

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined

## Celebrating Life

*Festivals that transcend religion*

*The festival that binds*

*An ancient Khasi festival*

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**

*Shantiniketan*

*Hundred years of Art*

**FACE TO FACE**

*Dr. Manisha Karmarkar*

YOU CAN HAVE ANY ~~COLOR~~ PRESIDENT  
AS LONG AS IT'S ~~BLACK~~ A GANDHI



Chalti ka naam... Gandhi



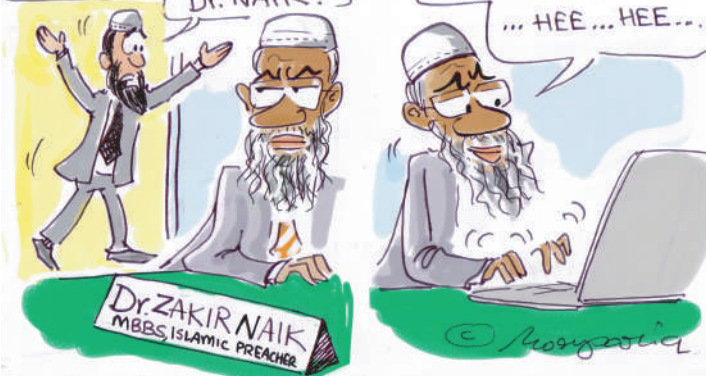
THE ONLY TIME  
I'VE SEEN THEM COME  
WILLINGLY, IS WHEN  
THEY'VE MISTAKEN IT  
FOR ERECTILE  
DYSFUNCTION  
OFFICE!



THE MALAYSIAN GOVT.  
HAS BANNED YOU FROM  
GIVING SPEECHES. WHAT  
WILL YOU DO NOW,  
Dr. NAIK?

I WILL WRITE  
ARTICLES FOR  
THE LANCET

... HEE... HEE...



SIR, ONE MR. MACHIAVELLI  
AND ONE MR. CHANAKYA  
ARE HERE. THEY WANT TO  
PAY THEIR RESPECTS  
TO YOU.



# CONTENTS

September 2019

VOL. 23/02

## THEME: FESTIVALS



### Morparia's Page 02

Festivals that transcend religion 04  
*Nivedita Louis*

The festival that binds 06  
*Shoma A. Chatterji*

Celebrating pain 09  
*Ankur Khamesra*

Cultural bonanza of the Northeast 11  
*Shikha J. Hazarika*

An ancient Khasi festival 14  
*Longnam Kharpuri*

The business of festivity 29  
*Mamta Chitnis Sen*

### Know India Better

Shantiniketan 17  
Hundred years of Art  
*Manjira Majumkar*

### Face to Face

Dr. Manisha Karmarkar 25  
*A. Radhakrishnan*

### General

Should active euthanasia be legalised? 31  
*Hufrish Lacca and Mansi Rathod*

A riveting drama 32  
*Prof. Avinash Kohle*

The alpha-beta-gamma of sustainable development 33  
*G. Venkatesh*

### Great Indians 36



FLIGHT LIEUTENANT  
SUMAS BISWAS, AC



JIGGS KALRA



SUSHMA SWARAJ



**Managing Editor**  
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

**Editor**  
Anuradha Dhareshwar

**Assistant Editor**  
E.Vijayalakshmi Rajan

**Design**  
Resurgam Digital LLP

**Subscription In-Charge**  
Nagesh Bangera

**Advisory Board**  
Sucharita Hegde  
Justice S. Radhakrishnan  
Venkat R. Chary

Printed & Published by  
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for  
**One India One People Foundation,**  
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,  
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,  
Mumbai - 400 026  
Tel: 022-2353 4400  
Fax: 022-2351 7544  
e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com  
oiopsub@fouressindia.com

visit us at:  
**www.oneindiaonepeople.com**  
[www.facebook.com/oneindiaonepeoplefoundation](https://www.facebook.com/oneindiaonepeoplefoundation)

# Festivals that transcend religion

*In the southern state of Tamil Nadu, **Nivedita Louis** found two beautiful examples of festivals celebrated across religions. She came away heartened by the diversity of India.*

**“T**ry to enjoy the great festival of life with other men” – Epictetus.

Festivals are always windows into one's culture and traditions. Most of the Indian festivals are celebrated with pomp and show, with lights and sweets, with laughter and food, and above all, with genuine love showered, irrespective of religions and communities. Every festival, be it Diwali or Ramzan or Christmas, is a shared celebration with mutual cultural borrowing and giving. When I posted pictures of Pongal celebrations of our church on social media, people were first skeptical. Then there were guarded comments, and finally the flood gates broke loose as I spoke of other celebrations in Catholic church, like annual Tamil festivals in the temples around Tamil Nadu where the celebrations start with a flag hoisting on day 1, and end with the grand 'sapparam'/ther' or juggernaut on the 10<sup>th</sup> day.

## The harvest festival of Pongal

Be it a temple, a church or a dargah (mosque), the celebrations of the annual festivals are always the same, following a distinct pattern with flowers, music, crackers, dance, and of course, the beliefs and trust in the Supreme Being. Pongal is the annual harvest festival of Tamil Nadu and is celebrated in mid-January with gusto. Nature blesses people aplenty irrespective of their religious inclinations, and hence Pongal has become a steady 'in house' festival of the Christians. The Catholic church celebrates this with aplomb. The date of this cultural festival coincides with the Feast of Epiphany (Feast of the Three Kings). Just as the three kings offered gifts to the new born Jesus, Tamil people through Pongal feast offer the first produce of harvest to Baby Jesus, representing the valuable gifts of love and kindness.

As the festival is a thanksgiving festival to the God who has blessed the peasants, the Holy Mass is celebrated with agricultural produce taking centrestage. Rice, milk, sugarcane, turmeric, holy water and a decorated mud pot are placed. People assemble in front of the church for blessing of the pongal preparation. The priest blesses the ingredients, places the pot over a temporary stove made of three stones, lights the fire, and starts the celebrations. The church wears a festive look, decorated with banana trees, mango leaves, coconut flower stalks, and with rangoli. Our church usually has a rangoli/kolam competition where people compete with various "anbiyams" groups formed within the church congregation. The entire area around the church is marked with small square plots for the kolams.

The priest and his assistants assess the kolams and award marks, as the milk comes to a boil in the pot and rice is shoved in. As the rice boils and the milk starts to drip down the pot, the congregation gathers to celebrate. The spilling milk denotes prosperity. The traditional "kulavai" sound by gathering the mouth into an 'O' and moving the tongue right and left repeatedly with sound emanating from the vocal chords rent the air. Along with it, the voices also shout "Pongalo Pongal". Once the pongal is cooked, the congregation and priest move into church for the holy mass and prayers.

After the Holy Mass where further produce is submitted to the church, the congregation and priest move to the pongal pot and holy water is sprinkled by the priest in the cooked pongal. Once it is done, there is a community feast of Pongal with people sharing the cooked pongal. The prizes were announced for the kolam competitions and then the traditional "uriyadi" game for men starts. This is much akin to the North Indian Dahi Handi, where a mud pot filled with water/flower petals, prize tied to it is hung at a height and eyes of the person who plays is tied with cloth.

The person has to trust his gut instinct and smash the pot with a long stick handed over to him. Young man after young man come and go, losing the game. When finally someone hits the pot, the crowd cheers loudly in sheer delight. The pongal eaten, kolams judged, prizes distributed and the church almost empty, I said my last prayer. When I came out of the church and looked back, I could see the used pot still sitting atop the stove placed on the kolam, with sugar-canes offering a canopy. Until next Pongal, I would carry forward the sweet memories of ghee dripping pongal served hot on banana leaves and thermo bowls.

## The Vedar Pari festival

Royapuram is a fishing hamlet that lies to the north of Chennai. The populace comprises of ethnic fishermen, their forefathers said to have come from Durgarayapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. The Vedar Pari festival of Royapuram is a festival that is celebrated by the indigenous people, irrespective of their religion. The story of Vedar Pari revolves around the mythological tale of Lord Muruga (Shanmuga, the six faced God) guarding the 'thinai' --- millet fields of tribal girl Valli, as he is smitten by her, and snatching her away on his horse, taking her to his temple. The Lord Muruga of Kandha-kottam temple is carried in heavily decked 'pallaku'/ doli by the families who have been carrying the Lord for centuries. The Lord traverses the distance of about 4-5 kilometers from Parry's Corner in Chennai to Royapuram.

Here at the Vedar Pari grounds of Muthukumaraswamy temple, the God is removed from the doli, moved into the temple and washing with holy water and other rituals take place. The Valli Goddess of the temple is also bathed and dressed in all finery. The special procession Pari or horse made of flowers, arrives soon. The God and Goddess bedecked with jewels and finery sit on the horse and go around the town in procession.

As my friend Rhoda and I reached Royapuram for my first-hand experience of the festival, the full force of the North Chennai hospitality hit me. It was organised hospitality with rows and rows of shops along the road, resembling a village fair that I had seen ages ago. The crowd, the festive mood, the shops and the religious fervour altogether had created an ethereal world. There were hawkers everywhere, with multitude of eatables and knick-knacks for sale. Without wasting time on the market sights, we went straight to the temple grounds. People were hurrying about everywhere, with sudden 'worship points' that had come up with photos of Lord Muruga, accompanied by schoolboys. The little ones had tiny hundi, some had placed plates with few coins to indicate that the 'special darshan' needed to be paid. People who couldn't reach the sanctum of the closed temple paid their respects to these pictures and paid these 'sudden God boys'! As it was said the Lord and Goddess would be seen only after the ceremonial bathing and decorating and it would take a couple of hours, we slowly made our way out of the ground. It was heartening to see handful of burkha clad women praying to the God, distributing food to the pilgrims as thanksgiving for favour received from Lord Muruga. We came to an old house as we meandered around. There was this beautiful old woman with soulful green eyes that shone like green fire. She waved to us and said she had come from nearby Tondiarpet, and she was once a drama artiste. The woman sitting next to her suggested she sing a song for us, and with all earnestness the drama artiste started singing in her mellifluous voice. A small group of pilgrims had gathered around us and we stood awestruck by the song.

Most of the houses had placed a table laden with fruits, flowers, lamps, incense in front of a photograph of the Lord and a steady stream of people kept worshipping these too. We started walking along the 'hawker market' along the road. There are 'cheating companies' that let us throw rings over objects which no one seemed to win anyway. Then we chanced upon this Narikorava (tribal) little girl who might have been around 15/16 years old, sitting with a sleeping baby on her lap. The mother of the baby was sitting next to them, stringing beads. There was a rainbow of beads around the two women and the baby sleeping in peace on her lap led me to ask the same question again, "Who is happy?" Definitely not me, I mused. With no roof over their heads, armed with their traditional knowledge and art of making these beads, the women looked at peace with themselves. Our next stop was at the Muslim lady who was selling hurricane lamps and photographs of Hindu Gods. She was very clear in the names of the Gods and treated her customers who were mostly Hindus, with utmost respect. Falling in love with the ancient looking tiny hurricane lamps, we



***The Vedar Pari festival celebration at Royapuram in Chennai***

bought one each. There was this man selling palmyrah knick-knacks. The shakers for kids, small boxes, purses, baskets and what not! We again fell for the natural produce and bought a couple of palmyrah leaf purses. On enquiry he said he was from Pulicat, a village about 40 kilometers away from Royapuram. A Dutch colony once known for its Palayacottah lungis, the fishing village is now struggling to survive, thanks to Government's purchase of lands for Sriharikota ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) base.

The ethnic people had switched over to palmyrah object making, thanks to efforts of a few NGOs. As we kept the small talk with him flowing, lots of information about his childhood and current state of affairs flowed into the conversation. Wishing him good luck, we purchased a pack of halwa and started our walk back. The festival was more about the plurality of religions in the city than a celebration of a particular religion or community. This was the India our forefathers had envisaged, the India that we had once seen up close, and the one that we hope would what be as we leave it for our children. Pongal or Vedar Pari, the festivals were more of Tamil culture, Tamil pride. As the famed Sangam Tamil poet Kaniyan Poongundran said, "Yadhum oorey, yavarum kelir", my only wish is Tamil Nadu remains the same, the man's verse dated 2000 years ago that says, "Every place is mine, every man is my relative".



**Nivedita Louis is a writer, blogger and social activist by choice. Bitten by the travel bug, and smitten by nature, she loves travelling and cooking. She blogs at [www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com](http://www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com).**

# The festival that binds

One of the most exuberantly celebrated festivals in India is the Durga Puja festival in West Bengal. **Shoma A. Chatterji** captures a slice of the sheer revelry, artistry, skill in idol making, and attention to detail, that are the hallmarks of this joyous festival.



