked with the Sunday Guardian and handled their Mumbai bureau for eight years reporting not only extensively on various political parties but also on crime, politics, religion, art, community, human interest, and general news. She headed *Dignity Dialogue*, India's foremost magazine exclusively for the 50 plus age group as the Executive Editor. She presently handles Media Advocacy for *Child Rights and You (CRY)* – an NGO working for the rights of underprivileged children in India covering the states of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat. Mamta is also an artist having studied painting and ceramics from Sir J J School of Art, and has exhibited in various groups shows in India and abroad.

## WHO AM I?





# Going to the camp

*Today, when trips to the 'native place' are just a part of the nostalgic past, summer camps provide children the much needed getaway. **Ashwin Honawar** provides some insights.*

**T**ILL recent years, camping in India was confined to school students enrolled as Scouts and Guides. Later, camping was something limited to female and male cadets of the National Cadet Corps (NCC). For a vast majority of students, summer camps existed only on American TV serials and cartoons. In fact, camping was considered alien to this culture and viewed upon as an activity enjoyed only by students in the so-called developed world.

Thankfully, this perception has changed over the years; several tour operators singly or jointly with educational institutes in India, conduct summer camps. Priced very affordably, these summer camps help children develop several elements of their character that would otherwise take years to build.

## Popularity of summer camps

There are several reasons why summer camps are fast gaining ground in India. The main factor of course remains the innate craze for anything '*phoren*' that continues to haunt typical Bharatiya *nagariks* (citizens). Students and their parents somewhat believe this Western practice is beneficial, since TV shows depict summer camps as a glamorous activity.

Rapid urbanisation of India is the second reason for the burgeoning popularity of summer camps. With ties to native villages weakening over the years, the age old tradition of visiting relatives during summer is almost extinct. With both spouses working, parents don't have much time to take children on holidays to distant destinations during summer vacations.

Given this scenario, students tend to become couch potatoes, glued to TV sets, computers and increasingly now, smart phones. The hot and humid Indian summer serves as an excuse to shun outdoor physical activities for the air conditioned comforts of home.

Given these circumstances, there is an inclination to opt for summer camps rather than spending the entire duration of the vacation at home. Further, there are numerous types of summer camps offered by operators across India. Children can select a theme based on hobbies, academic or personal objectives.

## Types of summer camps

Many operators across the country offer themed summer camps.

**Sports:** Sports camps are most popular among Indian kids. This is because taboos and inhibitions related to making a career as a sportsperson has faded over the years. Indeed, playing sports is now viewed as an excellent gateway to get prized jobs in central and state government



organisations, and the private sector.

**Arts:** For students inclined towards making a career in the performing arts as well as fine arts, a variety of themed camps are now offered. Art camps include training sessions, lectures and discussions that teach attendees to modulate their voice, learn or fine-tune their skills in playing a musical instrument, or acquire skills in painting, making portraits, sculptures and photography.

**Adventure:** Adventure camps rank third on the list of popularity among Indians. Operators take a group of students for trekking, hiking, wild-life spotting and mountaineering camps at select locations in the country. They have excellent arrangements and skilled trainers who accompany students on these adventure tours. However, a student has to prove medical fitness before enrolling for such camps, which is a fair requirement.

**Spiritual:** In an era where parents are unable to impart knowledge about a particular faith to their children for any reasons, spiritual camps at religious places are also fairly popular today. These camps are generally conducted at retreat centers and in the vicinity of shrines. They include teachings on religious scriptures and participation in ceremonies associated with the faith. Spiritual camps are intended for students who wish to gain insights into customs and traditions associated with their faith.

**Tech:** As the term suggests, these summer camps are conducted by operators to help students keep themselves abreast with latest advances in Information Technology. Abroad, tech camps also cover some basics of engineering such as maintaining automobiles or civil construction, the trend has yet to arrive on Indian shores though. However, IT related camps are useful for every student who aspires to make a career in this lucrative field.

**Educational:** Educational summer camps are on a variety of themes. Some operators take students to places of historical interest. Others are held at distant geographical locations to enable students learn about topography and demographics of a place. Yet others involve astronomy and mathematics, among subjects.

**Special needs:** Operators have special camps for students with special needs. These include camps for visually impaired or the mentally challenged. These camps are highly specialised since trainers and guides are skilled in caring for persons with special needs.



### The benefits of summer camps

Summer camps teach children a variety of skills.

**Problem solving skills:** Since all camps are conducted away from home, students acquire excellent problem solving skills. Children are left to find solutions for problems that do not require serious intervention by adults. Hence, they learn how to resolve problems without depending upon a parent or teacher.

**Independence and interdependence:** Summer camps give students their first taste of independence, away from parents, and with peers. It enables them to learn that despite independence, human lives are interdependent. This is through group projects, team play and team work included in camp activities.

**Acceptance of cultures:** Camps sound the death knell for xenophobic behavior among children. Left alone to mingle with peers from different backgrounds and cultures, they develop a sense of acceptance and tolerance. This is very essential for anyone living in a cosmopolitan city or wishes to study at foreign universities in future. Mingling with people of other cultures enables students to appreciate differences.



**Social awareness:** Thanks to team work and group projects included as part of camp activities, students develop Emotional Intelligence (EI) – a skill that cannot be learned anywhere. EI makes them socially aware about rights and wrongs. It helps them sense mood of the others and respond accordingly. EI is pivotal to developing leadership abilities.

**Physical health, survival skills:** It goes without saying that summer camps promote better health among students. Since every camp involves many activities, children remain physically active during summer. To some degree, camps highlight benefits of an active life over a sedentary lifestyle.

Children are also taught a lot of survival skills such as dousing fire, rudiments of first aid, swimming, fishing, climbing trees, searching for edible fruits and so on. Camps are often held at locations free of environmental pollution, and hence promote healthier living. They make students aware of differences between a clean, natural habitat, and crowded concrete jungles.

There is also much emphasis on diet. At camps, healthy meals that are nutritious but bereft of high fat and sugars, are served. Consequently, students who attend summer camps develop better dietary habits and control.

Surprisingly, summer camps in India are not priced exorbitantly. Other than the cost of travel to the destination, other expenses are somewhat similar to what a child would otherwise spend at home, including phone calls, electricity utilised for powering a computer and TV, fast food and other modern big-babysitting techniques adopted by working parents. It would be fair enough to say that summer camps are an ideal getaway for students and their parents.



Ashwin Honawar is a journalist, content writer and blogger based in Mumbai. He has worked as a journalist with reputed newspapers, TV channels and digital media in India and abroad over the last 25 years. He has varied interests and writes on diverse topics.



# Summer hues, perfect palettes!

*Summer is here and with it, summer fashion for those oh so sultry days. Ketaki Nair gives us the current trends and on dits about fun fashion and makeup.*

IT'S finally summer! That time of the year when the Mumbai weather stops slowly cooking you and instead drops you straight into the fire. You sizzle and sweat, but every now and then you're suddenly thrown into a deep freeze — courtesy, the increasingly omnipresent air conditioning. Crafting and maintaining a perfect look in this kind of a paradoxical environment may seem daunting, to say the least. However, there are some tips out there to make it just a little bit easier for you.

## How to glow from within

The first step towards achieving a perfect summer look is achieving perfect skin — or something as close to that as possible. The excessive sweating that comes hand in hand with the rising temperature makes most people avoid moisturiser like the plague. Certainly, it might seem like adding fuel to the fire. But sweat does not equal hydration. Depriving your skin of real moisture will only turn it lifeless and lacklustre. It's extremely important to moisturise once a day, if not twice. Remember, generously hydrating your skin is the best thing you can do to prevent it — and your makeup — from withering in the air conditioning. If your skin is naturally oily or your perspiration is beginning to exceed your patience, switch to a gel moisturiser in the morning, preferably something with SPF. Even us melanin-rich folk need sun protection, especially during these bright days, and an SPF loaded moisturiser is the perfect way to get it. And don't forget a night cream! All that air conditioning is sucking the life out of your skin unbeknownst to you, and a heavy-duty nighttime moisturiser helps your skin heal itself while you hit the hay. A sleeping mask, like Innisfree's wine jelly sleeping pack, works just as well. A regular daily routine of face wash and moisturiser is often all you need, but the heat and irritation of summer might induce a few — or a few dozen — breakouts. One great tip is using pure aloe vera gel on any zits or irritated skin. Nine out of ten times, your skin will calm down overnight.

## Perfecting your makeup

Summer should be all about beautiful, glowing makeup looks that don't dull in air conditioned rooms or melt off your face while you walk across a street at noon. And with the right products and the right application, this is entirely possible.

The first step towards this is a strong base. Gorgeous makeup looks even better when your canvas is perfect, but sometimes your irritated skin just can't be quelled. That's where foundation comes in! Freshly moisturised skin might not need a primer, and it might be wiser to ditch it in this humid weather. So wash your face thoroughly, apply your moisturiser, and then begin your makeup application. Now, it's hot. Nobody wants to wear a full face of heavy, full-coverage foundation.



For a perfect base, you only need this if you're dealing with some truly cruel skin. Otherwise, you can manage with a light foundation, a CC cream or a sheer skin tint, or even just a bit of concealer dabbed on strategically. If your skin is going through a rough patch, try to invest in a foundation or concealer that works to minimise your breakouts while hiding them (like Clinique's acne solutions clearing concealer).

Apply the foundation to your face and, starting from the centre of your face, blend the product outwards using your foundation brush, until it's evenly distributed. Remember, this step isn't necessary, and you only require it if you'd like a layer of overall coverage. Then, grab your favourite concealer and dot it under your eyes and over any blemishes or scars that are peeking out through your foundation. Maybelline's Instant Age Rewind concealer is a good choice.

I personally am a big believer in just using your fingers to blend concealer — it's fast, free and you are spared the arduous process of cleansing another makeup brush. Use your ring finger so that you can be as gentle with your skin as possible, and soon you'll have natural looking, yet flawless skin.