*Durga Puja celebrations in Kolkata*

For Bengalis across the world, Durga Puja is not just a festival, it is a part of the Bengali culture that no amount of political jugglery and infighting, electoral disturbances, globalisation and modernisation has been able to do away with. For many artists and artisans, it is also a way of life which offers them either the only source of earning their bread, or a seasonal occupation to earn some extra money.

## The story behind the Puja

The unitary concept of Sakti did not evolve into any solid personification of the goddess Durga until the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Devimahatmya section of the Markandeya Purana (chapters 81-93), variously known as Durgashaptasati and Chandimahatmya, expounds the splendour and majesty of the divine goddess and proclaims her sovereignty over the male pantheon. The abbreviated form of poetic verses as they appear in the Devi-sukta appears in an expanded, narrative form in the Devimahatmya. Here, the goddess is

portrayed without a male escort. Durga, unlike Parvati, Lakshmi and Sita, owes her autonomy to herself.

The legend: When the gods in heaven failed to suppress the oppression of the demon Mahisasura, they appealed to Vishnu and Shiva. In their anger and their powerlessness, the gods spouted streams of fire from their mouths. The combined mass of energy took the shape of a single flame, with distinct qualities derived from each of the gods. This flame condensed into a concrete form of a multi-armed Goddess – Durga. This divine woman comprising the potent energies of each god who spouted fire, was given weapons and a lion as her vehicle. When the Gods saw the result of their collective wrath, they paid their obeisance to this Adi Sakti, the perennial abstract-neuter energy, and the individuated manifestation of the infinite cosmic energy in female form. In the fierce battle that ensued, Durga defeats the demons one by one. During the most uncontrollable phase of this war, she spontaneously creates, from her brow, a wrathful form of herself, and this is Kali.

The story goes that the Goddess is immersed in the Ganges on the last day because she can go back to Kailash only along a watery route. It is the Arabian Sea in Mumbai, the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh, or the Icchamoti River. On the morning of Bijoya Dashami, married women of all ages play around with vermilion powder or sindoor just like people play with *gulaal* during Holi. Red-bordered white saris in different textures and styles are in great demand among married women on Asthami, the eighth day of the festival.. Traditional royal families of Kolkata even bring out a daily bulletin during puja days.

Another story is that since the Goddess is shaped out of clay from the Ganges, she should go back to the Ganges! On this day, the public transport system is stopped post-lunch to make way for the dancing and singing and drumming away to the river banks.

## The festive spirit

During Durga Puja the entire state in West Bengal and Bengali neighbourhoods in other Indian cities come alive as if with the touch of an invisible magic wand. Strung across every street, lane and road are colourful buntings, banners, paper streamers and floral decorations, with loudspeakers put up in every corner playing songs from Hindi and Bengali films. There are at least four collective Puja mandaps along every street, blocking vehicular traffic for all five days of the festival, with serpentine queues the order of the day.

Multicoloured lights spark up the evenings with decorations suggesting the World Cup, or a string of massive puppets shaped to represent Maa Durga and her kids, suspended from a string. Tinsel ribbons flutter away in the breeze and bawling kids harass their mothers for one more cup of ice-cream! The air is rich with the fragrance of dhoop, incense sticks, flowers and sandalwood. The kitchen goes dry because everyone eats out. No one goes to the movies but those who cannot go pandal-hopping, must sit back and watch the fun on the television news channels that give a minute-by-minute display of the festival!

## The backstage workers

Drummers or *dhakis* arrive from their original habitats in villages of Murshidabad and Behrampur to look for work. They are an integral part of any Bengali festival in general, and Durga Puja in particular. The *dhak*, a traditional percussion instrument mandatory for every religious festival among Bengalis across the world is a must. These *dhakis* arrive at Sealdah station just before the Durga Puja. With modernity and due to lack of government assistance of any kind, their lives and their music stand threatened by extinction.

The work is seasonal and pays much less compared to the labour and the money they put in for buying the dhak or replacing it when needed. A young man who trains with a group of six in Andiron in Beldanga explains how different rhythms and beats are used for different events during Durga

Puja – one when the Goddess is being taken to the mandap, one when she is welcomed, one when she is being worshipped, one when she is taken to the ghat for immersion, another one for the actual immersion ceremony changing with each ritual performed at the mandap.

## The clay workers of Kumartuli

The clay image makers are an institution unto themselves. In 1757, Lord Robert Clive and the East India Company won the first military victory for British arms on Indian soil at the Battle of Plassey, defeating the Moghul Nawab. Members of the urban Hindu elite of Calcutta who supported the British, decided to celebrate it with a Durga Puja. Clay images were then made by the craftsmen of Krishnanagar. Most of them later migrated to Calcutta and settled in Kumartuli. The name Kumartuli is derived from *kumore* meaning potter, which the craftsmen originally were, and *tuli* meaning their small place of shelter. As Calcutta grew as a centre of trade and administration during the British rule, these potters by caste became the core settlers of Kumartuli, or the Potters' Quarters.

Around 4,000 idols of Durga are created in the 450-and-odd narrowly built workshops or studios in Kolkata's Kumartuli, the hub centre of idol makers who make idols of Durga, her four children, her lion and the demon Mahisasura. But, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this cottage industry, also scattered in different parts of the city and the state of West Bengal, continues to be a creative space dominated almost entirely by men. Women, born or married into the families of these potters/artisans, are not really encouraged to join the trade, and in some families, are prohibited from becoming idol makers for the sole reason that they are women. So, at the most, we have not more than a dozen women who have broken the barriers, not only to become idol makers, but have also flourished in the business through courage, conviction and commitment.

Among these less than dozen women artisans, three or four have gained prominence through the media, while the rest continue to remain invisible. The media highlight has begun only since 2011, though some of them have been crafting beautiful idols of the Mother Goddess and her family for around two decades. During the puja season, the male artisans hire extra hands from across Bengal because making the idols of Goddess Durga is a grand affair. But they simply do not want women invading their space.

On Chaitra Sankranti, the last day of the Bengali year, 300 artisans who, by heredity, are marked out as idol sculptors of Kumartuli, perform a ritual puja before putting their hands on dry bamboo sticks to form the first skeleton of the first Durga idol that will come out of the work shed before the Durga Puja festival. The smell of wet clay from the Ganges and other rivers, the dry crackling of straw beneath one's feet, the criss-cross patterns of bamboo spread out within the narrow confines of a ramshackle, eight-by-eight (8x8) studio, blend seamlessly to create the traditional homes of the artisans where Goddess Durga takes 'birth'.



### ***The clay workers of Kumartuli at work***

Parul Raeel hails from Nadia district, and her marriage brought her to Kumartuli. She makes accessories like jewellery for the Goddesses with sequins, zardozi beads, and small mirrors. “It takes me about three days to make a single set of jewellery for a Kali idol, but the business side is taken care of by my husband”, says Parul. Nivedita is only fourteen years old. She excels in creating flowers out of pencil shavings that are used for decoration. She is training under her mother Shrabani Pal, who makes small idols for the market. The crafting of the hair of the Gods is another line in creative artistry.

Each Durga ‘family’- Durga, her four children, Mahisasura, and the lion - takes around two months to complete, and is priced within a range of ₹10,000 and ₹2 lakhs. Orders from abroad must be completed and shipped by April-May, before which they are packed in boxes made of ply, shaped like cupboards, and locked for security. The pandals and their decoration are works of art unto themselves. Some are shaped to resemble the Taj Mahal, while there are others crafted completely out of glass bangles, and a third could be a running train complete with a booking office. Farmers from different villages drop their sickles and their axes and their ploughs and pick up bamboos and long pieces of cloth and rope to engage themselves in making artistic and durable pandals, and earn some pin money. The raw material is very expensive so the cost of their labour is marginal. Yet, they come, because they are addicted to this artistic craftsmanship and continue doing it.

They arrive in huge groups from East and West Medinipur which happens to be a hub of the art and craft industry, and from other districts such as Nadia and North and South 24 Parganas, among others. In Medinipur alone, there are an estimated 100 pandal-making groups, also called decorators. The pandal and the decoration are never given second place after the Goddess. They receive equal status because their imagination can create a real farm where crops can be seen growing with a small pond some-

where, or, a real garden with huge sunflowers swaying in the breeze, or, perhaps, a small fishing village with “real” fishermen and fisherwomen at work – weaving fishnets or spreading their wares.

Lighting specialists are invited from Chandannagar, a suburban town famous for its lighting during Jagadhatri puja, to train lighting experts in Kolkata before the Durga puja. This community comprises little known Indian artists who have reinvented the great spirit of Indian story telling tradition, through a new and unique medium of light art. The whole essence and appeal of Chandannagar light art can be understood through simple but fascinating anecdotes. In one pooja pandal, the light magicians created an entire zoo inside the pandal only with lights. It was unbelievable in its imagination and execution.

## **Conclusion**

The artisans offer the rare experience of the spirit of the puja much before the drums begin to play on Maha Shasthi, and then fade away as the idols are immersed in the muddy waters of the river Hooghly on Bijoya Dashami. When the festival comes to an end, the ghats are filled with the skeletal remains of the straw and bamboo and small boys flood in to pick up the head of a slaughtered Mahisasura or the zardozi jewellery of the different goddess icons for a fast buck. The sounds of the dhak recede into silence, the colours fade away, the fineries are stored away, and the long wait for the festival next year begins.



**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.**

# Celebrating pain

*Can pain and suffering be used as a tool for celebration? Ankur Khamesra explains some of the seemingly weird and painful celebrations, and the folklore and significance of the way they have been celebrated for ages.*



**The annual Bharani festival celebrated at Kodungallur, Kerala**

India has always been the epitome of a country with a vast cultural diversity, and with such a vast diversity comes instances of what we would consider 'weird' customs and practices. While some of these traditions have a connect with some folklore or history, the others are carried out just as a continuum of years of practice.

The word festival itself cheers our mood and brings an eruption of celebration and frenzy. However there are some festivals that are celebrated in very notorious manners, which feel more like pain and punishment, rather than a celebration. One may wonder why a festival should be associated with such painful customs like walking on fire, being trampled over by cows, or even being hung by hooks; further, why would a sane person willingly go through such an atrocity? But when you see the determination and belief of the participant, questions are almost redundant, but just a true blind faith to be observed that leaves you bewildered with its intensity. While most of these festivals are celebrated regionally, some are celebrated throughout the country.

## Testament of faith

History has given us unimaginable examples of

extremities a man can go through, to prove his faith. The concept of sacrificial ceremonies is one of them. While some cults adhere to animal sacrifices, there are many others who test their faith by self-sacrifice or mutilation. The sacrifice is not just a ritual for these believers, but holds two very significant reasons. Firstly, it is the symbolism of undying faithfulness towards their deity, and secondly, it shows the extremity a man can go through to quench the thirst of his own insatiable desire. Though there are many festivals and places where these ceremonies can be witnessed, a few of these festivals deserve a special mention.

## The Bharani festival

The annual Bharani festival at the Kodungallur Bhagawati temple in Kerala, is celebrated in the month of Meenam. The festival commences with animal sacrifices and continues with 'Kavu Theendal'. During this ritual 'Vellichapads' (oracles of the Goddess), dressed in red run around the temple in a state of trance, waving their sickle-shaped sticks (symbolising the sword used by the Devi to slay the Demon Daruka) in the air. The oracles consider themselves as Yoginis (feminine force of the Devi). During this state of trance, these oracles overrun the temple premises and smite their heads with their sticks, to please



### **Mourning or *maatam* during Muharram displays the acts of lamentation**

the Goddess with their blood. This site of ecstatic women dancing in frenzy, wearing red covered in blood can be quite a mystical and thrilling experience, yet frightful at the same time.

While Bharani festival is strictly regional, Garuda Thookkam is observed in many parts of South India. Garuda Thookkam is a ritual art form wherein the devotees hang themselves on a tall pedestal like structure with the help of sharp metal hooks piercing their bodies. They enact as Garuda who quenched the thirst of the Devi with his own blood after slaying off the demon Daruka. Though both the stories above hark back to the same incident, yet both have a difference when it comes to sacrifice. Whereas the former shows a connection with Devi from within (oracles themselves enacting as Goddesses), the latter celebrates the relation of servitude between the devotee and the Goddess.

Another such festival that celebrates faith is 'Thimithi'. Originating in Tamil Nadu, but celebrated in many parts of the world like Singapore, Fiji, Sri Lanka, etc., Thimithi is celebrated a week before Diwali in the Tamil month of Aipasi, in honour of Draupadi Amman, a.k.a Draupadi in the North of India. Whereas Draupadi is just one of the main characters of Mahabharata in the North, she is revered as a Goddess in the South. The festival of Thimithi commemorates the event of purification of her by Agni where she walked through the 'yajna' to prove her adherence to Dharma and walked out afresh and unharmed. The devotees of Draupadi Amman re-enact the event and walk through this fire pit (specially prepared for the event), barefoot. It is believed that the true devotee of Draupadi Amman will walk out of the pit unharmed. Devotees not only participate, but also make their own children participate in this testament of faith.