Now for the fun stuff! Let's go over a really natural, timeless look that translates from summer day to sultry night quite easily. Really glowing skin is perfect for the summer. Moisturiser and a combination of a good foundation and concealer promises radiance to at least a certain extent. But to really shine, a good highlighter is essential. Different highlighters can give you anything from a subtle glow to something positively blinding. I recommend leaning towards a subtle glow for the daytime, for a megawatt highlighter can result in something a little too shiny in our weather.

Liberally dust or blend in highlighter over your cheekbones using a fan brush, and do the same more subtly on your Cupid's bow, over your brow bone and even down the bridge of your nose if you want to go all out. Champagne highlighters in particular can give you a really lovely, radiant, summery look.

For your eye makeup, primer is key. Excessive sweating increases the likelihood of your mascara and *kajal* melting off tenfold. No one wants black spiders beneath their eyes at the end of day. So a quick layer of eyeshadow primer and even a mascara primer, especially on your lower lashes, is imperative. You could choose to opt for waterproof eye makeup instead, but waterproof makeup is harder to remove, and all that rubbing can cause your skin to sag and your eyes to crease more in the future. So it's best to use a primer.

Next, apply eyeshadow. Using an eyeshadow brush, sweep on a sunset toned hue to the majority of your lid, blending out. Use a darker shade at the crease and blend that shade into your lash line as well. Blending is extremely important; it can be the difference between a gorgeous ombré and a few awkward splotches of colour. This can be done with bronzes and browns and golds as well. All these shades will result in natural, sun-kissed eyes. A combination of gold and forest green, navy and pale blue, and bolder pinks can be worn for a more dazzling nighttime look.

After eyeshadow, you can decide whether or not to apply a thin line of eyeliner or *kajal*. If your eyeshadow was on the darker side and you'd blended that into your lash line, liner is unnecessary for a natural look. Instead you can simply move on to a single coat of mascara. Jiggle your mascara wand at the roots of your lash and then sweep it outward, for a long lasting curl, and a natural effect. You needn't stick to plain black and brown this summer either. The ancient trend of coloured mascara has returned to high fashion, so you can pair your bronzy eyelids with gold mascara for a bolder effect. But stick to a single coat, at least during the day.

For eyebrows, stick to a natural yet structured look. A good brow gel or a wax (for example, Benefit's Wow Brows) can be used alone instead of adding pencils and powders to the mix. Brush a thin line of wax through the bottom of your eyebrows, following their natural shape for the most part, but accentuating the arch. Then lightly sweep through it with the gel or the wax until you're pleased with how full your brows look.

For lips, less is more. Regularly exfoliated (just gently scrub your lips with a toothbrush every few days), well hydrated lips are all you really need to complete your summer look. If you simply must add a dash of colour, nude lipsticks or tinted balms or a bit of gloss are the way to go. Of course, at night you can switch to plums or reds or any other shade you'd like.

And that's it! This look can be a great staple throughout the summer.



### Summer outfits

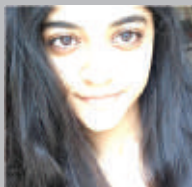
Summer 2018 is all about ruffles, denim, checks, bold colours, sequins, pastels, sheers, and ridiculously enough, plastic. Plastic is arguably the biggest fashion trend of 2018, but it might be a little unwearable in India. Kim Kardashian's Cinderella-inspired plastic heels would turn into little greenhouses for our feet in Mumbai weather.

Plastic handbags might be the only possible way to venture into this particular fashion trend, but no matter, there are a myriad other ways to dress in style this summer.

Incorporating checks into any outfit is simple and actually quite practical. Light checked shirts, checked sundresses and adorable checked caps are all perfect for this summer. Jeans and denim shorts are always in vogue and perfect for summer, especially denim shorts. Dark wash denim is on trend and looks cute with practically anything.

After years of black and white, bright colours have been flooding the runways and stores. Add a touch of red and yellow to your wardrobe this summer. Jewel bright crop tops and tank tops can be paired with versatile dark denim. Along with bright colours, pastels have also made a comeback, as seen on the catwalks of Hermès, Victoria Beckham, and many others. A light ice cream hued blazer can be perfect for those frozen restaurants, and candy coloured tops or pants complement denim or black very nicely. If wearing pastels isn't really for you, you could grab a cute handbag or tote in a pale shade instead.

Ruffles? Sequins? Sheers? That all might seem a bit much for the streets of India. While a sheer minidress might not cut it for you, throwing on a dress with sheer cutouts or a sheer white wrap might be perfect for a summer dinner party. Metallic, sequined dresses would be perfect for clubbing or anything of the sort, and sequins can be incorporated into daily wear by adding a sparkly bag to your collection. Ruffles too might unfortunately have to be absent from our everyday outfits, but a ruffled statement dress would wow at any big party this summer.



**Ketaki Nair is a student in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade at the Cathedral and John Connon School, Mumbai. Words are her weapon of choice, and she enjoys writing on subjects varying from socio-political and cultural behaviour, to fashion and make up.**



# Summertime blues

*Summer is a much awaited season as it denotes vacations, travel and leisure. Yet, it also comes with its own set of health risks. Dr. T.D. Rajan provides guidelines to stay healthy this summer.*

**S**UMMER is the time when days are long and the warmth of the sun heats up the environment. In the northern hemisphere summer arrives during the middle of the year, whereas in the southern half, it begins from December. While it is the time for school vacation in most parts of the country, it is also the time for several health related problems. It is important to be aware of these conditions, so that some of them can be minimised. Children often play long hours in the sun and may forget the rules of hygiene. Also, recreational activities like sports, swimming and physically grueling outdoor activities undertaken during the summer help the spread of germs. During intense summers, food poisoning, heat stroke, sunburn and prickly heat are common. Viral infections like jaundice, conjunctivitis (sore eyes) and chicken pox are also seen in summer. Some of the conditions have been elaborated here.

## Sunburn

Normal skin has got enough capacity to withstand moderate degrees of heat and sunlight. This ability varies with skin colour and sensitivity. Due to prolonged exposure to ultraviolet rays from the afternoon sun, people may suffer intense burns, making the exposed areas of the body red, dry, itchy, and it starts peeling after a few days. In some cases, fine, fluid filled eruptions or frank blisters may appear. In toxic sunburn, the person may feel feverish and may develop chills.

The best way to prevent sunburn is to cover oneself with long-sleeved clothes and by using sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher twenty minutes before venturing outside. People who are prone to sunlight induced allergic skin rash should wear clothes which have close-knit weave. Using an umbrella or a broad brimmed hat when you are on a holiday is essential for people who feel the heat strongly. Drinking sufficient water to keep the moisture of the skin intact is equally important. The peeling skin can be protected by Vaseline or coconut oil. Creams containing betamethasone will help to heal the burnt skin. Although bathing with normal water will be helpful, soaps should be avoided.

## Heat stroke

Our temperature regulatory system helps to maintain body temperature within a specific range that allows the brain, heart and the major organs to work efficiently. However, in certain extremely hot conditions, the temperature may soar excessively, leading to 'heat stroke.' Intense headache, drying of skin, cramps, weakness, vomit, increased heart rate or shallow breathing are signs of a heat stroke. The skin appears flushed and the person becomes disoriented and confused. If not promptly attended, the patient may slip into coma. One must not leave such a person alone.

Put him under the shade or shift him to a cool place or switch on the air-conditioner, if available. Spray water on his body and keep wet towels on his body.

## Prickly heat

One of the purposes of sweat production from our skin is to allow the skin to release heat and this happens silently without us being aware most of the time. The sweat glands go on overdrive during summer to expel excess heat. Sometimes due to copious production of sweat, the pores that bring sweat to the surface of the skin gets clogged, giving rise to a red rash of fine eruptions with a pointed tip containing clear fluid, which ruptures on scratching. This is called prickly heat. It may also appear as wide areas of intense redness accompanied by itching. The trunk, groin and underarm are the commonly implicated areas.



**A case of prickly heat; summer has its drawbacks!**

Taking cool baths and remaining in a cool room helps to soothe the rash. Calamine lotion can be applied two or three times a day to cool the surface and give relief from itching. Tablets containing cetirizine or fexofenadine can be given once or twice daily. Avoiding use of soaps during bath helps to relieve itching. Gently pat the body with a dry towel after bath as vigorous rubbing will bring back the itchy feeling. Loose cotton clothes should be worn till the weather improves.

## Boils

Germs are normal 'residents' of our skin, as we all know. However, their numbers are never too large to allow them to produce infection and cause damage to the skin.

When there is profuse sweating, the skin is teeming with bacteria which set up inflammation. The bacterial enzymes cause intense redness, swelling and pain. Pus may form deep within the skin, and the area becomes painful and cannot be touched. Sometimes, they develop into abscesses, which rupture releasing yellowish discharge. Fever sets in if the bacterial load in the body is heavy. Rest is an important part of treatment if boils are on the lower limb. Hot fomentation will help to soothe the area and also to help in the healing process. Antibiotics and pain-killers are necessary in these cases, and hence it is better to visit the physician for accurate advice. Large abscesses may need to be drained by a needle or by surgery.

### Ringworm

It starts as a troublesome itch somewhere on the body where sweating is in abundance. In areas like the groin, armpits, under the breasts and buttock folds, the presence of sweat makes the skin soft and porous. This spongy skin mops up fungi waiting outside, and welcomes it inside! The eruptions take the pattern of a ring and hence it has the name. The itch produced by the ringworm is one of the most intractable types, and people cannot resist scratching, irrespective of the time of the day or where they are seated. Unlike in the past, ringworm is not only spreading rapidly but is also becoming resistant to most of the commonly available medicines and creams.

#### *Creams to be avoided*

*Candid Total, Quadri-derm, Panderm + , Panderm Super, Panderm – NM , Terbinaforce Plus, Orkid - 4, Dermi- 5 , Cosvate - GM, Lobate - GM , Clobet - GM, Betamil - GM, Tenovate -M, Clozema - GM, Cloderm - GM, Clop - GM, Gracederm, Topifort - MX, Sonaderm - GM, Surfaz - Sn, Betnovate - GM, Qualiderm Plus, Fourderm, Nadimix, Triben XT, Triben Plus, 3 Mix, Tetmosol Total, Keto 4s, Ringout+*

One must avoid wearing denims and tight fitting garments. It is necessary to take shower twice daily and wear only loose clothes at bedtime. Treatment should be sought quickly by consulting a skin specialist, and the entire course should be completed to prevent relapse. It is important to avoid using cheap, over-the-counter creams which may only give relief without permanent cure.

### Food poisoning

As people go outstation on vacation and eating

outside is a regular feature, the chances of food poisoning is on the rise during summer. The environmental conditions are perfect for bacteria, virus and parasites to thrive on uncovered food.

Fever, nausea, vomiting and profuse diarrhea are the common symptoms. The patient develops numerous watery, loose stools, and feels very drained out and weak. Rest is important and the person should drink fruit juices and water frequently. Eating just curd and rice will help to provide energy for the healing process, till appetite returns.

Drinking a glass of boiled water with a pinch of salt and little more than a teaspoon of sugar (known as Oral Rehydration Solution or ORS) will replace the salts and water lost from motions. ORS needs to be repeated after every loose motion if the patient is unable to consume soups and juices or food.

### Typhoid fever

Contaminated food and water is responsible for this type of bacterial infection which appears as a high-grade fever, headache, weakness, indigestion, abdominal pain and loose motions. In severe cases, it may cause ulcers in the intestine.

It may take a few days to understand that the fever is due to typhoid since blood tests are not confirmatory within the first week. Rest, simple, non-spicy food, boiled vegetables, plenty of fruit juices and water or ORS is important to treat typhoid, which is also called enteric fever. Antibiotics are necessary and should be taken for as long as suggested by the physician.

### Jaundice

One of the most dramatically visible conditions which can be suspected without any tests is jaundice or (viral) hepatitis A. The skin as well as the whites of the eyes appear yellow. Urine colour also is a deep yellow. Fever, nausea, vomiting and itching all over the body are common complaints. Treatment involves giving rest to the bowels by consuming soups, boiled vegetables and fruit juices. Like typhoid, this condition is also caused by contaminated food and water.

Both these infections can be prevented by ensuring that one drinks boiled water, and by eating only well cooked food. Avoid street food. Vegetables need to be washed well before cooking.

Thus, summer is vacation-and-fun-time only if proper care is taken without falling ill. Opting for well-cooked food and bathing frequently helps to remain fresh and fit. Remember to pack your bags with loose fitting, cotton clothes, sunscreens, moisturisers, calamine lotion, and don't forget to carry a bottle of mineral/boiled water.



The writer is a senior skin and sexually transmitted diseases specialist, practising in Mumbai. He advises pharmaceutical companies on drug branding, promotion and marketing. He is a writer on social topics in the print and electronic media, as well as in pharmaceutical magazines. Dr. Rajan is also an hon. consultant to ONGC, Larsen & Toubro and Air India.





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*“All the servers in ‘Mirchi and Mime’ are speech and hearing impaired. The sequence of service manager interventions is designed to ensure seamless interaction between the customer and the server.”*

Meet **Bhagyashri Vartak**. She is one of the most dynamic, positive-minded personalities I have ever met. She works as a Special Teacher and Supervisor for the speech-and-hearing challenged over the past 25 years in Mumbai. She teaches at the Rochiram T. Thadani School for the speech and hearing impaired. This is an interesting and dramatic departure from her conventional qualifications that comprises a degree in commerce followed by a diploma in business management and a short course in journalism. But her interests lay elsewhere, so she did a course for the Hearing Impaired and also completed a course in sign language A and B levels, and is currently waiting to complete the C level. What drew my attention to her is that she has successfully trained and mentored some of her ex-students to join the service staff of a restaurant and a bar in Mumbai. The restaurant is called ‘Mirchi and Mime’ while the bar is called ‘Madeira and Mime’. She has also written and composed the ‘silent’ national anthem for her students at the RTT School. **Shoma Chatterji** in conversation with Bhagyashri Vartak.

**What motivated you to move towards training and also working with the speech-and- hearing impaired?**

I had a wish to contribute to society and that is why I chose this field. It gives me great pleasure and satisfaction knowing that I have achieved my purpose. Some of my students and their parents thank me for giving them the reason for living with dignity that the parents had never imagined when their handicap was discovered. Looking at their bright and smiling faces gives me satisfaction nothing else would have done. I



am very proud of my association with them and feel overwhelmed by the affection shown to me by my ex-students.

**You have initiated this beautiful programme of training and placing some of your students to man the service staff in the restaurant called Mirchi and Mime. How did this happen?**

One day, I was approached in my school by two young men - Prashant Kasar, CEO and Director and Anuj Shah, Chief Operating Officer and Director who run Squaremeal Foods Private Limited in Mumbai. Mirchi and Mime and Madeira and Mime are their brainchild and they run it very efficiently. They met the director of the school, Amar Asrani and explained their project of employing youngsters who are hearing challenged in the service staff. Mr. Asrani liked the idea and greenlit the project. I decided to accept this new proposal and took it up as a new challenge for the benefit of my ex-students.

**How did the ex-students respond to the idea?**

The response was very positive. They realised that this would help them stand on their own feet, boost their self-





**Bhagrashree being felicitated at an event**

-confidence and would help them flow into and with the mainstream. Socially also, they would be recognised as productive individuals who are not burdened under their handicap. This would help them communicate and socialise with the mainstream which was the main purpose of the project. I was helped in this by my close friend Rujita Patil and Shubhada Satpute, who is the Assistant Headmistress of my school.

#### **How did their parents respond?**

We showed the parents a video film on a similar restaurant called Signs. They were convinced but had the usual worries of how their daughters would come home late at night, or, how would their son work in a bar or in a restaurant. These doubts were patiently explained by the owners who assured them that their wards would be taken care of and their safety would be of prime importance. Other significant things such as salaries, perks, concessions, shift hours, conditions of service were explained to them patiently by Prashant and Anuj. Anuj explained that the service delivery was designed keeping in mind the limitation of speech and hearing.

#### **What did the training comprise and how did you mentor them?**

The training programme had four modules – life sciences, job readiness, simple English and service skills. It went on for eight weeks within a classroom situation, followed by three weeks of floor experience with friends and family posing as customers.

#### **How different is it serving guests and customers in a mainstream restaurant along with other colleagues who do not have any physical challenges? Please explain.**

All the servers in Mirchi and Mime are speech and hearing impaired. The sequence of service manager interventions is designed to ensure seamless interaction between the customer and the server. I serve as the conduit between the restaurant management and the serving staff, while I continue as mentor to my ex-students who seem really happy to discover a new meaning in their lives.



**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.**



**Some of the motivated staff at Mirchi & Mime**

#### **How many of the speech-and-hearing impaired are employed at the two restaurants now?**

They had initially appointed around 25 service staff which included students from my school and also from the job fair organised by the National Society for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped. Sadly, the restaurant industry is not spared the politics and one-upmanship that sustains around us, including the corporate sector. The causes are varied and cannot be individualised. Especially when parent support, character and ego play an important part. However, compared to other players in our industry, the drop-outs in these restaurants have been extremely low.

#### **Did you try to find out why some students who were working here had dropped out?**

So far as my observation goes, some left because of long working hours. The other reason is since both the bar and the restaurant are very popular, they are called upon to work overtime which is a very big issue for those who live very far away like New Mumbai, Dombivli, Virar. That was one reason why they left their jobs. I think without hard work you cannot realise one's dream. Some of them did not understand the meaning of hard work, nor did their parents. So they left their jobs. A few also had a drinking problem. The owners have kept a room for late night working staff. As their mentor, I discuss their problems on a one-to-one basis and try to solve them.

#### **How are the customers responding to the service staff?**

We have had an overwhelming response from the customers, who need to book beforehand to get a place. The customers have been most supportive and appreciative and encourage the efforts that we have taken to open such a restaurant. Besides, there is a special menu card designed with sign language that is handed to the customers when a speech-and-hearing impaired server is serving them, which mainstream customers can decipher easily. The staff who are still there are happy and extremely committed to their work, and a few have also gained promotions and increments.



# Bengal's churches and taverns

## *A whiff of the European heritage*

*The European heritage of West Bengal is the lesser known part of its history, especially the French, Danish and Portuguese influences. The churches, taverns and villas which exist even today, are such an elegant and nostalgic part of India's legacy. Today there is a rising awareness about this slice of history, with successful attempts at restoring some of these monuments.*

**Text & photos: Manjira Majumdar**





**The Danish Tavern during festival**

CALCUTTA (now Kolkata) was crowned the second city of the British Empire. So naturally the spotlight has always been on the imperial architecture that is a mishmash of Victorian, Gothic and Doric, not excluding other European styles, especially South European. However, before the city was monopolised by the British East India Company, there existed buildings, mainly administrative offices and beautiful churches built by the European settlers, who held trading posts in certain pockets of the state, and elsewhere in the country as well.

Over time, Christian missionaries, who were of European origin and belonged to various Christian orders such as Catholicism, Augustinian (belonging to the Catholic order, thereby Portuguese and Spanish) and Protestantism, established some of the simple and in many cases,

ornate churches in undivided Bengal.

It is said five bishops came to the city over a period of time and built a number of churches that still stand today. The Anglican churches have their own history (see page 24-25). In fact, if we trace the patterns of colonisation, we find that European traders who took permission from the Mughal rulers to conduct businesses, gradually exerted their territorial rights. Soon they became administrators of the region. They commanded security forces to safeguard their trading interests.

Immigrants from those countries came in droves and married local women. In due course, religious preachers followed, and they set up places of worship, educational institutions and monuments resulting in some grand heritage buildings; churches, forts, public buildings and residences.