### **Testament of sportsmanship**

Every year on the eighth day of the equinox, devotees gather in number at Kateel Devi Durga Parmeshwari temple near Mangalore in Karnataka to please Devi Durga by participating in Agni-Keli. Devi is worshipped in this

temple as Sri-Devi "the supreme Goddess in her Rajas form that rules all the three lokas". Just like in olden times, where sport of swords and weapons were held in arenas to please the royalties; the devotees participate in this fire sport of Agni Keli to please the Queen of Goddesses.

A small arena is set up where the devotees are divided in two groups and are supposed to throw burning palm fronds at the opponent. Each player gets only five throws, and thus the sport lasts no more than half an hour. Precautions are taken by the temple authorities, wherein no person intentionally harms the opponent out of personal grudge. Anyone who gets burnt during the sport is sprayed with water of Kumkumarchane (holy water used to worship the Goddess).

Though this ritual carried out for centuries by the devotees seems daredevil and a risky sport, yet the devotion for the Devi and the enthusiasm with which it is participated, makes this festival a true celebration of spirits.

### **Testament of mourning**

One can easily connect to Muharram with the phrase - festival of mourning. Though this festival is celebrated with joy and feast by some Muslims, however, the Shia Muslims mourn the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad and his entire family. The Shia mourning begins on the first night and continues for 10 days. The mourning also known as *maatam*, displays the acts of lamentation like chest-beating and self-infliction of pain by acts like flagellation and face-slapping. The act of flagellation includes striking of chest with palms, striking of backs with chains and swords, and cutting of foreheads with knives to inflict pain and shedding blood – a symbolism of the atrocities borne by Hussein by the forces of Umayyad Caliph. Some of the Shias believe that the mourning ritual will help them to salvation on the day of judgement, while the others bear such a pain to feel the atrocity their Imaam went through while walking down the path of righteousness. During the whole act of *maatam*, the practitioners can be seen in a trance of devotion, and claim to not feel pain.

Whereas these are few of the rituals that are celebrated for their own reasons and stories, yet the intensity of the faith with which they are celebrated is what marks them as festivals. These festivals show us that we, the people of faith, are not just tied with the bonds of virtues and celebrations, but also equally to the hardships and atrocities of the fables of the past, making us a part of these beautiful stories.



**Ankur khamesra is an entrepreneur and an artist, who owns a digital marketing agency. He has particular interest in Indian mythology. He also loves to travel and photograph his journeys. You can contact him at: <https://www.resurgam.in> and**

**follow his travel stories at: <https://www.instagram.com/banjaaraa.couple/>**

# Cultural bonanza of the Northeast

*The enchanting states of the Northeast are ethnically, culturally and linguistically different from the rest of India, with each state celebrating their traditional festivals in their own unique ways. Witnessing these festivals would leave one with a lifetime experience, says **Shikha J. Hazarika**.*



**(Right) Assamese youth busy preparing the Meji for the Bhogali Bihu celebration ; (Left) The early morning hours where people are busy burning the Meji and worshipping the God of Fire (Agni Devta).**

**W**hen a small portion of a pudding tastes so heavenly, imagine how great it would be to taste some more or maybe the whole of it! Similar is the case when we talk about the diversity of Northeast India. Be it the picturesque beauty of each of its states or the food with its unique flavours carrying the indigenouness; be the inimitable festivals and traditions or the ethnic attires of each community weaved with tales of their originality. Northeast India is incredible in its own way! So, here's offering some more flavours of the festivals of Northeast India.

## Magh or Bhogali Bihu

The word 'Bihu' itself has gained such popularity across the country that when one talks about Assam, it is obvious to discuss Bihu. But many are unaware that there are three Bihu festivals celebrated with lot of fervour. All of them hold an agricultural significance and so celebrated in relevant seasons. Bhogali or Magh Bihu is celebrated in mid-January, on the first day of 'Magh' month of Assamese calendar. 'Bhogali' means handiness of rich food. So Bhogali Bihu represents a festival of food and it is related to harvesting. Bhogali Bihu is celebrated at a time when all the cultivation works get over and everyone has plenty to eat

and enjoy. On this eve, people build 'Meji', a structure made of wood or dry leaves that is to be burnt on the actual Bihu day. This Meji is guarded day and night by all the people of the village. To stay for the night, people build temporary houses called 'Bhela ghar'. These houses are usually made of hay. Traditionally, there used to be grand feasts for the people staying in the Bhela ghar that night. The feast is called 'Bhoj'. On the actual day of Magh Bihu, everyone takes bath at dawn and enjoy the Meji that is lit up by one old member of the society or village. In the villages, people also witness some interesting bullfights and bird fights. Dance and music also become the order of the day as the day wears on. People also visit the homes of their friends and relatives to exchange pleasantries on the occasion of Bihu.

## Moastu Mong

From the seventeen existing tribes of Nagaland, the Moatsu Mong festival is celebrated by the Ao People. The Ao Nagas observe Moatsu Mong as their designated harvest festival in the month of May. This festival brings an end to the sowing season and is a period of relaxation. People pray to the almighty to look after their lands and seek blessings

for a great harvest. They also express their gratitude for the abundance of blessings received. It is also a time when the wise old men of the village predict how the upcoming year will be. People dance and sing, feast and pray. Only the best reared animals are slaughtered for their meat. The festive spirits are complete with competitions where the best made rice wine is awarded. Women and men both clad themselves in their finest traditional wears and artistic ethnic jewelry and celebrate. The festival is celebrated for three whole days. Initial festivities begin on 1<sup>st</sup> August and end on 3<sup>rd</sup>. These days, Moatsu Mong is being promoted as a national event by Nagaland Tourism, and Chuchuyimlang village is the main place of attraction for the celebrations that take place during the festival.

## Kharchi Puja

Popularly known as the 'Festival of 14 Gods' in Tripura, Kharchi Puja is the worship of the dynasty deity of Tripuri people, the fourteen Gods. The word Kharchi is derived from two Tripuri words 'Khar' or Kharta meaning or Sin, 'chi' or 'si' meaning cleaning. The fourteen Gods are worshipped by the royal priest 'Chantai' who is not a 'Brahmin' but of a tribal origin. As per the 3000-year-old tradition, only the Chantai descendants can take place of the Chantai. This festival customs are completely related to the authentic Tripuri traditions, however everyone else is always welcome to enjoy and partake in this celebration. According to Tripuri legends, Ama Pechi is menstruation of mother goddess or earth mother. So the soil is not ploughed or dug anywhere during this time. Among Tripuri, the menstruation of a woman is considered as unholy, which is why during this period women are prohibited from performing any auspicious rituals. Even a priest whose wife is

menstruating is prohibited from performing any auspicious or religious function. Puja is performed for seven consecutive days to wash out sins and to clean post menstrual phase of mother earth's menstruation. On the day of puja, 14 gods are carried to Saidra River by members of Chantai where gods are bathed in holy water and are brought back to the temple. A large fair is also organised where every day lots of people throng the festivals. Both Tripuri and non-Tripuri people participate in the festival.

## Solung

Celebrated by the Adi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Solung is a popular agricultural festival that comes after the sowing of seeds to seek prosperity and a good harvest. The 'Solung' of the Adis can be compared with the three Bihus of the Assamese, as they are also socio-religious in nature, which has a close connection with agriculture. To mark the celebrations, people perform various rituals and make offerings to gods and goddesses during the celebration and pray for a bumper harvest. Mithun (Great Indian Bison) is considered as holy animal and occupies an important religious significance among the Adis. During the 7 days celebration, along with pigs, Mithuns are slaughtered in the wee hours of the morning and people present gifts of meat and Apong (rice beer) to neighbours and relatives. On the last and on the seventh day of the Solung festival, men assemble at the village dormitory generally known as 'Mosup' to make bows and arrows, which are fastened on the doors of every house in the village. This is done in order to resist the evil spirits from entering the houses. This day is known as 'Ekob'. The festival also reflects care and protection of animals which are vital components of their family and social life of Adi tribe.



*Kharchi Puja is the worship of the dynasty deity of Tripuri people*



***The Rongker festival is celebrated to free people from diseases and natural calamities***

## Rongker

Rongker is a major springtime annual festival celebrated among the Karbis in the month of April to pacify local deities who are associated with the village welfare, as well as to get rid of all bad happenings. Karbis or the Karbi tribe is one of the major ethnic groups in Northeast India and especially in the hills of Assam. The key reason behind the celebration of the festival is to free people from all the diseases and natural calamities throughout the year. There are ten earthen alters installed in the eastern side of the site where the festival is supposed to be held. They are kept in a row that faces the south-north direction. This festival lasts for three days and one of the rituals is where all the deities are invoked. The main rituals are performed by the head priest who is assisted by other religious specialists and the village headman. In one of the unique rituals performed at night on the second day of the festival, the evil spirits are driven out from the lower to the upper part of the village by dancing. At the end of the village road an altar is made where a chicken is sacrificed in the name of a deity. A feast is organised when the rituals are over. This festival has some special features where some specific activities are not to be performed during this period. For e.g., husking, where women are not supposed to participate, no agricultural activities are to be performed and no villager is allowed to leave the village. During this festival twelve deities are worshipped.

Festivals form an essential aspect of the socio-cultural life of the people of a state and as a matter of fact,

festivals are the mirror of the people's culture. However, it would be worth mentioning that Northeast India is such a region where one state is not limited to just one or two tribal communities. A state like Arunachal Pradesh has 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub tribes. Similarly Nagaland has 17 tribes and the count in other states are no different. And each of these tribes has their own unique culture and customs. Additionally, this region is probably one of the last remaining outposts in the country where tribes still live a primitive existence, seeking out a living from the land and maintaining a harmonious relation with nature. Reading on them would leave one with knowledge and imagination, but visiting and witnessing the cultural bonanza would for sure leave one with a lifetime experience!



**Shikha J. Hazarika who hails from Assam in Northeast India, is a Communication Specialist by profession and a hardcore travel propagandist, who has a wide reach across Northeast India. Writing and photography being her**

**passions, she is also keenly associated with the communicative works development sector, and is presently working as a Senior Officer - Media & Communications, with Bitchem Asphalt Technologies Ltd., a company carrying out a green roads mission using coldmix for paving of roads. Besides, she has worked for many international events like the 12<sup>th</sup> South Asian Games, Guwahati International Film Festival, etc.**

# An ancient Khasi festival

*The Northeast Khasi festival of Shad Nongkrem symbolises an unbroken tradition of rituals that have continued from ancient times. **Longnam Kharpuri** elaborates.*



**Maiden Syiems dressed in traditional attire perform the religious dance at Shad Nongkrem**

I am writing this article to not simply lend another space of tokenism to tribal beliefs and practices for tourist consumerism, but rather a deeper insight into the intricacies of being a Khasi by looking at one sacred festival held annually every year. This is the Jinglehniam Hima Khyrim or popularly known as Shad Nongkrem.

## A truly old festival

The Shad Nongkrem is the only large scale Khasi festival that is being held today that has stuck to the ancient roots in which it was first established: The festival goes back to the very first Syiem or Khasi Monarchy that being a woman, Pahsyntiew, believed to have been sent by a god U 'Lei Shillong embodied in the hill that tourists now know as Shillong Peak. The festival derives its name "Nongkrem" from the place that the original Syiems stayed at, that being a place of the same name. However, due to some feud that broke out during the British rule, the ling Sad (sacred building where all assemblies of state and religious observances are done) burnt down and the Syiems, u Syiem Klur Singh and ka Syiem-sad Jir Kiri, fled to Smit where the dance is now being held every year. The dates for the the Shad Nongkrem are usually set between the end of October and the beginning of November depending upon the favourability of the rituals and the phase of the moon: The Shad

Nongkrem always falls on an auspicious full moon night. This festival lasts six days and encompasses elaborate rituals and sacrifices on different Khasi market days: ĩew Pamtiah, ĩew Umni, ĩewduh, Lyngka, ĩew Nongkrem, and ĩew Mawlong.

Even though the above dates are when the rituals and various sacred dances happen, the preparation starts way before: The preparation of the ĩingsad/ sacred house is done on the day of ĩew Rynghiep by the replacement of the thatch of the roof. This is mandatorily completed in a day. Before they initiate the process, the Sohblei Mawroh (the priest), has to first climb up and start the process. On the next day of ĩew Shyllong, the Dhulia/ musicians come to stay at the ĩingsad (nowadays two weeks before the main festival), and continue with the process of preparation for the main festivities. On the next day in the evening of the ĩew Umni, the Dhulia soak Thribah/cane strings in water. In the very early hours of the morning of ĩewduh, they weave the strings in a specific way. The weaves tell the populace that the rituals are to start soon. These same weaves are sent to the different leaders that are the Lyngdoh and the Basan Raid, and in turn these leaders direct their raids and shnong to send goats to the ĩingsad for the ritual of Bujai Blang and others. On the day of ĩew Rynghiep, in the week when the rituals are to start, the Syiem Sad soaks Jyndem/-

fermented rice in a basket which will be used in the rituals. On the afternoon of ĩew Shyllong, the Dhulia go to the river to wash their musical instrument that will be used in the sacred rituals. After they are finished the Dhulia come back to the ĩingsad and play on the Tyngkong/ Verandah and they do a dance called Shad Mastieh. On this same day the Lyngdoh Lawai or priest brings the diengsnung/ Khasi oak to tie with the Rishot Blei/ God Pillar in the ĩingsad.

## The main day of the festival

We will now discuss the fourth day of the festival on the day of ĩew Lyngka which often is considered the main day and known as Shad Nongkrem by popular understanding. This day begins with the Shad Nohkijat by the women Syiem who are unmarried. These maiden Syiems dress in the attire suitable for the religious dance executed by Syiems before them. They are decked in silks, golden crowns, and other gold ornaments and are accompanied with music played by the Dhulia on a type of drum called Ksing Kynthei.

By this time the male members of the family and the Khasi noble men are present in the Shlur of the ĩingsad. The women Syiem stand surrounded by their maternal uncles, father and their brothers and they hold each other

by the cloth that is tied around their waists. In this way they form a kind of chain and the noblemen and two of the senior Dhulia join. The Dhulia each hold a symphiah and they wave it around while everyone moves around the hearth three times.

They repeat this same dance in the compound outside the ĩingsad except they dance around the Dhulia instead of a hearth. This dance is called the Shad Nohkijat as the Syiem have to dance the first steps on the lypnung shad/ dancing ground before the dancers from the general public take part. After the Syiem initiate the dance the dancers from the general public join in all their traditional finery, right from the golden and silver crowns, silk dhara, and gold ornaments fitted with priceless stones. The men wear their feathered turbans, their silver quivers, coral and gold beads, their dhotis, black embroidered vests and carry a symphiah in their right hand whipping it around as they dance. The men dance on the outer circle and the women in the inner.

This dance goes on till evening and in that time the Syiem Sad prepares for the rituals, and executes them with the Suidñia Longsyiem (maternal uncle of the Syiem) and the heads of clan Mawlieh come to give their offerings of produce taken out of the ground.



*Male Syiems in feather turbans and traditional wear dancing at Shad Nongkrem*

The ritual signifies the sanctification of the fertility of the soil and a good harvest. In the evening when it is time to do the ritualistic sacrifice of the Pomblang Syiem, the general dance is ended.

The priests in charge of this part of the ritual collect the items needed from the Syiem Sad in the Shlur of the ĩingsad. Then the Kñia Khadar Sla happens in this same area which pays homage to all the Khasi gods and guardians (12 in number) of the hearth, agriculture and political administration. Following this are the rituals in the compound just outside the ĩingsad where the same priests set up their seating areas along with many other items needed for the ritual. Again, an elaborate and systematic ritual is carried out to mark out the portents of the future and to pay respects to Ka Blei Longsyiem and U Blei Shyllong. The goats are also sanctified before sacrifice and separated based on their gender. Based on their sex the sanctification is also done accordingly through the male god or the female god. After this sanctification the ruling Syiem takes his position with his dao/ heavy long bladed sword like implement and sacrifices the goats accompanied by rifle shots into the night sky. The goats' innards are studied for signs and portents and pieces of meat are taken by the priests following the division of the flesh among them. Then homage is paid to the following gods: U Saidni Longsyiem, U Kapitor u Kha, U Bakhraw U Basan, and U Shakri Shakor

After their dance the Dhulia change the music to

celebrate the Risa Blang where the general public participate joyfully. A ritual is again carried out by the Syiem Sad after all the priests come back inside the ĩingsad with the items used for their ritual. She progresses to the fire roasting meat and distributing it for 15 gods. The five Lang Synran or special goats are sacrificed only by the Syiem and the other younger male Syiem. Again the goats brought by the public are never sanctified or used in rituals. They are brought only out of the generosity of the public to pay respect to the rituals and also add more grandeur to the festivities. These are consumed by the public.

I would like to mention here that the practice of this festival entails much of the Khasi way of life that prioritises the family and the hearth, the clan, the society, and our relationship with our environment, be it the soil, the forests and the rivers. At first glance a festival is just taken for its display of tradition through attire, dance and music; my attempt however is to give a deeper glimpse of the significance of such a festival handed down from time immemorial, in a vastly oral culture that is matrilineal in essence.



**Longnam W. Kharpuri is an M.Phil student at Delhi University.**

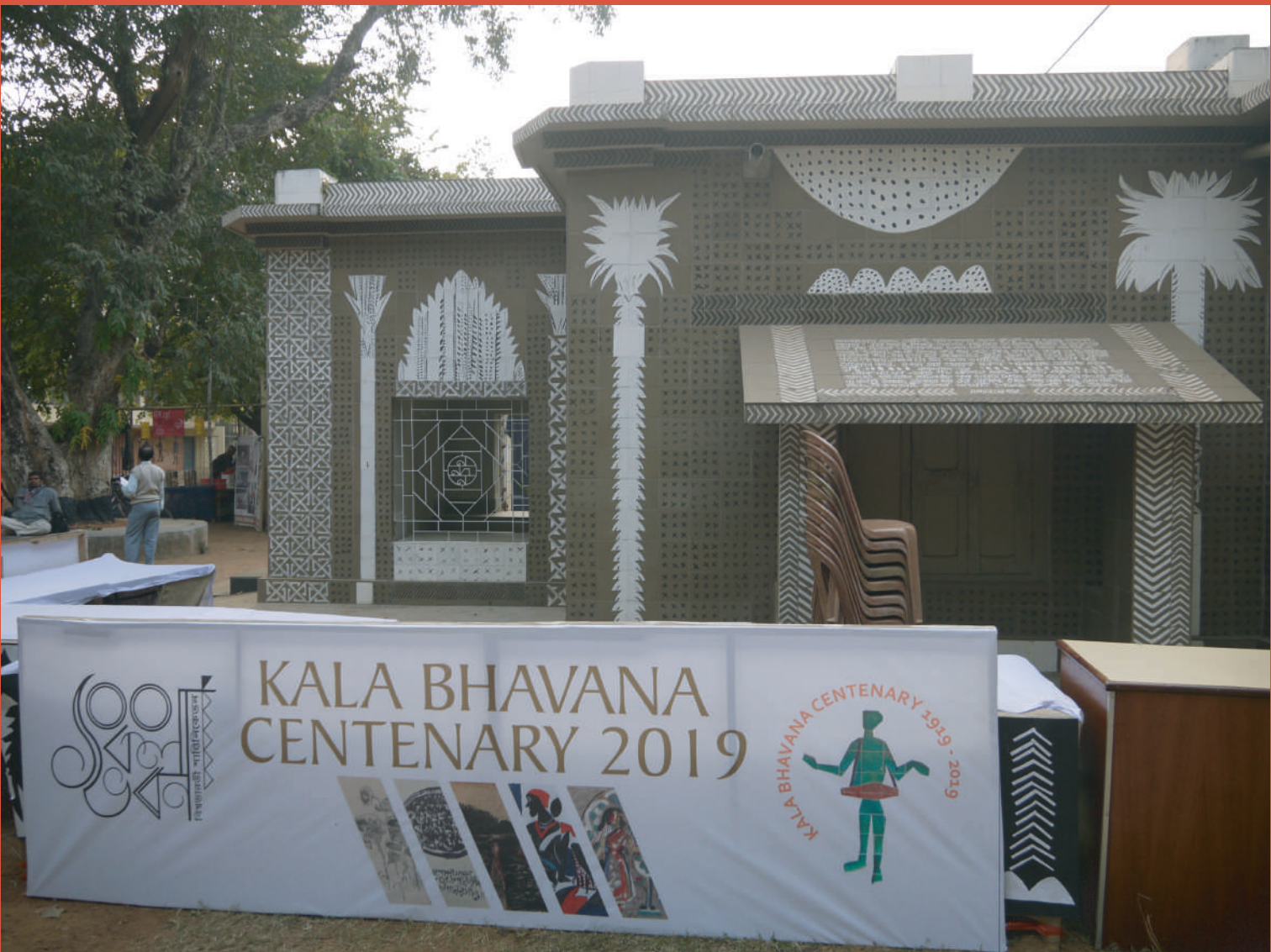
## WHO AM I?

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



*Earth...*





# Shantiniketan

## A hundred years of art

*Kala Bhavan, one of the first visual arts colleges in the country set up by Rabindranath Tagore, is celebrating its centenary this year. Art in its various manifestations flourished here under dedicated mentors. The institute has produced not only the multi-faceted Tagores, but other renowned names like Ram Kinkar Baij, Nandalal Bose, and even Satyajit Ray.*

**Text & Photographs : Manjira Majumdar**



**(Above) Art everywhere! The graffiti on the walls of an eatery called Kashahari (named after a Japanese visitor to Viswa Bharati) adjacent to the campus; (Below) Kala Bhavana turns 100! Artistically decked up by students and teachers.**

All roads lead to *pous mela* in Shantiniketan; the month of pous falling towards the end of December, and beginning of January. Held officially for three days, the various stalls continue to operate for a longer time. This is when artisans bring in their wares from nearby villages of this small town, located near Bolpur, in the Birbhum district of West Bengal. The weather is usually cold and crisp, and the city people plan for a small getaway to enjoy some country air and mela or fair/carnival time. Live music presentations are an integral part of the fair, prompting music lovers to travel only for this because the double bill is in the annual baul mela, held roughly 40 kilometres away at Kenduli, the birthplace of the famous ancient Bengali poet, Joydev. The *pous mela*, however, over the years, has reduced into a synthetic one, catering more to the needs of the locals; the artisanal flavour somewhat missing from it.



## Abode of peace and knowledge

But anytime is a good time to visit Shantiniketan, three-and-half-hours by train, of which there are plenty of options to choose from. Or one can drive down, stopping at small dhabas for snacks and sweets, along the way. The speciality *mishti* (sweet) of the region is the *langcha* of Shaktinagar.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's father Deben-dranath founded Shantiniketan, as an abode of peace and knowledge, he being a philosopher. But it was Rabindranath who set up a residential school and later, a university, where one could learn and hone both performing and fine arts in an open environment. Instead of being confined to classrooms, the ashram style Viswa Bharati was known for its classes under the shade of trees and the open sky, collaborating with the local tribal community to learn about their art and craft. Art in its various manifestations --- performing such as dance, music, drama and visual arts in oil painting, water colours, screen printing, sketches, print making, lino cuts, lithography, sculptures, the art of tying and dyeing, et al, flourished here under dedicated mentors.



**(Above) Beautifully designed posters and calendars – collectors' items; (Below) Writer under a huge installation of a photographer training his lens on society perhaps – a comment on the media?**





***Ceramic glaze figurines: apart from decorative items, the potter's wheel also turns out utility items like platters, mugs and teapots; (Below) Terracotta decorative items sometimes fashioned into tableware***



Even though Shantiniketan remains a quick getaway from the city, it is facing the onslaught of development, by which private houses and sprawling gated housing complexes are fast sprouting, resulting in crowds and congestion. The idyllic ambience has long gone, but it is just that the locals need more amenities and less of real estate development. The private homestays in some of the bungalows, very tastefully and artistically designed, and owned by several well-known names of the city's intellectual and artistic community, can offer a breather for a few days. Otherwise, small hotels and resorts abound.

Tagore also visualised a universal abode of syncretism and harmony, combined with simple living. Not a touristy affair. So a mandatory visit to Viswa Bharati University, or to see the several simple mud house architecture inspired homes that Tagore built to enjoy his discourses with people like C.F. Andrews, Gandhiji, and other stalwarts from various fields. These are what legends are made of. Sonajhuri, on the banks of River Kopai, is where some tribal fair or *haat* takes place on weekends, attracting hordes of visitors to buy, mainly, woven saris, and tribal dokra and white metal jewellery.

## Seasonal festivals

From Basanta Utsav which is the onset of spring to Barsha Mangal during the heavy rains, the festivities here revolve around the seasons than religion. But the most unique fair that Shantiniketan offers and remains one of its



best kept secrets is the two-day art or Nandan mela held every year on December 1 and 2. The uniqueness of this mela is that it is an art exposition organised by the students of Kala Bhavan at Viswa Bharati. Kala Bhavan attracts students from several part of the globe (Bangladesh, Turkey, Korea, Japan, to name a few), wanting to study art and design here.