**Our lady of Happy Voyage, Bandel Church at Chinsura; sailors prayed here for safe voyage over the Bay of Bengal**

## Portuguese influences

Right on top were the Portuguese, who sent their boats from Cochin to undivided Bengal to do business from May to October. They landed in Hugli (as it was spelt then), or went to Chittagong (now in Bangladesh). Under Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in the mid-sixteenth century, the Portuguese fought with the Dutch, who also tried to wrest control of these parts. Losing control from time to time, the Portuguese then resorted to piracy and looted ships because Chittagong was a large port, with Chinsura by the banks of the River Hooghly (as it is now spelt), the smaller one. Today, what we have left of them is the Portuguese Church at Bandel, a major tourist draw among believers and non-believers alike.

Declared as a minor basilica, the Portuguese built this church known as Basilica of the Holy Rosary or Bandel Church in 1599. It is recorded that when the Portuguese established a port here they invoked the protection of the Augustinian friars, then the largest religious congregation based in Goa.

Captain Pedro Tavares obtained the Mughal emperor's permission to preach his faith, and it is a curious case of sailors who were also preachers, who initially brought in the religion to the region.

An interesting fact is that the original church was destroyed by the Moors in 1632, leading to a new one built in its place in 1660. On the balcony is consecrated the Our Lady of Happy Voyage because of the sailors who prayed here for safe voyage over Bay of Bengal. A ship's mast was indeed presented to this Church by the captain of a vessel that survived a strong storm over the Bay.

The church is pretty opulent with marble tiles and stained glasses galore. Incidentally, there was also an Armenian Church and a Dutch Church in these parts, today in ruins, but not yet restored, unlike the Armenian Church of Murshidabad. The other strong influence of the Portuguese was in the art of making 'chana' or cottage cheese that went on to become the main ingredient of sweetmeats of Bengal. Ironically, Bandel cheese, a locally made cheese with a smoky flavour is available in a town known for its French lineage called Chandernagore or Chandannagore, which is but two stations away from Bandel.



**Facade of Bandel Church; it was built in 1599 by the Portuguese**





**The Riverfront built by the French at Chandannagore**

## **A whiff of France**

Chandannagore became a French settlement in 1688 from a trading post set up in 1673. In 1730, Joseph Francois Dupleix was appointed the Governor and maritime trade in jute, indigo, textiles, sugar, among others, greatly flourished. But bloody wars between the English and French (including the Napoleonic Wars), led to its subjugation by the British. It was subsequently returned to the French for governance in 1816, and remained under the

political control of the Governor-General of Pondicherry till 1850. Gradually, trade declined and this once beautiful suburban town with beautiful villas and a grand promenade fell in importance. The grand Dupleix residence now converted to Indo French Cultural Institute and Museum, and a very elegant study in white church - Sacred Heart Church set amid beautiful grounds, landscaped with flower beds are testimonies of the French influences.



**Sacred Heart Church, Chandannagore, is a testimony of the French influence**

## The restored Anglican churches of Kolkata

### ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

St. John, the original parish church of Bengal, became the first Anglican cathedral in the Indian subcontinent when the first Bishop of Calcutta, Thomas Middleton, preached his first sermon there on Christmas Day, 1815. It remained a cathedral until the consecration of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1847. St. John's was the most eligible candidate to take up the role of the East India Company's leading church in its leading city in India. Sir Evan Cotton, author of *Calcutta Old and New* (1907), wrote, 'There are few public buildings in Calcutta richer in their memories of bygone days than the old church of St John'. It was built on the site of the old burial ground, which originally belonged to the Maharaja Nabakrishna Deb, who gifted the land for the construction of the church. Sandstone from Chunar was brought for the steeple and blue marble from the ruins of Gaur, the first capital of Bengal, for the flooring.



St. John's Church



The St. John's Church is the first Anglican Cathedral in the Indian subcontinent

### ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

St. Paul's which shares a visual axis with the landmark Victoria Memorial building (Sir William Emerson, 1906-1921), was built opposite the Bishop's Palace on Chowringhee Road. Construction began in 1839, when the foundation stone was laid by Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta, and it was completed in 1847. With the consecration of St. Paul's as the first Episcopal Church of the Orient in 1847, it assumed the role of cathedral from St. John's. The cathedral was designed in the Indo-Gothic style by William Nairn Forbes, a military engineer who was later promoted to Major General, and was also responsible for the design of the old Calcutta Mint, where he held the post of Mint Master. The tall central spire and square tower beneath were inspired by a similar feature at the 12th century cathedral in Canterbury, England. The upper portion of the tower, which originally reached a height of 61m (200ft), was destroyed twice by earthquakes, in 1897 and 1934. Finally, it was rebuilt as a replica of the Bell Harry Tower of Canterbury Cathedral. The nave of the cathedral is large, with beautifully carved wooden pews and chairs, a stained glass window to the west, intricate coloured artwork covering the eastern walls, and two marvellous Florentine frescoes. The cathedral is 75m (247ft) long and 25m (81ft) wide, and is set in huge grounds with several ancient trees. The church is a feast for the eyes, with fine murals vividly recording the life and work of St. Paul.





**The St. James Church after restoration**

## **ST. JAMES CHURCH JORA GIRJA**

The recently completed conservation of St. James' Church took two years of meticulous planning and implementation, and twenty-one consultative meetings with the members of the church. The project has seen the church rescued from a state of decline, carefully conserved and, finally, rededicated in December 2011 by Rev. Bishop Ashoke Biswas nearly 150 years after its consecration by Bishop Cotton on 25 July 1864.

The church had been slipping into decay since 2000 due to a wide range of factors. Parishioners could feel the dampness rising from the floor. The wooden floor at the second level and many of the door and window frames were infested with termites. Although the main mahogany roof was still strong, leaks had developed along the drip channels, leading to water ingress during the monsoon season. The lack of regular maintenance, shortage of funds and inappropriate repair interventions in the past led to the deterioration of the physical fabric of the church. This is when the church authority and the two neighbouring schools, Pratt Memorial School and St. James' School, decided to conserve the church for posterity under professional guidance. Many restoration professionals and organisations were contacted. Work started in September 2008 with archival research and a study of old drawings and photographs of the church in order to

understand its significance. This information, along with a physical survey, was used to produce updated and accurate floor plans, elevations and sections of the church. A detailed study was then undertaken which included documentation, measured drawings, condition survey and assessment of the historic fabric of the church, in order to prepare a detailed estimate and specification for an authentic and appropriate conservation programme.



**The St. James Church in ruins**

## The great Danes

“Gentlemen passing up and down the river maybe accommodated with breakfast, dinner, supper and lodging, and may depend on the charges being very reasonable....also liquors sold by the single dozen, for ready cash. A good billiard table and coffee room with the newspapers etc.”



**Olav or Olaf Church in ruins**

From Chandannagore to Serampore is 15 kilometres distance. Again located on the banks of River Hooghly, the final lap of the journey of River Ganga from the north to Gangetic plains, Serampore is a small old town rich in history. It was here that William Carey, the Baptist missionary founded the Serampore College and University under Danish rule. In recent history, the vintage block prints on weaves that inspired one of India's leading fashion designers Ritu Kumar, were made by craftsmen here.

From 1755 to 1845, Serampore was administered by Denmark under the name of Frederiksnagore. The main trade was in fabrics and the Danes established trading posts in parts of Andhra Pradesh and on the Malabar coasts, as well. The flourishing trade attracted merchants and many of them built their European villas along the banks of the river. With money comes a desire to leave behind footprints in grand buildings and churches. St. Olav's or Olaf Church of Denmark and Norway, was built here almost 200 years ago.

As part of the "Serampore Initiative" - launched by the National Museum of Denmark (NMD) in 2008, the restoration of the Lutheran Protestant Church which was in ruins, began in 2015, and was completed in 2016. The church is known for its bell tower clock and is consecrated to Christian VII, the then King of Denmark. "St Olav's can serve as a model for conservation projects," said Manish Chakraborti, who has helped with the conservation of Dutch heritages along with Anglican churches in the city.

Naturally, restoration is very hard work because one has to create something new out of the ruins, with often the original materials not available any more. What got the conservationists excited recently was the restoration of a quaint tavern that prospered on the very banks of the river. During the 19th century, it is believed that Serampore's grandeur was even more than Chandannagore. Well-heeled residents built villas on the river banks, and the town attracted tourists who stayed at the tavern. It was in 1786 that a British gentleman opened 'The Denmark Tavern and Hotel'. From an advertisement in Calcutta Gazette in 1786:





**Olav or Olaf Church after restoration**

“Gentlemen passing up and down the river maybe accommodated with breakfast, dinner, supper and lodging, and may depend on the charges being very reasonable....also liquors sold by the single dozen, for ready cash. A good billiard table and coffee room with the newspapers etc.”

A specialised team of craftsmen from Murshidabad, Sunderbans, Serampore and other parts of Bengal using traditional materials and old craft techniques in masonry helped in the restoration,” according to Chakraborti. “The carpenters have carefully restored the old doors and windows and hand crafted the wooden staircase in Indian teakwood to replace the original one which had collapsed,” he added. Reopened to the public with much fanfare, The Park group of Hotels is expected to run a Riverside Heritage Cafe and Lodge under the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation, on what was the erstwhile tavern.

Bengal has had a rich history of colonisers from almost all major European nations, who have had a stab at setting up trading interest. In Chinsura, there was a Dutch Fort.

Finally, all other European East Indian companies folded as they were edged out by the British who ruled the waves right through the 16th century to the 19th century. And with the Battle of Plassey in 1757, India came strongly under English rule, and whatever influences that the Portuguese, Danish, Dutch and French had, were laundered out gradually. Today these remain in various small pockets of the state. Even within the rest of the country, the influences, except for the Portuguese in Goa and the French in Pondicherry, are not so widespread, but extremely grand nevertheless. Fallen in disrepair and long considered ruins, several of these heritage structures, mainly churches, forts and old buildings are being conserved with local architects, with governments in these countries providing the aid. History, no matter how bitter or tragic can never be ignored. These churches and monuments whisper of a past – a life gone by – and it is often left to our imagination to reconstruct those days. But with such wonderful conservation projects, the past is coming alive once more.