Kala Bhavan synonymous with unique style of art known as the Shantiniketani School of Art, was set up in 1918, and has produced not only the multi-faceted Tagores but other renowned names like Ram Kinkar Baij, Nandalal Bose, and even Satyajit Ray. Bose became its principal in 1922 and it is in his memory that this art exposition is held every year.

This year, the Art School will be completing hundred years, and the celebrations began in December 2018. Nandan mela showcases the students' work at modest prices when not showcasing the latest arty trends, not just in oils and canvases, but in beautifully designed ceramic, wood, metal, leather and textiles as well. Some members of the faculty who have been well-known artists of their times, sometimes donate their works for students as a fund raiser. No wonder gallery owners from other cities descend on it to pick up works of art, be they in calendars or posters or prints. Every year, prints, water colours, lino, litho, pen sketch, and numerous mixed media in addition to samples of textiles, home linen and tableware designs are on display.

**(Above) Interactive art: visitors were invited to sign or draw on the dress and mask of this foreign student;**  
**(Below) Part of an exhibition: note the graphic designs**



The handicrafts by the students created with the help of their professors are unique. They are inspired by the surroundings, but are not typical mass produced local souvenirs. The range of products on offer for the special fair has always been mind-boggling. Every year, the trends vary, but various elements define their benchmark and of the special care and attention paid to these. The students, after all, plan to pursue a career in arts and design.

## Carnival time

The two-day *mela* turns into a carnival with food and music because it is also a time for students, past and present, to let their hair down.

A carnival type of ambience grips you the moment you enter the Viswa Bharati grounds. This year it was a bit too noisy and crowded due to swelling crowds, but the students, with the help from the alumni, worked hard to put up interesting installations and exhibits. There was a cultural programme on the eve of the *mela* – a modern dance fusion – on the grounds of the University; various art symposiums and seminars ran parallel. Every year, the students put up beautiful installation type of decorations up in the trees along with fairy lights lending a magical effect to the whole atmosphere. This year it was no different; only extra special.



(Above) Re-cycled materials made into object d'arts  
(Below) History of Kala Bhavan in a slim volume





**Designer ethnic jewellery crafted out of leather, wool, cloth, wood, beads and more**

## The centenary exhibition

Those were exciting times in art -- a century back, and evolving. A new school of painting was emerging from the shadows of European art in India. The Bengal School married the two styles, and in the true spirit of things, to commemorate the centenary, a month-long exhibition of original works of well-known artists associated with Viswa Bharati, were displayed at the Nandan Gallery, adjacent to Kala Bhavan. Notable among these were works by Tagore and some of the best artists that emerged from Shantiniketan over the last hundred years or so. There was a portrait of Andrews by Tagore himself. Works of the blind artist Binod Behari Mukherjee, Nandalal Bose, sculptors Ram Kinkar Baij and K.G. Subramanyam, the virtual who's who of Shantiniketan art was represented in this exhibition. So were works by Somnath Hore who trained at Calcutta's Government College of Art, but joined Shantiniketan at the behest of another famous artist Dinkar Kaushik. The former set up the graphics and print making sections. Then there was Riten Mazumdar, an artist who was a student here and returned after his training in Scandinavia to design art on textiles.

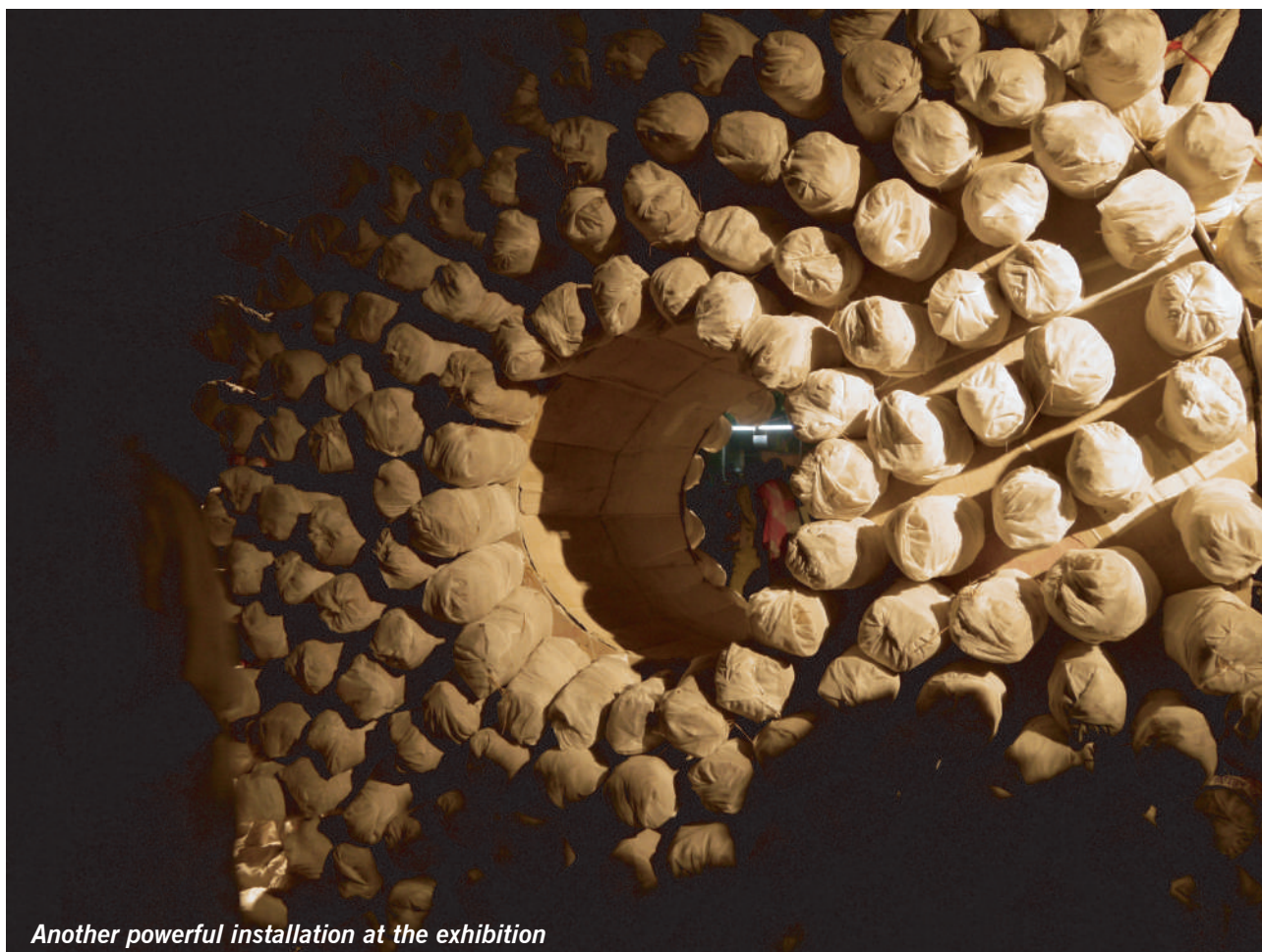
Sadly, no photographs were allowed in here.

## Art in life

For a long time it has been felt that artists need not only create paintings and sculptures to adorn walls, home and office spaces. A lot of art can be infused into everyday objects. Therefore a number of artists have been lending their names to such utility objects. Same with studio pottery that can be used both as decorative and utility items. Toys, jewellery, batik and Shibori, the Japanese art of dyeing on cushion covers and recycled art were the highlights which made great souvenirs to carry back this year. There is usually a lot of colour, and though the exhibition starts from late afternoon, the lengthening rays of the winter sun often cast its shadows, and soon it was night.

Installations, interactive art whereby one could write on the dress of a model in a mask, graffiti and much more were amply featured. These were interspersed with sculptures of the great artists already on campus grounds. Notable among these, is of course one of Ram Kinkar Baij's sculpture of Gandhiji.

Food stalls in one corner sold a variety of snacks made and managed by students. Fritters, cup cakes and easily put together chaat disappeared fast, but what one

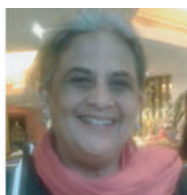


*Another powerful installation at the exhibition*

missed were local delicacies prepared by Japanese and Koreans, such as crepes, gimnap, cinnamon tea, in some of the exhibitions visited by this writer previously.

Once the crowds picked up it was difficult to see or experience everything. There is so much to record in such an art fair, but suffice to add that all creations put up by students may not have been absolutely flawless. In fact, they are not meant to be as they are not machine manufactured but rather, made by hand. What makes this exposition truly interesting is that it is “preparatory art”, as commented by a visitor. Many from here would go on to become successful artists, some would teach and others

would write. This is where it all begins, under the tutelage of masters, who were students once.



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* and *Stories from Bengal & Beyond*.

## Our Last Six Issues

Call: 022-23534400 / E-mail: [oiopfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:oiopfoundation@gmail.com) / Web: [www.oneindiaonepeople.com](http://www.oneindiaonepeople.com)



*“For me, passion is the fuel behind a successful career. Do what you love and success will always follow suit. After all, one does spend a majority of one’s adult life at work, and how terrible it would be if you dreaded going to work each day!”*

**Dr. Manisha Karmarkar**, an MBA in Health Care from Manipal University, and an M.D in Anaesthesia, from Nanavati Hospital, Mumbai, is a leader in positive transformational changes, and currently heads Ruby Hall Clinic, Wanowarie, Pune’s first boutique multi-speciality tertiary care hospital as COO (Chief Operating Officer). A perfectionist, with her far-sighted understanding of the nature of healthcare and administration, she is single-handedly transforming it, while partnering with the CEO on a full range of operational and strategic issues.

Here she is in conversation with **A.Radhakrishnan**.



### How would you describe yourself?

Always a go-getter, seeking to overcome challenges life throws at me, I go into work putting my best foot forward every day. It's always been about adopting the right mindset – especially in the field of healthcare --- because only positive attitudes bring about positive outcomes.

Nutrition, wellness, and prevention should always be part of medicine, but it wasn't until I stepped in as COO, whilst being a practicing anesthetist, that I had an opportunity to use my background and medical skills to create a brand, community, and platform as well as an actual health care service to bring a different perspective of medicine to everyone. I have since revamped the concept of luxurious, yet affordable healing at the hospital.

On the personal front, I'm also a daughter, wife and mother, and do everything in my stride to show my daughter that a woman can achieve all that she sets out to do!

### Why did you choose medicine as your field?

For many individuals who decide to become a doctor, it takes years of personal realisation. And for others, it's always been their life's calling to pursue medical school and ultimately don the iconic white coat.

For me though, it's always been a very personal one. My passion and curiosity to understand the human body, while being the most compelling reason, I had also grown up first seeing my father work as a doctor, and then eventually my brother, and it's perhaps these events which inspired me the most.

I always enjoy a good challenge, and see it through successfully. Being a focused student motivated me to undertake the long gruelling hours of study required. In medicine, overcoming the long work-hours and rigorous academic training is just the beginning. Post my MBBS, it was my husband who motivated me to pursue anaesthesia as a specialisation. With him being a surgeon and me an anaesthetist, I thought we'd make a perfect match in the operating theatre!

### How passionate are you about your career?

For me, passion is the fuel behind a successful career. Do what you love and success will always follow suit. After all, one does spend a majority of one's adult life at work, and how terrible it would be if you dreaded going to work each day!

Healthcare fascinated me and I knew it was the path I was destined for. The satisfaction I get after a long day at work, the smile on the face of a patient or their family members, and the longing to continuously learn and upgrade my skills, are what keep me going.

### Where do you draw motivation from? Who's your role model?

Innovation isn't an option; it is a necessity. For most effective medical care, in-depth understanding of the patient is key, and recent advances in technology have allowed us

medical professionals to gain a deeper insight, and re-align our goals both as a healthcare system and as individuals.

For years together, my role model has been our CEO Bomi Bhote, who saw potential in me as a leader. His willingness to take calculated risks and the ability to read people and adapt management styles, helped me shape my dream of managing a tertiary care hospital with women leading from the front, where the bottom line is not solely profit, but one where the stakes have a human face.

### How well have you been able to leverage your leadership skills and strengths?

True leaders have the capacity to develop a big vision – one that inspires and motivates their team – and turn it into reality. Clarity to communicate and the intelligence and experience necessary to execute it, is paramount.

As COO, I have had the incredibly demanding yet fulfilling responsibility of a large, complex organisation, with a diverse workforce in a strict, regulatory environment. Integrating my medical experience with my managerial skills has helped me not just transform the financial prowess of the hospital, but also make it home to a driven and passionate workforce – right from doctors and nurses, to even front line managers and support staff.

With the majority of our workforce women-driven, we encourage working women with innovative policies such as work from home, and evening OPDs. Through a combination of hospital affiliations, outpatient specialty care centres, health care accreditations and corporate partnerships, we have redefined healthcare while taking it to the next level.

### What's your decision making style?

All business activity really comes down to two simple things; making decisions and executing them. Your success depends on your ability to develop speed as a habit in both. I'm highly impressed with arguments supported by data. I gather as much information as possible, including market research, customer surveys, case studies, and cost-benefit analysis. Though absolutely enthralled by new ideas, experience has taught me to make final decisions based on balanced information, not just emotions.

At a hospital, every call we take is not only crucial, but has to be quick. Whether I'm in the OT or handling any aspect of patient care, I know my decision has the potential to change the continuum of care.

### What's the biggest challenge you've faced so far?

When I was first offered the role of COO, there were a lot of people who assumed it was the end of my career as a practicing anaesthetist, as the hospital was fairly new and needed to break even to be financially successful, and that would require all my attention and time. I knew it was going to be a very different hat to don, and would definitely be a struggle. But isn't that what life is all about? Taking risks, accepting challenges and proving to yourself that you can surpass it all. I decided to take it up with full force, whilst continuing my anaesthesia practice.

It was in my hands to understand the continuum of care across all departments, right from inpatient to outpatient, to ancillary services, to technology, pharmacy and nursing. I first focused on clinical programme development, including bolstering the hospital's quality management and clinical support services. I began focussing on employee relationships following an open door policy where they could come and talk to me about anything.

Yes, I took a big risk while taking up this role, but the challenge proved to be an eye-opener. I do believe that the magic happens when you move out of your comfort zone.

### Do you think outside of the box?

This piece of business advice has become pure cliché over the past few decades. Although overuse has run it into the ground, the intent has merit, the lesson remains valid; don't let your preconceptions, habits, lack of information, and narrow-mindedness keep you from considering all possible aspects of a problem. As a hospital, we have issued bold reforms to increase access to care, while decreasing health care spending.

### What are the essential skills a COO requires to be a successful administrator?

Being at the helm of affairs is daunting. Much of the operations lean on our shoulders, necessitating consummate trust in our abilities. As a professional, we have to be in touch with customers as well as employees on a humane level. A successful administrator /COO should balance out a visionary tendency with practical follow-through, i.e., they should be able to cross the t's and dot the i's. As guardians of some of the world's key pieces of infrastructure, they have a tremendous impact on the lives of their constituents.

It also means being part business leader and part politician, requiring a blend of diplomacy, advocacy, business management, and financial sense. The stakes of this role aren't just profit and loss, but life and death.

### What role do you play in the hospital organisation?

In the Ruby Hall environment, leadership has always been about promoting change and only change from within can bring about external changes. It my duty to look at all perspectives from the bottom-line right up to the top, keeping everyone in sync with each other.

I assume responsibility not just for myself and my work, but for the work, attitude, and accomplishments of my team too. Every single day, I lead the team in the operating theatre, taking decisions that are related to people's lives and deaths. I not only show my team where to go and what to do, but also encourage them to answer questions, track progress, and provide motivation. With the economics of health care shifting from growth-mode to achievement of efficiencies and value creation, I am leading the commitment to patient-centric holistic and compassionate health-care.

### What awards have you won and what do they mean to you?



Winning awards for what I do is great validation of what I've achieved to date, and it's an honour to be recognised among a high level of successful business women. Personally, I feel very proud to be able to set an example for my daughter that hard work and being passionate about what you do leads to success.

I am extremely humbled and honoured to have received the Healthcare Woman Icon Award at Singapore for my leadership skills making me the only doctor in the APAC region to have received this prestigious honour, the Navbharat Healthcare Excellence Award – Woman CEO of the Year 2018, the Times Power Woman – West, and the Times Business Woman of the Year.

Our hospital is a LEED Gold Certified structure - Pune's first hospital to receive the rating that incorporates natural light, energy efficient rooms for patients, families and hospital staff. It is also Pune's only hospital with six NABH certifications, and its Accident and Emergency Medical Services is the first in the city and Western Maharashtra to be accredited by the NABH, and the Green Hospital Award by the AHPI for our eco-friendly practices.

### What are your hobbies?

As an early riser, I start my day with exercise. I like to get moving first thing in the morning – it keeps me stress free and motivated throughout my daily hectic schedule. I also really enjoy listening to music. Melodic instrumental music after a long day is my escape, and it just clears my head and lifts my spirit.

A voracious reader, the pleasure and perks of picking up a book in your free time is just something else. When I'm with a book, it just opens a whole new world in front of me, gives wings to my imagination, while providing me with an abundance of knowledge.



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

# The business of festivity

*Beside celebrations, Indian festivals provide an opportunity for employment and income generation for artisans and small businesses. Mamta Chitnis Sen explores the many opportunities these festivities provide to the unorganised sector of this country.*



**A family engaged in making kites for Makar Sankranti festival**

**F**estivals in India mean much more than just the joy of celebrations. It is also a time when employment and income generation peaks for those not only hailing from the small and medium enterprises background, but also individuals and those who belong to the unorganised sector.

## Small businesses, large benefits

For instance, a month before the festival of Raksha Bandhan, Shubha Chakravarty, a widow from Hooghly district makes weekly trips to the Bura Bazaar market in Howrah to purchase threads, beads, and other decorative material for making 'rakhis' (an amulet that is tied by a sister on her brother's wrist on the day of the festival of 'Raksha Bandhan'). She then assembles the material to make wonderful wrist bands or rakhis, and sells them by weight in her hometown of Kalna in remote rural Bengal, to

local customers, housewives and even general stores.

For Shubha, the pension of her late husband, a local panchayat member, hardly covers the tuition fees of her teenage daughter, but the extra income generated from the sale of rakhis during Raksha Bandhan helps in making their lives a bit more comfortable.

After Raksha Bandhan, Shubha engages herself in another income generating activity that Durga Puja festival brings. She makes trips to handloom weavers in the neighbouring villages of interior Bengal to source cotton saris, and sells them at the local stalls in her village during the Durga Puja, hiking their price a little to cover her profits that include the efforts in sourcing them.

Like Shubha, there are many others who use their skills for earning extra income during festivals.

Idol making is another seasonal activity that helps artisans augment their income. For the many idol makers of West Bengal and Maharashtra, the beginning of Durga Pujo season and Ganesh Chaturthi, respectively, not only brings joy in their lives, but also prosperity because of the work and money the festival season brings. These artisans create beautiful idols of Gods and Goddesses which are thematic, and come in various sizes. The process of making idols begins a couple of months before the festival.

Idols of Durga and Kali created by these artisans are then shipped off to the many pandals around the country and even to devotees abroad, generating a good amount of money for the idol makers. Similarly Ganesh idols too are transported to near and far off places. Along with the idol makers, the decorators of pandals, where the idols are installed, too get busy around this time, and some even migrate to other states in the country to set up elaborate and eye catching pandals that enhance the beauty of the idols. The costs of many of these pandals can run into a few lakhs, even crores.

It is brisk business for flower vendors too, as the demand for flowers and garlands made from flowers peaks during the festival season. A variety of flowers grown in different parts of the country flood the flower markets in the cities. Making 'torans' and garlands need special skills and speed, and many families are engaged in the business of making bouquets, torans and garlands. These flower garlands are not only offered to the deities, but used in decorating pandals and homes. As only fresh flowers are offered to God, each day is good business for the vendors during the festive season.

Makar Sankranti is a festival that kite makers in India look forward to in the month of January. The kite festival is celebrated in various states of India on January 14, where the young and old participate. Simple and fancy kites in different shapes, sizes and colours are seen floating in the skies on this day, and people compete in kite-flying. The international kite flying competition is held in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, and attracts not only local kite-flyers, but experts from all over the world. Months before the festival, homes in Gujarat begin to manufacture kites which are then sold to local vendors or directly to kite flyers, by setting up small shops in their homes. Jamalpur, a small area in the old city of Ahmedabad is considered as the hub of kite making, and is the largest kite market in India. The festival has immensely benefited the kite manufacturers in Gujarat. Nowadays, kite flying is held in other states too, generating employment in the unorganised sector in those states.

Diwali is a festival of lights, and traditionally celebrated by lighting diyas or traditional lamps made of mud, clay and terracotta. Although colourful electric bulbs from China and machine-made decorative lamps have flooded the markets in cities, there is still a big market for the traditional diyas.

## Generating business for locals

A large part of India's manufacturing is largely dependent on the unorganised sector which is scattered all over the country or run by small societies/unions or Self-Help Groups (SHG).

With day jobs to survive, these groups are known to come alive during the festive season. Nirmala, an 'anganwadi' worker gets transformed into a full time chef close to the Diwali festival. She, along with her team is engaged in making delicacies for Diwali, catering to a large clientele of working women who do not have the luxury of time to prepare Diwali sweets at home. Nirmala confides that the festival time is when she and her circle of women in her SHG or Bachat Gat (as called in Marathi), are able to make extra money to survive through the year.

Each year close to festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Navaratri, Diwali, Christmas, etc., across India SHGs of every kind come alive luring consumers with a wide variety of crafts and food. Festivities not only bring in joy and excitement to those celebrating them but also to a whole lot of others involved in the manufacturing and production of goods for local consumption.

The range of smaller businesses that spring to life during the festive seasons too end up being a part of the nation's financial ecosystem in some way or the other. Unlike the Western or European countries where emphasis on solidifying local businesses is part of their financial and social fabric, in India, we still have a long way to go in terms of bringing them into a recognised space.

Like Shubha there are many women and men across the country who form a crucial part of the country's economic backbone. It is time that not only the government, but we too as a society recognise their contribution, and help in drafting policies that work in favour of bringing them into the visible zone.



A journalist for over 15 years, Mamta Chitnis Sen has worked with reputed publications in Mumbai, reporting on crime, politics, religion, art, community, human interest, and general news. She was Executive Editor of *Dignity Dialogue*, India's foremost magazine exclusively for the 50 plus age group. 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 and has exhibited in various group shows in India and abroad.



**WORLD CLASS  
QUALITY MEDICINES  
AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

**BLUE CROSS LABORATORIES PVT LTD.**

PENINSULA CHAMBERS, LOWER PAREL, MUMBAI - 400 013,  
INDIA.

# Should active euthanasia be legalised?

*The debate over euthanasia is slowly gathering momentum in India, especially after the Aruna Shanbaug case. **Hufrish Lacca** and **Mansi Rathod** discuss this issue at length.*

“ I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.”  
- William Ernest

This quote signifies that any man in his senses can make a decision of his life which he doesn't wish to live. No law should decide the amount of time a person should suffer or continue living a life they do not wish to live. This decision should only be taken by an individual for himself.

Euthanasia is a very complex term but the Oxford dictionary defines it as, 'The painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma.' Further, the Cambridge dictionary defines euthanasia as, 'The act of killing someone who is very ill or very old so that they do not suffer any more.' The renowned authors Marvin Khol and Paul Kurtz's define it as "A mode or act of inducing or permitting death painlessly as a relief from suffering".

## Types of euthanasia

Euthanasia takes different forms. It is broadly divided into: voluntary, non-voluntary, and involuntary euthanasia. Voluntary euthanasia is where a patient makes a conscious decision to die. Involuntary is where a patient is killed against their expressed will, which is further of two types, namely, active and passive. Active euthanasia is where a medical professional or someone else deliberately intervenes to end someone's life, while passive euthanasia is where death is caused by withholding or withdrawing treatment that is necessary for maintaining life.

Non-voluntary euthanasia is where the patient is unable to express

their consent, and another person takes the decision of ending the patient's life on his behalf. There is a certain moral distinction between active and passive euthanasia, but there is no real difference as the outcome of both is death of the suffering patient.

## History of euthanasia and Indian religious views

Ancient Indian philosophy justifies the idea of wilful death. As per Hindu mythology Lord Rama took Jal Samadhi (death by drowning) in the Sarayu river. Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavir attained death in the same way. According to the western culture, right from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, no human being is said to have the right to decide the time and manner in which he dies. According to Christianity there is only one creator and one destroyer, that is 'God'. If euthanasia takes place it is said to be a crime committed against God himself. Under Islamic laws euthanasia is explicitly forbidden and is highly against the concepts of euthanasia or any kind of self-killing. Many people like Veer Savarkar and Vinoba Bhave had also chosen to end their lives by adopting fast unto death. Mahatma Gandhi was also a big supporter of wilful death. In this way we can trace that the right to die existed even in early times.