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

*Text on Page 24-25 is published with the permission of conservation architect Manish Chakraborty from his article on 'Historical Anglican Churches of Bengal'.*  
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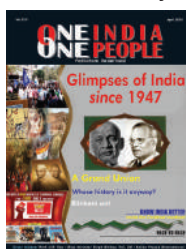
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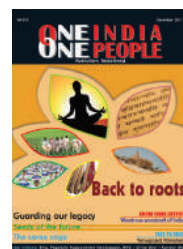
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### Back to roots



# India in crisis

*Never has the meaning of words like 'gender' and 'safety' been more relevant than in today's India. As news of horrifying assaults on young girls filters through, it's time the country did serious introspection, says **Nikhil Katara**.*

INDIA as a country is under going a crisis. When this crisis began cannot be ascertained and one can't put a date to it. But that this crisis is being experienced, particularly by our country, cannot be denied. Rape, molestations, and violence against a certain section of our society is in the news and stark in our faces. But it is like the elephant in the room everyone pretends not to notice.

A lot has been written and spoken about, and many articles have emerged, that focus on the victim. But not much has been spoken about the rapist. He is treated as general evil and desecrated, shamed, but one can't really put a reason to his act. Why does a rapist physically abuse, murder, violate a person? What is in his mind? What is the baggage he carries? These are the questions which need to be asked. For after all, many of these rapists who commit these demonic acts are a part of our society. They have grown up in our neighbourhoods, roamed in our streets, eaten in our restaurants, and many a time are even a part of our family. For the sake of clarity and brevity, one shall only analyse the crimes committed against women and children in this article.

## Deconstructing the rapist's mindset

For her doctoral thesis, Madhumita Pandey interviewed a hundred rapists in India. Her findings brought to the fore the burning question about how the minds of these men work. Some of her findings suggested that the gender roles are skewed in India. The men wield an authoritative power over women and in many families, women don't even think it correct to use the first name of their husbands. In her many interviews, her findings suggested that these men don't understand what consent is. Some men denied that rape happened at all, some gave excuses, some even made Pandey feel sorry for them, some put the blame



**Women protesting against rape, molestation & violence against them**

squarely on the victim, but there were only a handful who regretted their actions. In one of the interviews a man expressed remorse for raping a five-year-old and said he would marry the child after he got out of jail, since no one would accept her after what he had done to her!

The questions of these findings suggest myriad ideas that stem from the mind of these men and the skewed masculinity they are attempting to performing in society. Also, the interview only reflects the mindsets of convicted rapists. There are many who have never been reported and continue to walk the streets free. The mindset of a free person and that of a convicted one might be different. Many times rape happens within the family, and many of these people are members who get access to the private spaces of the home. Such incidents are ignored, not reported, and the male member of the family who is in an authoritative position inside the sanctum of the home, is never challenged.

One of the central tenets of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy was the 'Will to power'. Schopenhauer influenced Nietzsche's thinking by his concept of 'Will to live'. He stated that everything in the universe is driven by the primordial will to live, in it is the desire to procreate and avoid death.

But Nietzsche, in his many doctrines, put forth a will, which is much more than the will to just survive and reproduce. He puts forth the doctrine of power, making it central to human existence. Though Nietzsche doesn't define the will to power, he does pose the argument that achievement, ambition and the will to reach the highest possible position in life is what drives the human, and not just the will to survive. But in this continual struggle to execute one's will, the role of cruelty can't be denied. On the doctrine of the feeling of power he quotes—"Benefiting and hurting others are ways of exercising one's power over them—that is all one wants in such cases! We hurt those to whom we need to make our power perceptible, for pain is a much more sensitive means to that end than pleasure: pain always asks for the cause, while pleasure is inclined to stop with itself and not look back. We benefit and show benevolence toward those who already depend on us in some way (that is, who are used to thinking of us as their causes); we want to increase their power because we thus increase our own, or we want to show them the advantage of being in our power—that way, they will be more satisfied with their situation and more hostile towards and willing to fight against the enemies of our power."



## The Kathua introspection

The Kathua rape case, where an eight-year-old girl was murdered after being gangraped for several days was one of the episodes that made India introspect. While it has not been proven and the matter is sub-judice, it has been posed that the crime occurred to “dislodge” a group of Bakherwal Muslim nomads from Rasana village in Kathua near Jammu. Women's bodies have been a site of violence and political trauma for a long time. Even the democratic republic of Congo has seen widespread use of sexual violence to execute power, take over territories and ‘punish’ civilian populations who are supporting the enemy. Thus cruelty is used categorically in all these cases to execute power. But to say that the act of violence doesn't stem from a sense of satisfying sexual gratification would be problematic. It is undeniable that ‘sexual gratification’ is a basic instinct that drives human kind. The entire existence of the human race depends on the instinct and hence the phrase “rape is about power, not sex” would not give the correct picture. It is posed that human events could be influenced by more than one reason, hence, while power could be a determining factor, sexual gratification could be an undeniable association.

In a study Michael F. McKibbin and three other researchers at Florida Atlantic University identified five types of rapists:

- 1) **Disadvantaged men:** Men of lower socioeconomic status who are deemed undesirable mates, who resort to rape.
- 2) **Specialised rapists:** Those who are aroused by rape than consensual sex.
- 3) **Opportunistic rapists:** Those who can rape with low risk of punishment, like rape during war time.
- 4) **High mating effort rapists:** Those who have high self-esteem and do not

like it when they are refused. They have expectations after they initiate a date, pay for dinner etc.

5) **Partner rapists:** Those who fear competition, suspect infidelity, or have a break up.

By evaluating all these categories, it might become evident that the mind of a rapist is a complex environment and the reasons influencing one to carry out these devious crimes can be multi-plicate. But all this is not to say that just because the crime has reasons it is reasonable. It deserves correction, intent and doesn't have quick fix solutions, for its nature is embedded in instinct and power structures. The punishments to these crimes are also myriad: life imprisonment, ban on certain employment positions and death penalty, are among a few that are utilised by different countries all over the world.

“Why does a rapist physically abuse, murder, violate a person? What is in his mind? What is the baggage he carries? These are the questions which need to be asked.”

These crimes are our immediate evils. How often has one seen news about people with political influence dismiss the act as a ‘mistake’, and how often one sees the regression begin at home, where women are not given the right to participate in decision making, or even speak on sensitive subjects. Where rights to property, executing wills, and even the right to have an opinion are male domains.

## The Kenya story

Does sex-education change all this?

One in four schoolgirls in Kenya had experienced sexual assault when Ujamaa Africa introduced the programme ‘Your moment of truth’. This programme focused on adolescent boys and took them through a six-week course that took them through making difficult choices, not participating in a misogynistic conversation, and taking courageous decisions. The curriculum did influence the minds of the participants and some pre-conceived notions and prejudices were challenged.

The point that this article wants to make is that punishment is an important part of a committed crime and should be meted. While instilling fear might demotivate some, it might not change the attitude where it should change, i.e., in their minds. One should not rape, not because one might face the death penalty if one does, but because if one rapes it causes untold harm to the other person, who is a living breathing person with aspirations, dreams and a thirst for life like we ourselves do. Sex education has been opposed in India for various reasons. Some being because people believed it would corrupt the youth and lead to promiscuity. Some even argued that it is a Western construct forced upon India. Well, another argument is, that rape exists, and many human lives are getting affected by it. Doesn't it need a human intervention somewhere? While some organisations in India are working towards an education in this field, there needs to be more work that goes to the grassroots. A definite truth is that India cannot afford to live with a conscience that gets stained time and again by victims that have been tormented, and by men who have no idea that what they have committed is a crime.

We do have miles to go before we sleep, but it is important that we do not sleep till we walk those miles.



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. (The writer would like to acknowledge Bhavini Merchant Dalal's inputs for this article.)

# Forests and nutrition

*Many tribal communities are dependent on forests not just for livelihood, but also for their nutrition. But in the commercial wave which swept across government policies, commercial plantations were given importance over natural forests, says **Bharat Dogra**. Can this trend be reversed?*

**D**UE to the increasing commercial orientation of government policies and practices of forestry, the role of natural forests as an important source of food and nutrition, as well as related livelihoods, has been increasingly neglected or ignored in recent times. As a result, important decisions were taken to replace natural forests with plantation of commercial species, or to consider only commercial monocultures at the time of afforestation, which very adversely affected the contribution that natural forests have traditionally made to food and nutrition, particularly to food and nutrition systems of tribal communities.

## The importance of uncultivated food

To prevent this costly damage from accelerating further, it is important to establish a better and wider understanding of the important role of natural forests in protecting food and nutrition system of vulnerable communities. In this context, a recent study titled *Forests As Food Producing Habitats* has made an important contribution. This study was taken up by an Odisha based voluntary organisation - 'Living Farms' - on the basis of the conditions prevailing in Rayagada and Sundargarh districts, with the help of three other organisations - DISHA, ASHA and SHAKTI.

This study recorded 121 different kinds of uncultivated foods being harvested between the last week of July 2013 and December 2013, by the sample households. On an average, 4.56 kg of such foods were harvested per household, during each collection foray.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises taken up with the communities studied showed the criticality of uncultivated foods in the perception of the adivasi communities. The cultural linkages with forests and forest foods



are clear and alive to this day. However, a variety of factors could potentially be playing a role in a general decline on dependence on forest foods, as reported by the adivasi communities. In terms of a nutritional analysis, it was found that the forest foods could be playing a vital role in terms of micro-nutrients.

This study, as well as other surveys and inquiries undertaken by these organisations revealed that in times of stress, it is the uncultivated foods which form a critical source of food and nutrition. The special significance of these foods is also in terms of their nutritional composition. If the forest is maintained well in all its diversity and if access is good, there is a year-long supply of such uncultivated foods. In the overall context of low incomes and inequalities, this is a food source that is not just affordable, but completely free and accessible on basis of equality. If the resource is managed sustainably, it is also a source of income for the communities. This study says that while food safety is a major emerging

concern when it comes to cultivated food, especially of fruits, vegetables and greens, here is a source of food where no chemicals or additives come in at the time of growing, or post-production. This study further asserts that wild species are supposed to be more resilient in this age of climate change, compared to cultivated species. On the other hand, the periods of food stress of communities are also likely to increase due to climate change, if they are dependent only on cultivated foods.