## Some suggestions

Euthanasia gives the right to an individual to take control of his life.



**Does euthanasia give the right to an individual to take control of his life?**

This would enable him to die with dignity as well. Denying a person, the right to die in a dignified manner extends his suffering.

On March 7, 2011 the Supreme Court of India set out certain guidelines allowing passive euthanasia in India for Aruna Shanbaug who was in a permanent vegetative state (PVS) since 42 years. This case discussed the issue of euthanasia at great length, but an act that legalises euthanasia has still not been passed in India. In India active euthanasia is illegal and a crime under Section 302 (murder) and Section 304 (culpable homicide) of the IPC. Physician assisted suicide is a crime under Section 306 IPC (abetment to suicide). The judiciary has given a positive opinion in the 2011 case of Aruna Shanbaug where in the patient was granted passive euthanasia. We believe that the formation of a Statutory Euthanasia Board with ten members including one chairperson should be formed.

(continued on page 35...)

# A riveting drama

*A Hollywood film turned into a play can go horribly wrong. But the play 'A Few Good Men' based on the English film of the same name, is not only well cast and directed, but almost surpasses the original in many departments, says **Prof. Avinash Kolhe**.*

**A**ny court room drama that involves murder, holds the attention of the audience. No wonder the fifth edition of Aaditya Birla group's Aadhyam Theatre that began last month in Mumbai with the staging of A Few Good Men, drew packed houses. Aaron Sorkin's drama, which is also a Hollywood film released in the year 1992, is a high-voltage entertainment that keeps audiences riveted to their chairs and when they leave the hall, they ponder over the philosophical aspects of the discipline in the armed forces the world over.

## Based on an actual event

The play is based on the actual event that took place at the Guantanamo Bay, the Cuba Naval Base, in July 1986. The play was so popular in the USA that soon it was adapted in several languages like Spanish, German, and Hungarian. The Indian version of A Few Good Men has been directed by Nadir Khan, who has directed each play in Aadhyam's previous editions, like God of Carnage and Anand Express. He has not indianised this play unlike other plays like The Twelve Angry Jurors. It is a well-known fact that Sorkin wrote this play largely on cocktail napkins while he was a bartender at the Palace Theatre. It is about how the military lawyers navigate a court-martial to uncover a high level conspiracy against the two US marines accused of murdering a fellow mariner. Though the play is based on a true story in the US marine, it could take place in Japan, Myanmar, Iran or Brazil, as the world over, the armed services function in a more or less uniform way.

The play opens on the fact that US Marine Private Santiago is



*A still from the play*

dead as a result of ill-advised punishment infamously known as 'Code Red', at a US naval force. Private Downey and Lance Corporal Dawson are charged of this murder. As per the principle of legal system, they get a lawyer to defend themselves, US Navy Lieutenant, Daniel Kaffee, an unmotivated lawyer, who wants to finish the cases on plea-bargaining. He would have packed off this case in a similar manner but for the arrival of US Navy Lieutenant Commander Jo Galloway who is convinced that the case is more complicated than it appears to be. She argues with Kaffee and the play takes a new turn. She convinces Kaffee to take the case to court. They manage to establish a fact that 'Code Red' was ordered at the Naval Base. This is how Private Santiago met with death. And yet they do not have concrete evidence. They decide to call

Col. Jessep as a witness, despite the risk of being court-martialed for smearing a high-ranking officer of the US Marine. With his legal skills picked up at the Harvard Law School, Kaffee manages to break Col. Jessep, who is finally charged with the murder of Private Santiago and is escorted out of the courtroom. Dawson and Downey are found guilty too and are dishonorably discharged.

Nadir Khan has an enviable cast to stage this play. Rajit Kapoor (Col. Jessep), Neil Bhoopalam (Lt. Kaffee), Kenny Desai (Judge), Ira Dubey (Lt. Jo Galloway) are all excellent at their craft. Rajit Kapoor is as good if not better than Jack Nicholson who played the same role in the Hollywood film.

**(continued on page 35...)**

# The alpha-beta-gamma of sustainable development

*The terms sustainability and sustainable development are bandied about, often, interchangeably. G. Venkatesh decodes this language of ecology, and what lies behind it.*

There are words, terms and phrases one hears often on television and radio, in conferences and casual conversations, and reads in newspapers and magazines. The mind conjures its own meanings. All minds do not necessarily agree with one another. These 'conjured meanings' then dictate the extent to which something is understood, supported, contradicted, or for that matter, simply ignored as irrelevant. The word 'sustainability' and the term 'sustainable development' are two such.

The former has its etymology in the Latin word 'sustinae' meaning 'to hold', which this author's mind or readers' minds could conjure as 'to endure', 'to maintain', etc. The word 'development' originates from the French word 'développer', which means 'to unfold'. Thus, when we say 'sustainability', we are talking about the ability to endure or maintain, and by 'sustainable development', we imply 'moving ahead while making sure that we can maintain, manage and do justice to the changes we seek and intend to bring about'. Now, let us clearly differentiate between these two terms. Oftentimes, they are erroneously used as synonyms. It is thereby imperative that the reader always remembers the difference between these two.

## Sustainability v/s sustainable development

Sustainability refers to a state, or an ability. Sustainable development is a process. This process is essentially the means towards the end, which is sustainability itself. Here, it is necessary that the means – the process of development and all



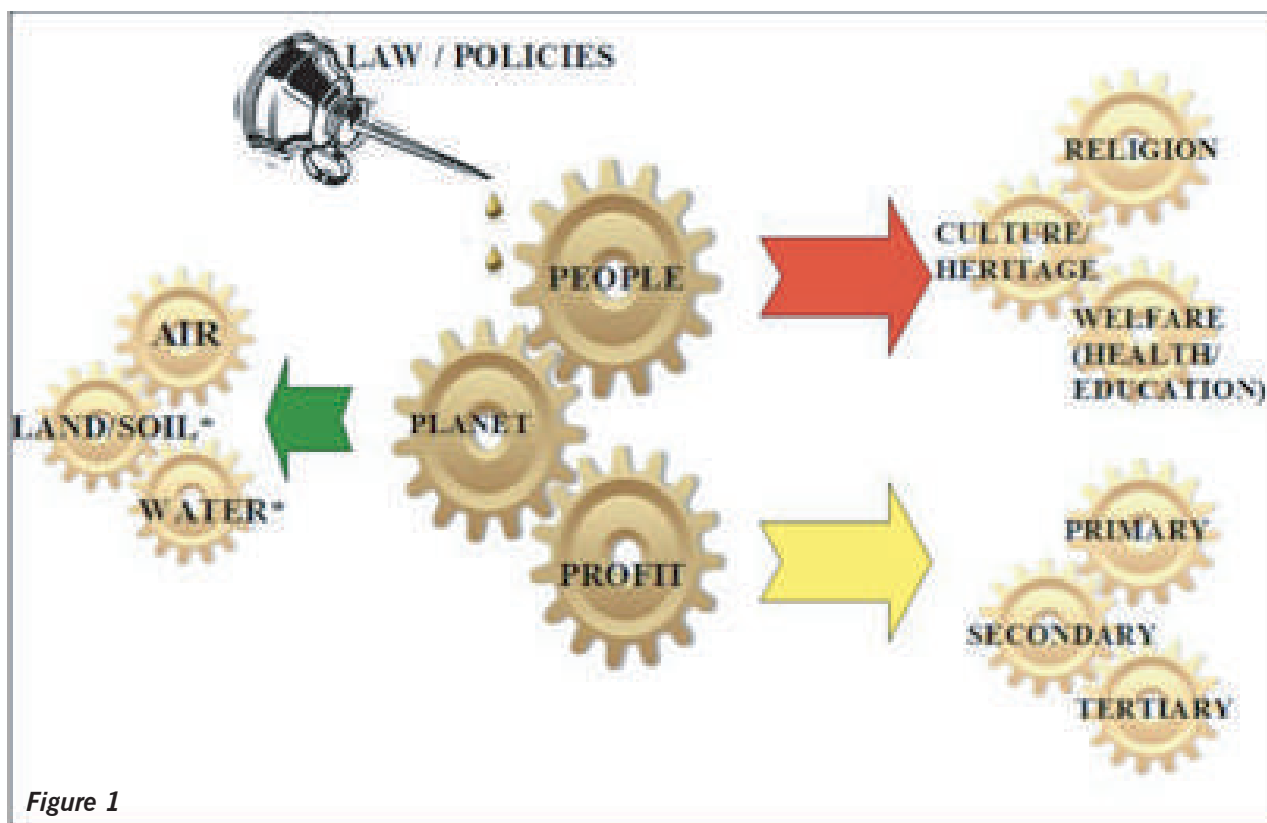
that it entails - are sustainable, in order to justify the end. As the lead picture of the chapter depicts, sustainable development is no less than a Sisyphean struggle. And one can well remember this limerick, when one tries to visualise sustainable development – 'Rob Peter to pay Paul; Pay Peter by robbing his son; Plug a leak at Vauxhall; End up flooding Wimbledon'. Also note that the end here – the state of sustainability – is itself a moving target. One needs to restlessly endeavour to keep pursuing it and try to minimise one's distance from it, through the means of sustainable development. The bar is raised from time to time, necessitating a fresh analysis and evaluation of the process, and an adjustment thereof, before the next pursuit begins. As said in Kallio, et al (2007), the phenomenon we label as sustainable development can never be exhaustively defined; it would constantly change with time, interpreters and their needs. We thus have an elusive, impermanent end-goal, which is

pursued with a changeable set of ways and means. Quental, et al (2011) has stated that the introduction of sustainable development as a concept was an intellectual answer to reconcile the conflicting goals of environmental protection and economic growth.

In Hindu philosophy, a thing is understood by understanding what it is not in the first place. Let us adopt that approach here. What is the absence of sustainability (or for that matter, sustainable development)? Let us just take commonplace, mundane examples which all of us are familiar with.

It is like having many children without being sure of being able to care and provide for them in the future. It is like enrolling for a course in the university, without really being sure of one's ability to do the necessary hard work in fulfilling all the requirements – assignments, projects, examinations, etc., – to get a decent grade in the end. Little things, these, on familial and individual levels; but it is the decisions taken at these levels, collectively, which influence those at county, provincial and national levels at times. This is what one may term as a bottom-up approach to change and development. In a way, this throws the balls, so to say, into the courts of individuals and families, as far as the larger cause – sustainability – and the necessary means – sustainable development – are concerned. Not avoiding individual (or citizen) responsibilities will just make it a wee bit easier for all of us to adopt the desired 'means' towards the desired 'end'.

Space, time and just about



**Figure 1**

everything when we talk of sustainability, as it is a moving target, the process of sustainable development needs to keep going on. It is never completed! Thus, the temporal aspect here suggests that while long-term thinking needs to be adopted, the process never really stops. It is quite like a never-ending relay race, with the baton changing hands, and the demands fluctuating, with 'sustainability' being the constantly-receding goal which a team of countless athletes, keep pursuing in turn.

As far as the spatial aspect is concerned, we are all connected, through the atmosphere, hydrosphere and pedosphere, and the anthropospheric constructs of trade and travel. What I do now, may/can/will impact someone else somewhere adversely or favourably. If space and time are considered together, this someone else somewhere, may even be a person who is not even born at the time of the deed. This is an apt-enough juncture to recollect a statement from the (Gro Harlem) Brundtland Commission Report - Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the

present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future. In other words, is it possible to ensure that someone somewhere at some point of time in the future is not adversely affected by what I do here now? Tempted to just say 'No' and give up the pursuit of sustainability? Of course none will blame you if you did, but surely if you decide not to give up, you may end up being the change you wish to see in the world.

One man's food is often another's poison. A job acquired by someone here is tantamount to a job or more lost elsewhere (consider a manufactory relocating to China from the USA; retrenching the American workforce and hiring cheaper labourers in China). More trees cut down in the Scandinavian forests may mean more 'moolah' for paper and pulp mills elsewhere, and perhaps employment generation. A school built on a plot of land could mean one hospital less for a city. Some people may contend that the plot of land on which a 1000-year-old church stands could have been put to better use if there had been an automotive-components manufactory there, to generate

employment and boost the economy of the city. Some others would like to opine that the old church is not just a necessity for the believers in town, but also a magnet which attracts tourists off and on, and contributes to economic growth in its own special way. What is the right thing to do then, when one wishes to change, develop and progress? (Refer Figure 1, which illustrates the challenges planners face if total sustainability is factored into decision-making.) The three Ps in the Figure – People, Planet and Profit – define the triple bottom-line approach, first introduced by John Elkington.



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

# Should active euthanasia be legalised?

(continued from page 31...)