Uncultivated foods provide an important fallback mechanism as these foods, which do not require a household to incur costs, borrow money, depend on a government dole-out scheme, or even seek the permission of others before accessing, lend communities as well as individual households a sense of self-dependence, and therefore, dignity and pride, which are quite dear to adivasi communities. In our interactions, the lack of reliability of state schemes was repeatedly brought up.



**“The forest department in the past has prioritised commercial plantations to benefit the department. This has destroyed/jeopardised access to uncultivated foods to the local communities. This trend needs to be reversed. Any future plantations must be taken up only in consultation with the community while developing the forests.”**

Another aspect to which this study draws attention is that there is an enormous wealth of biological knowledge associated with these foods with members of the community, including children. “Whether it is about where a particular species grows seasonally, characteristics, identification and appearance, or its nutritive and medicinal properties, properties related to processing or storing, cooking methods and quality, veterinary and livestock uses etc., are all valuable knowledge that community members possess”, as per the study.

This important knowledge base should be protected. Several of these foods hold great cultural significance for the communities dependent on them. The recommendations

This study has made several recommendations:

“The importance of uncultivated foods to the food basket of adivasi communities is clear from the study. It is recommended that the Government provide funds to research institutions to document the availability of uncultivated foods and their nutritional components so that conservation measures are taken up to ensure sustainable availability and collection processes in forest regions. Most uncultivated foods are highly nutritious, but some are not. It is recommended that the nutritional properties of these foods be fully documented and shared with the communities to help them make better choices. The study highlights diversity of uncultivated foods with a wide range. The lowest in one village being



21 varieties to 69 in another, both in Sundargarh district. The Forest Department must take up a programme to understand the habitats producing uncultivated foods, and make efforts to increase availability of nutritious foods.

“The forest department in the past has prioritised commercial plantations to benefit the department. This has destroyed/jeopardised access to uncultivated foods to the local communities. This trend needs to be reversed. Any future plantations must be taken up only in consultation with the community. The existing knowledge within the community of availability of uncultivated foods and their habitats must be taken into consideration while developing the forests. Implementation of the Forest Rights Act gives communities and the forest department a new opportunity to develop the commons in the service of the community, and to meet an important development goal of ensuring nutritional security to the most marginalised. Considering the extensive diversity and

availability of uncultivated foods which can act as a buffer against hunger and malnutrition, it is recommended that the Department of Agriculture in Odisha as well as other states ensure that organic agriculture is promoted in and around forest regions. Particularly, pesticide use must be banned to prevent negative impact on forest environment and pollution of water bodies or collapse of bee colonies or other harm to the flora and fauna.”

Civil society organisations and people's movements have recognised the importance of uncultivated foods, but this has usually been in broad terms. Adequate efforts have not been made to understand in-depth, the contribution forest foods make to the nutrition and health of adivasi people, and to protect them from starvation in times of drought. It is recommended that NGOs and people's organisations make special efforts to understand the current situation through detailed studies, and strategise to conserve and develop available foods.



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

# Weakening institutions

*The central government has not done the nation a good turn by interfering in institutions of defence governance, and must rescind its recent orders, says Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi. He explains why.*

**D**EMOCRACIES are all about strengthening and sustaining institutions. If they flourish, the nation flourishes and grows. Till recent years, the nurturing of institutions in India was in stark contrast to what was happening in its neighbourhood. It is sad that the present Indian Government, despite its massive mandate, is bent on weakening, if not dismantling, important institutions that have contributed so much to nation-building.

With much fanfare, the government has announced the setting up of a Defence Planning Committee (DPC), headed by the National Security Advisor (NSA) and comprising a large number of members, which include the three service chiefs, the Chief of the Integrated Staff Committee (CISC), and a large number of civil officials who have little knowledge of the military and what it does. The DPC has been tasked with preparing a draft national security strategy, undertake a strategic defence review, and formulate an international defence engagement strategy. Commendable actions no doubt, but assigned to a wrong group.

## The blunder

By placing the three chiefs under the NSA, who is merely an advisor and is outside the laid down chain of command, the government has committed a blunder, as this is gross interference and dilution of the time-tested and perhaps one of the most important institutions of the nation. The chain of command for defence-related tasks is unambiguous, commencing from the highest level of Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). It goes to the next level of the Defence Minister's Committee (DMC), and then to the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC). NSA and others are nowhere in this chain, and hence have no locus standi in this structure. The present

order constituting the DPC therefore needs to be rescinded, as it is yet another attempt to weaken the military and the well established chain of command. I am perplexed that the service chiefs have accepted it.

**“We seem to have reinvented the wheel by tasking the new DPC with tasks that were commendably done by the erstwhile DPS. The major difference is that the erstwhile DPS was manned by professionals, while the present one has many members who have little or no clue about ‘matters military’! The old DPS was merged with the Integrated Defence Staff in 2001, where professionals are available.”**

The second lacuna with the order is its large complement of heavy-weights, more on account of the office they hold, than their qualifications for the task. It appears that it has been done purely as an eye-wash, more for electoral reasons and the fact that even after four years of rule, not a single point of the 15 point BJP Election Manifesto dealing with defence issues has been implemented! Maybe the ruling party feels that such announcements may sustain and assist them in the forthcoming

general elections.

Since the subject relates to defence planning, there is need to understand its essentials, albeit briefly. Defence planning comprises not only operational planning but also planning force levels, and organising and equipping of the armed forces. Contingency operational planning apart, all defence planning has to be on a steady long term basis. Planning must be for both current and foreseeable security threats. Defence planning must not be confined to the armed forces, but must also ensure that a proper balance is maintained between economic development, defence plans, and synergy with other departments dealing with security issues.

## India's fascination for committees

India does have a fascination for committees; hence our entire higher defence structure is based on committees, which as we all know are so designed that accountability becomes vague, and decision-making is at a snail's pace. Since Independence, barring the highest decision making body – the CCS, it is the Defence Minister who is charged with all aspects of the defence of the nation. We have now grossly interfered with this well laid out and time-tested structure by side-lining him and even placing the service chiefs under a non-constitutional appointee, viz., the NSA, whose expertise is only in police work.

The NSA is the chief executive of the National Security Council (NSC), and advisor to the Prime Minister on national and international security, mostly on internal and external intelligence. Essentially he is a policeman, notwithstanding his prominent and powerful office. His bungling in two terrorist-related attacks in Punjab is well-known and commented upon.

**(Continued on page 35)**



# A constitutional review?

*The jury is out about how long the caste-based reservation system in India should continue. Nearly seventy years after the Constitution came into effect, isn't it time for some deep introspection, asks Venkatachala I. Sreenivas.*

It is time to review to what extent the caste-based reservation policy (CRP) has favoured or hindered the guarantees of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity enshrined in the Constitution.

The authors of the Constitution had to accommodate diverse voices while preserving an effective centralised government. Such a document, of necessity, will have built in tensions. One such is the CRP to disadvantaged sections which is opposed to the principle of equal opportunity. CRP is a balance between the opposing principles of equality of opportunity and the need for state assistance to the disadvantaged. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, one of the architects of the Constitution, wanted reservation to be confined to a minority of seats for ten years only. Because of political exigencies the ten year limit has been extended repeatedly, creating two groups — a favoured and an unfavoured group; in violation of equality for all.

## The basis of CRP

The CRP is based on the mistaken assumption that castes are homogeneous and are rigid. There are disadvantaged people among forward communities and vice versa. Defining caste is problematic. Caste as understood now has four features:

1. Hereditary (parent's caste)
2. Endogamy (marriage between members of the same caste)
3. Craft exclusiveness (members pursue a particular vocation)
4. Commensality (custom as to from whom one may receive food)

In post-independent India, the caste barriers are fast disappearing. Endogamy, commensality, and craft exclusiveness have doubtful validity. The increased incidence of inter-caste marriage poses problem in determining the caste of children born to such couples.



The CRP has created two groups; the preferred group which reaps benefits which are denied to the non-preferred group. This is discrimination and this should be eliminated. Those subscribing to this view advocate creating equal opportunities for everyone by providing quality education, affordable health care, good nutrition, job opportunities, and elimination of exploitation conforming to the letter and spirit of the Constitution. Another school is that the disadvantaged will not be able to effectively compete to take advantage of the opportunities provided, and need extra assistance in the form of reservation. The goal of this school of thought is to create equality of outcome whereby there will be proportionate representation of the disadvantaged in all societal endeavours.

Equality of opportunities is achievable, but the creation of equality of outcome is impossible, as it has never existed during human history. Predominance of certain groups in certain human endeavours is a rule rather than an exception throughout the world, over the ages. It is claimed

that CRP is reparation for the past injustices suffered by the disadvantaged group. However, the present generation, which had nothing to do with past injustices, is made to compensate for crimes they did not commit for those who were themselves not victims of past injustice. This situation is opposed to the principles of justice.

It is important to prove that a compromised policy is beneficial for its implementation. The benefit may be utilitarian or promotion of an ideal or both. Utilitarian argument is fallacious. Preferential treatment is not a zero sum game where loss of one is annulled by the gain of another. Both the favoured and the non-favoured groups could change their behaviour. The favoured group may slacken their effort in achieving excellence since they are assured of a position even with mediocre performance; the non-favoured group may slacken their effort because their effort will earn them neither recognition nor reward. Society as a whole suffers from loss of efficiency which is difficult to quantify.

**“The resentment created by the reservation policy among different castes reached a higher level with the Gujjar agitation in Rajasthan. In order to improve the share of their benefits, Gujjars started agitating to gain benefits of CRP. Meenas, who had been enjoying the benefits of CRP fearing dilution of their share by the inclusion of Gujjars, vigorously opposed their inclusion. In the ensuing violent agitation several lives were lost and an estimated ₹ 7,000 crore worth of property damage occurred in Rajasthan alone. The Gujjar agitation has paved the way for inter-caste resentment and fight. A more sinister fact was that all Meena legislators of the ruling BJP resigned, illustrating that caste loyalty was superseding other loyalties.”**

#### **The Vanniar agitation and changes that ensued**

The non-preferred groups resent the benefits conferred on the preferred group and try to be included in the preferred group. In 1987, Vanniars started demanding 20% reservation, which turned violent. The worst clashes were between the Vanniars and Schedule Caste (SC) members. Vanniars, who were not favoured with the benefits of reservation policy as were the SC members, directed their full fury against the SC community. Ultimately Vanniars achieved 20% reservation within the backward class reservation, opening doors for every community to claim a share of reservation by agitation, and by inflating their numbers, and touting their backwardness.

The resentment created by the reservation policy among different castes reached a higher level with the Gujjar agitation in Rajasthan. In order to improve the share of their benefits, Gujjars started agitating to gain benefits of CRP. Meenas, who had been enjoying the benefits of CRP fearing dilution of their share by the inclusion of Gujjars, vigorously opposed their inclusion. In the ensuing violent agitation several lives were lost and an estimated ₹7,000 crore worth of property damage occurred in Rajasthan alone. The Gujjar agitation has paved the way for inter-caste resentment and fight. A more sinister fact was that all Meena legislators of the ruling BJP resigned, illustrating that caste loyalty was superseding other loyalties.



Another adverse effect of the CRP policy is to ascribe a caste motive to all problems. Twenty students had been expelled from IIT for poor performance in accordance with the established rules. Of the twenty, eight were from the general category and the remaining eleven were from SC and one from ST. The incident was reported in the media under the heading “IIT shuts door to nine Dalit students”, although the dismissal had nothing to do with caste. Such quixotic reporting diverts atten-

tion from real issues.

Another damaging aspect of CRP is the creation of the victimisation syndrome. Reservation policy implies that the preferred group can gain more by emphasising their past suffering, than by discipline and hard work in the present. As backward looking entities they have to keep on finding new enemies or new reasons to hate the old ones to continue to derive the benefits of reservation—a deterrent for developing self-respect and self-confidence.



Preferential policy under different names is practiced based on race (U.S.A), language (Sri Lanka), ethnicity (Malaysia), etc. All of them suffer from the same ill effects, including:

- The range of beneficiaries keeps on expanding as more and more groups seek benefit.
- The array of benefits keeps on increasing as groups demand more and more.
- Political mobilisation on the basis of caste/ethnicity.
- Emergence of backlash from the

non-preferred groups.

- Inclination to resolve conflicts generated by preferential policy by creating redundant positions, adding to inefficiency.
- Compromise of economy, efficiency, and equity generating bitterness and resentment within institutions.
- Inter group infighting.
- Increased group/caste consciousness to the detriment of national integration.
- The benefits intended to be temporary often become permanent, creating a new privileged group.

- It is the relatively affluent of the preferred group who siphon the benefits, to the detriment of the really needy.

A sinister aspect of CRP is that no single caste has been promoted from its backward status to forward status, after more than half a century of implementation. The policy has been uncritically continued regardless of the damage it has caused and is causing to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, and to national integration.



**Venkatachala Sreenivas is a retired surgeon. He was also a faculty member of Yale University in New Haven U.S.A. He enjoys writing on philosophy and current affairs.**

## Weakening institutions

(Continued from page 32)

All NSAs appointed since the inception of the post on 19 November 1998, have belonged to either the Indian Foreign Service or to the Indian Police Service. Obviously, the professional senior officers of the armed forces are not considered good enough; something that is neither understandable nor in tune with what exists in most major countries. Incidentally, the trend was set by the NDA-I government, with the then NSA holding two important and busy offices, viz., security and political administrative functions. I was the Vice Chief then and when needed, only I or more often the DGMO, used to interact with him; never the Chief.

Earlier, a military wing functioned under the Cabinet Secretariat but was later placed under the Ministry of Defence (MoD). It was merged into the Integrated Staff on formation of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff after 2001. A high level inter-service Defence Planning Staff (DPS) was

created in 1986 to assist the COSC. It had senior inter-service staff along with senior representatives from the Ministry of Defence, Defence (Finance), Ministry of External Affairs and a senior scientist from the DRDO. The DPS was headed by a Director General (DG DPS), held in rotation between the three services by an officer of the rank of Lt.Gen./equivalent. It had four divisions, namely International Security Division, Weapons and Equipment Division, Military Plans Division, and Policy Planning Division. It may be noted that what this highly professional staff was doing is exactly what has been entrusted to the presently formed DPC. As the head of the army's Perspective Planning, I used to interact and provide inputs to the DPS.

The DPS was tasked to prepare coordinated perspective defence plans and also undertook periodic threat assessment to evolve a mix of force levels and weaponry to integrate the

requirements of the three services to meet threats. It also ensured that defence plans were oriented towards threats emanating during the next decade and to ensure integrated capability to meet the threats optimally within the resources available to the country.

We seem to have reinvented the wheel by tasking the new DPC with tasks that were commendably done by the erstwhile DPS. The major difference is that the erstwhile DPS was manned by professionals, while the present one has many members who have little or no clue about 'matters military'! The old DPS was merged with the Integrated Defence Staff in 2001, where professionals are available.

I would strongly urge the government to wind up the DPC and task the CISC and the Integrated Staff under him instead to do the tasks, and thereafter through the COSC present the reports to the Defence Minister.



**Lt.Gen. Vijay Oberoi is a former Vice Chief of Army Staff, and the former Founder Director of Centre for Land Warfare Studies.**

# SHAHU MODAK

The 'godly' actor (1918-1993)

**S**HAHU Modak was Hindi and Marathi cinema's go-to actor from 1932 to 1986, for playing mythological characters like Krishna, Dyaneshwar and Vishnu.

In 1932, Bhalji Pendharkar planned a film on the childhood of Krishna. Those days, there being no playback singers, only actors who could sing were cast. He wanted a boy who looked good, could sing and fell in the age group of 12-13 years. Though Modak had all the qualities to play Krishna, being Christians by faith it was felt his family would not allow him to play a Hindu God.

However, Pendharkar along with Nanasaheb Sarpotdar, and Dadasaheb Torne went to Ahmednagar to meet the well-educated and open minded Modak family. The visitors had loved his musical performance of Deenanath Mangeshkar, and asked if he would act in a film? Though the women of the house opposed it, his father agreed, since Shahu's studies would also not be affected. Thus came the film *Shyam Sundar* (1932), where he played Lord Krishna, in Marathi and Hindi. All the eight songs sung by him became very popular. It was the first talkie to complete a silver jubilee.

Thereafter, Shahu played the role of Lord Krishna in about 29 films like *Nand Ke Lala* (1934), *Shri Krishnarjun Yuddha* (1945), *Bhagwan Shri Krishna* (1950) and his last, *Krishna-Krishna* (1986), and became famous as cineworld's Krishna. Soon there was a long queue of producers. His second film was *Ayodhyecha-Raja*, in Marathi, (titled *Awara Shahzada* in Hindi), in which he became the first Indian talkie actor to do a double role as a prince and pauper.

He was admired for his title role of *Sant Dyaneshwar* (1940), social theme films like *Dulhan*, *Talaash*, *Bulbul-e-Punjab* etc., and historical films like *Razia Sultan* too. Others include *Chakradhari* (1954), *Mee Tulas Tuzjhya Aangani* (1955), *Sudamache Pohe* (1958), *Zala Mahar Pandharinath* (1970), *Hari Darshan*(1972), *Maya Bazar*, *Utavala Narad*, *Sant Tukaram*, *Goswami Tulsidas*(1964) and *Rangalya Ratri Asha* (1962).

In *Manoos* (1939) he portrayed the lead role as a policeman 'Ganpat' who saves a prostitute Maina from a police raid and falls in love with her. Directed by V.Shantaram, it was amazing how a bold subject was tried almost 80 years ago. Even Charlie Chaplin had seen that film.

His film *Pahili Mangalagaur* (1942) was bolder and even included a kissing scene. Lata Mangeshkar played Modak's sister-in-law. In a film *Sati Ahalya*, his character had to rape a woman. But after three reels his wife protested, and the film was never released.



Modak met his future spiritual partner and wife Pratibha, a Marwari Jain sadhvi (nun) of nine years. *Swami Vivekananda* was his guru, and at one such lecture he gave, they met and soon married not for procreation but for a spiritual relationship.

Shahu also had a great interest in astrology. As a person, he was very calm and peaceful, spoke softly and never got irritated. He used to consider himself as a world citizen and humanity, his religion. He never discussed movies but restricted to chatting about deep spirituality.

It's said he never used the studio toilets, as he found it improper to sit on a dirty commode while wearing the dhoti used for playing a God like Krishna. He only took small sips of water throughout the day. His wife, in a book titled *Shahu Modak, Pravas....EkDevmansacha*, provides an insight on the varied facets of this highly gifted personality.

When he turned 75 on 25 April 1993, he had predicted that he would leave the world within 18 days. And he passed away after 15 days on 11 May, 1993, but his memorable roles will always be remembered by film lovers.

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



# AIR CHIEF MARSHAL IDRIS HASAN LATIF, PVSM

An inspiring officer (1923-2018)

**A**IR Chief Marshal Latif was born on 9 June 1923, and was educated at Nizam College, Hyderabad. His father was Chief Engineer of Hyderabad State, and became Principal of Osmania Engineering College after retirement. While studying at the Nizam's College, Idris Latif applied for a career in the Air Force and was sent to the Madras Flying Club. He then went to Lahore and on to Begumpet, where he was awarded the trophy for the best simulated force landing. He completed his training at Ambala and was commissioned into the Air Force on 26 June 1942. He was posted to No. 2 Coastal Flight at Karachi, where he flew vintage aircrafts like Wapiti and Harts on anti-submarine missions. His bag containing his pistol was stolen during a train journey, and he was awarded severe reprimand and a penalty of ₹35!

He was next sent to the United Kingdom (UK) for training on Hurricane and Spitfire fighters. On return to India, he was posted to the Hurricane Squadron. He took part in the Burma (now Myanmar) campaign on interdiction duties against ground targets. After a brief tenure in Madras, he joined the No. 9 Squadron equipped with Spitfires. Asghar Khan and Noor Khan who rose to Air Chief's post in Pakistan, were his colleagues. They tried in vain to persuade Latif to opt for Pakistan.

At the turn of Independence, he was promoted squadron leader at the age of 26, and commanded No. 4 Squadron, equipped with the Tempest fighter aircraft. He was a member of an Advisory Group which went to Indonesia to help them induct jet fighters. A graduate of the Defence Services Staff College and alumni of the National Defence College, he was posted as Air Attache to USA, and was also accredited to Canada. Air Marshal Arjan Singh asked him to continue in that appointment for another term after he completed the usual tenure of three years. Latif returned from the USA in 1965, and held staff appointments in the Eastern Command.

Soon after 1966, he took over the duties of Station Commander of Lohegaon Airport at Pune.

The station had the unique distinction of having fighters, bombers, four-engine transport aircraft and World War 2 vintage Liberator aircraft.

He flew in all of them from time to time. His next assignment was in the newly created post of Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Plans) in the rank of Air Vice-Marshal (AVM). He was responsible for the modernisation plans of the Air Force. He was awarded the PVSM in 1971. In the Indo-Pak War of 1971, he visited the forward units to obtain information on the requirements of the units and their performance. He

was promoted Air Marshal in 1974, and worked

as Air Officer in-Charge, Administration, at Air HQ and later as AOC-in-C Central Command at Lucknow. He organised the relief operations by the Air Force during the floods in Patna in 1975. The operation demanded precision, accuracy and high skills of flying. The next move was to the Air HQ as the Vice-Chief of Air Staff till 1 September 1978, when he took over as the Chief of Air Staff (CAS).

He succeeded in convincing the government to procure Jaguar fighter aircrafts, the proposal for which had been pending for eight years. He also negotiated for the induction of MIG-23 and MIG-25 fighters from

USSR. During a visit to France in 1981, he

had the opportunity to fly the Mirage-2000 as well. He had a passion for flying and took every opportunity to fly till the end of his service in the Air Force. Just before his retirement in 1981, he flew in the MIG-25 which had been assembled from a semi-knocked out condition.

He retired in 1981, and was appointed as member of the Public Enterprises Selection Board. He held the posts of Governor, Maharashtra, and later, Ambassador to France. He left France in 1988 and settled down in his home town, Hyderabad. He had been ailing for some time, and passed away on 30 April 2018.

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



# MADAVOOR VASUDEVAN NAIR

A Kathakali legend (1929-2018)

**M**ADAVOOR Vasudevan Nair, one of the greatest exponents of Kerala's sublime art form, Kathakali, passed away on 6 February 2018, while performing at the Agasthamcode Mahadevi Temple at Anchal. He was 89. He remained devoted to the art form right through his life, and never once thought about hanging up his boots. He took his last breath doing what he liked best; essaying a character on stage in front of admirers of the art, and his ardent fans.

Born in Madavoor in Thiruvananthapuram on 7 April 1929, Vasudevan Nair whose father Rama Kurup was a renowned folk dancer who was also well versed in Kambadakali and Kuthiyottam, took to Kathakali from the early age of 12, and his first teacher was Madavoor Parameswara Pillai from whom he picked up the basics of the dance form. Later he came under the tutelage of Kurinji Kunjan Panicker and Padmashri Changanur Raman Pillai for 12 years from the age of 17. Raman Pillai was the one and only veteran teacher of the Kathakali style called Kaplingadan, a pristine style practiced in South Kerala. Vasudevan Nair made optimum use of this opportunity to master the various shades and nuances of Kathakali, and was ready to begin his journey as an artiste.

The stalwart won renown for his expertise in essaying several roles, namely, Minukku, Pachai, Kathi and Vellathaadi, but revealed a marked penchant for Kathi or villain roles. Some of the more famous characters that he brought to life on stage were Ravanaan, Duryodhanan, Keechakan, Jarasandhan, Banan, Kamsan, Hiranyakasipu, and Narakasuran. He was also adept at portraying puranic characters like Hanuman, Hamsam, and Kaataalan. His forays into 'Minukku' characters like Brahmanan and Mannaan too won him a host of admirers. Nair was a highly respected figure in dance circles for his ability to enact various vesham-s (roles) in Kathakali. He regaled audiences by enacting the navarasa-s' with a great deal of grace and flourish. His endeavour primarily was to restore the traditional style of Kathakali while ensuring that it remained acceptable to contemporary viewers. In the early stages of his

career, Nair played female roles as well, with aplomb. He had the good fortune of performing alongside most of the titans of the time for well over five decades, and legendary performers and critics showered encomiums on him for his accomplished performances. He served as a faculty in an institution called Thekkan Kalari affiliated to Kerala Kalamandalam from 1968, and was also the Founder-Principal of Kalabharathi, another reputed dance-based organisation.

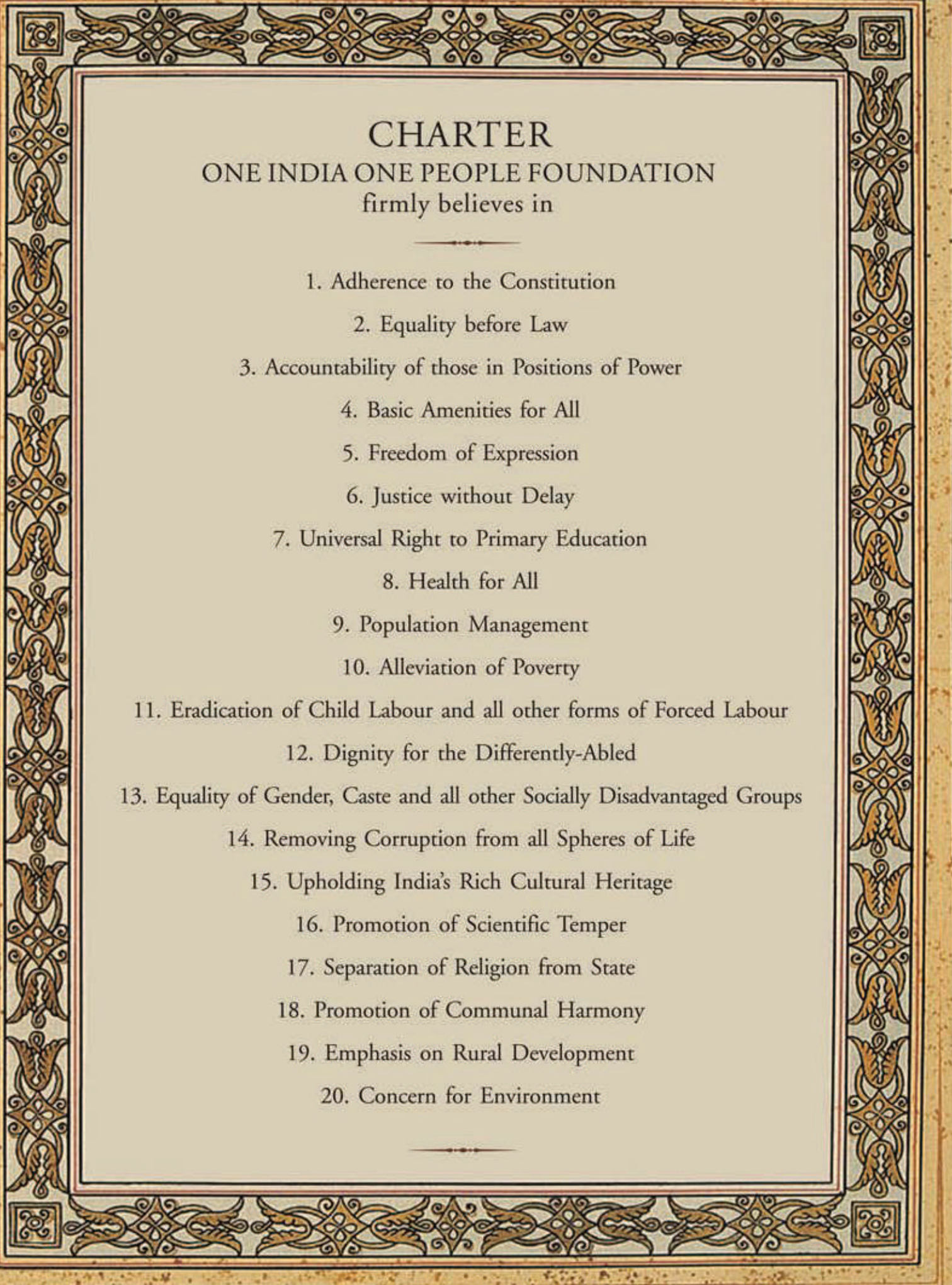
Vasudevan Nair during his long and eventful career performed in all parts of the country and abroad as well. Among the foreign countries where he successfully staged his shows to packed houses were Singapore, Hong Kong, Fiji, Indonesia, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.



Nair won several laurels for his proficiency in the art and these included inter alia the Kerala Kalamandalam Puraskaram, and the Sangeet Natak Academy Fellowship from the Central Government. He was one of the last practitioners of the Kaplingadan style of Kathakali, and has trained and mentored several students who now have been able to carve their own niche in the art. Apart from being a performer, Nair was also a talented singer, and was an 'A' grade artist in Kathakali music with the All India Radio for three decades. Madavoor Vasudevan Nair has left behind a rich legacy for the future generations, and for contemporary performers and neophytes, his meticulous performances could serve as yardsticks of excellence and as valuable insights into the sublime levels that the art could touch. His appeal was not only to the connoisseurs, but also to the common folk who cheered his portrayals and whose constant encouragement and support prompted him to pursue his dancing career till the very end. The Padma Bhushan award conferred on him by the Government of India was a fitting honour to a legend of our times.

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





# CHARTER

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-



# WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor  
(October 9 १९३० – February 23 २००७)  
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