This board would accept the applications of patients that want to be euthanised, assess and review such applications, and later if approved, grant euthanasia to the applicable patient. The chairperson would also be given one veto vote in case of divided opinions of the members. This board should work directly under the control of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. We are of the opinion that people should be able to express their wish to be euthanised in the future, that is, if they face such a situation, in their will. If they fail to do so, and cannot express their consent and have been suffering, their immediate family (parents, spouse/partner, children, siblings, in this order) can give their consent and will be granted euthanasia under scrutiny of the Statutory Board that is formed.

Bringing out a law which would put a stop to the illegal practices of DNR or 'Do Not Resuscitate' option that is practiced in ICUs where there is a discrete discussion between the family and

the doctors, which is not discussed openly at all, is required. On 9th March 2018, in Common Cause v. Union of India, a five-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A.K. Sikri, A. M. Khanvilkar, D.Y. Chandrachud and Ashok Bhushan, held that the right to die with dignity is a fundamental right.

An individual's right to execute advance medical directives is an assertion of the right to bodily integrity and self-determination, and does not depend on any recognition or legislation by a State. It was concluded that the right to die with dignity as a fundamental right has already been declared by the Constitution bench judgment of the court in the Gian Kaur case that they reiterate. The Bench further concluded that an adult human being having mental capacity to take an informed decision has right to refuse medical treatment including withdrawal from life saving devices. Since the Common Cause judgment recognize 'Right to Die' as a fundamental right, the need for legalising active euthanasia under strict guidelines is of paramount

importance as only then would there be a remedy to the right given.

The legalisation of active euthanasia in India would not only be helpful to the suffering patient and his family but it would also be a step towards liberating the individual further from the state and making him the rightful owner of himself. This would in turn strengthen the democracy of India and give people a sense of individuality and a feeling of complete control over oneself.



**Hufrih Lacca and Mansi Rathod are 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of Pravin Gandhi College of Law. They have a passion for writing and they want to throw light on those aspects of law which need immediate attention and they hope that some day with.**

## A riveting drama

(continued from page 32...)

Rajit powerfully shows the convictions of armed services officers about the honour of their regiment, and how such things happen in the course of time. Then there is the lovable Neil Bhoopalram, the happy-go-lucky young lawyer who suddenly decides to fight the case with seriousness. This is the only flaw in the otherwise flawless script where this important change in the character of Lt. Kaffee is not convincingly portrayed. Neil carries this role with extreme ease. Ira Dubey was equally convincing in her role of Lt. Jo who cannot sleep if there is a miscarriage of justice. Kenny Desai, an old-pro, has once again delivered a solid performance. His role of the judge of the court-martial has surely set very high standards.

This review will not be

complete unless a special mention is made of the set design by Juhie Gupta, which does the job of shift of place and time frame effortlessly. And a big round of applause for Nadir Khan, the director. Nadir Khan has directed a court drama before. He has been around for over 20 years. His directorial debut was a college production in 1998 The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail. Since then he has been handling many complicated scripts, and this is one of them. A Few Good Men is not an easy script to deal with as it is a play about morality. What should a soldier do? Obey the orders of his superiors without bothering whether these orders are right or wrong? This issue had come up during the Nuremberg Trials held after the World War II by the Allied forces. These were held during November 1945 to October 1946 in Nuremberg, Germany. Here many accused argued

that they were merely carrying out the orders given by their superiors. All over the world, the basic code of soldiers is 'Ours is not ask why, ours is to do and die'. Then there is this issue of 'honour' of respective regiments for which no sacrifice is greater, even if this means death of a private. These are not small issues, but have deep philosophical ramifications. This is precisely why A Few Good Men continues to haunt the audiences long after they have left the hall.



**Mumbai.**

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

## FLIGHT LIEUTENANT SUMAS BISWAS, AC

A brave airman (1924-1957)

**F**light Lieutenant Suhas Biswas was born on 9 September 1924, in Kolkata, to Samuel and Diana Biswas. After completing his education, he joined the Indian Air Force (IAF) and was commissioned as a pilot on 24 April, 1944. He acquired experience on various types of transport aircraft and became an experienced ace pilot. In 1952, he was posted to the Communication Flight under the Training Command. This unit was responsible for ferrying senior officers to various tasks.

On 3 February 1962, a major exercise was conducted at Lucknow by UP Area Command. It was attended by senior officers from various places. Lt. Gen. S.M. Shrinagesh, Maj. Gen. K.S. Thimayya, Maj. Gen. S.P.P. Thorat, Maj. Gen. Sarda Nand, Maj. Gen. M.S. Chopra and Brig. Ajaib Singh had witnessed it. Flt. Lt. Biswas was detailed to ferry them from Lucknow to New Delhi at the conclusion of the exercise.

Biswas took off in a Devon aircraft at 6 pm. Moments after take-off, the crew observed smoke coming out from the engine, and soon fire broke out in the engine. Fire kept creeping towards the main fuselage, and it became difficult to control the aircraft. Biswas tried to extinguish the fire but did not succeed in that effort, and decided to force land the aircraft. He realised the gravity of the situation, but did not show that he was not in control of the plane. His behaviour was inspiring and he displayed leadership of the highest order.

It was getting dark and he spotted a piece of level ground. He put the aircraft in a dive in order to reduce altitude. His plan was to crash land the plane before the fuselage caught fire. The aircraft shuddered and the engine mounting broke away. The burning engine got separated from the wing and fell off. He came out of the dive, levelled the plane and was successful in controlling the aircraft. He switched off the only working engine and successfully belly landed the plane at a village near the Sandilla railway station. All the occupants were safe and walked out of the aircraft without any injury. Biswas was the last one to walk out.

Gen. Shrinagesh recalled that when he looked through the window, he saw flames coming out of the engine

and the plane could have literally gone up in flames if the fire had reached the fuel system. The Devon incident has been mentioned in the biography of Gen. Shrinagesh authored by Brig. Satish Issar.

They walked a few miles to the nearby village and looked for some transport to reach the main Lucknow road. They took a lift in the only available transport – a bullock cart. Soon the search party located them and whisked them away.

The then Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru wrote to Gen. Shrinagesh of his concern, "As it's all over now, one can look back upon it with composure. It is perhaps a good thing to face such contingencies provided one survives!" Attention was also drawn to the rule that many senior officers should not travel together in the same plane.



Flt. Lt. Suhas Biswas was awarded the "Ashoka Chakra" for his presence of mind, skilful navigation, and courage in landing the aircraft on unreconnoitred ground. He became the first airman to get the coveted award. Due recognition was given to Flt. Lt. Biswas for the presence of mind, skill and courage in maintaining the stricken aircraft and saving the lives of many senior army officers, which included two future army chiefs and an army commander. The then Air Force Chief, Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee, had the passenger chairs removed from the wrecked Devon and presented it individually to each of the survivors of the crash with a brass plate mentioning the circumstances of the crash.

On 1 September 1957, Biswas was flying a Dakota aircraft on an operational mission to Mangalore. After take-off, the weather turned bad, resulting in poor visibility. He had to fly low over the Western Ghats and lost contact with the ground control. The aircraft crashed and the brave airman lost his life in the course of duty.

- Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)

# JIGGS KALRA

Tastemaker to the nation (1948-2019)

**D**aspal Inder Singh Kalra, popularly known as Jiggs Kalra, celebrated chef, culinary genius, food revivalist, food columnist, gastronome, television anchor, pioneering restaurateur and author, passed away at the age of 71 in Delhi. His is a name that Indian restaurant owners revere, chefs watch out for, and food critics respect. In a career of close to five decades, the septuagenarian introduced Indian cuisine to an international audience, reviving lost ancient cuisines of the treasure trove of the royal kitchens of India, and elevated age-old delicacies such as the galouti kebabs. With his portly frame, authoritative voice, and fiery temper, he was an impresario, an influencer, before the term got fashionable, a man of knowledge, of good taste, of a formidable reputation, and impeccable media relations.

Though his army father expected him to follow in his footsteps, he had other plans. Fond of reading and writing and mesmerised from youth by his grandmother and mother's amazing way of cooking traditional Punjabi food, he found joy, passion and patience with food. So, armed with a Bachelor's in commerce, he joined the *The Illustrated Weekly*, where his idea of starting a food column was lapped up by his editor, Kushwant Singh. His prodigious appetite for a deeper understanding of Indian cuisine, made him not only extensively write about food, but also work alongside chefs, housewives and culinary legends spanning the length and breadth of India, exploring the country's culinary treasures, recording data that never existed before.

Walking the food streets of India, he discovered old-world masters such as Tunday in Lucknow and Ram Babu, Agra's famous *paranthewala*. He egged on chefs to get creative and bolster the Indian repertoire with dishes like tandoori salmon, and spun stories to popularise these inventions, the most famous of them being that of the toothless nawab for whom the kakori kebab had been created. He even served the likes of British royals Prince Charles, the late Princess Diana, and former US President Bill Clinton. He went on to food consultancy in the 1980s. As CMD of Bawarchi Tolla (Hotel & Restaurant Consultants), he also assisted his son, Zorawar Kalra, as the mentor and

culinary director for Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd. The father-son duo who took immense pride in the robustness and versatility of Indian cuisine, were sad that Indian cuisine always featured at the bottom, whenever people chose to dine out. Innovation in food and ambience became their prime focus. Turning restaurateur promoting gourmet food, he launched some of the most critically acclaimed and revolutionary restaurant concepts in the country like, Farzi Café and, MasalaBar and KODE's, Punjab Grill, BBQ'D, Masala Library by Jiggs, Made in Punjab, and Pa Pa Ya. In all their menus, molecular gastronomy was only infused in dishes it could add value to, without taking away from its flavour profile. They stayed innovative while aggressively expanding their domestic footprint and eyeing major international ones, winning 20 national and international awards.



However, he suffered a paralytic stroke a few days after he devised an impressive menu, *daure ki tafreeh* for the banquet at the fruitless Agra Summit in mid-2001, between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf. He represented India at various international food festivals. The first Asian to be inducted into the International Food & Beverage Gourmet Hall of Fame, he won numerous national and international awards and accolades. In 1997, the Government of India appointed him as advisor to the India Trade Promotion Organisation. The first to conceptualise and host a food-oriented television series, his *Daawat on DD*, was a pioneering one, showcasing regional food and revelled in its nuances. This was followed by *Zaike ka Safar*, on Zee TV. Indian food was undocumented, with recipes getting diluted. He took it upon himself to revive, restore and record them. He authored over 11 titles on Indian cuisine, including *PRASHAD – Cooking with the Indian Masters*, released in 1986, which is considered the Bible for budding chefs. His son and daughter-in-law, Zorawar and Dildeep Kalra, now take his food legacy forward. As for Jiggs, he must be drinking his fill of amrit where he is, trying to decode the exact recipe!

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

# SUSHMA SWARAJ

A life devoted to service (1952-2019)

**T**he country lost one of its most loved and admired politicians in the passing away of Sushma Swaraj, the former External Affairs Minister in the Narendra Modi cabinet. Affable and accessible, the late Sushma had friends cutting across party lines and also shared a huge rapport with the voters in the constituencies from four states that sent her to the Lok Sabha seven times. She had to opt out of the contest in 2019 due to ill-health.

Sushma Swaraj was born on the 14 February in Ambala as Sushma Sharma, and had her primary and secondary education in Ambala. She pursued a law degree which she obtained from the Punjab University. She was associated with the Akhil Bhartiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP) during her student days, but after her marriage to advocate Swaraj Kaushal, she was influenced by leaders like George Fernandes and Jayaprakash Narayan, and was an active participant in the Total Revolution Movement.

Sushma Swaraj later joined the BJP and had the distinction of becoming the youngest minister at 25 when she was inducted into the Haryana cabinet. She held the Education portfolio in the government. Sushma was fortunate to come under the tutelage of two of the BJP's biggest stalwarts, former Prime Minister, the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee and former Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani. Advani took her under his wing as he did many others, and from then on her rise in national politics was meteoric. Her first tenure as a Union Minister was in the Vajpayee cabinet where she held diverse portfolios such as Information & Broadcasting, Telecom, Health & Family Welfare, and Parliamentary Affairs. She won the hearts of the film folk during her tenure as I & B minister when she paved the way for cinema being conferred industry status, a step that rescued the industry from the clutches of money lenders and the mafia. As Health Minister, Sushma set up AIIMS institutes in six centres across the country.

She served as the first woman Chief Minister of Delhi for a very short period, from October to December 1998, and later contested the Bellary Lok Sabha seat in Karnataka where she was pitted against Congress party

president Sonia Gandhi. Although she lost the election, she won the hearts of the people of Bellary. The three term Rajya Sabha member from different states including Madhya Pradesh, replaced her mentor L.K. Advani as the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha in 2009 when the Congress was in power in the centre, and gave a very good account of herself.

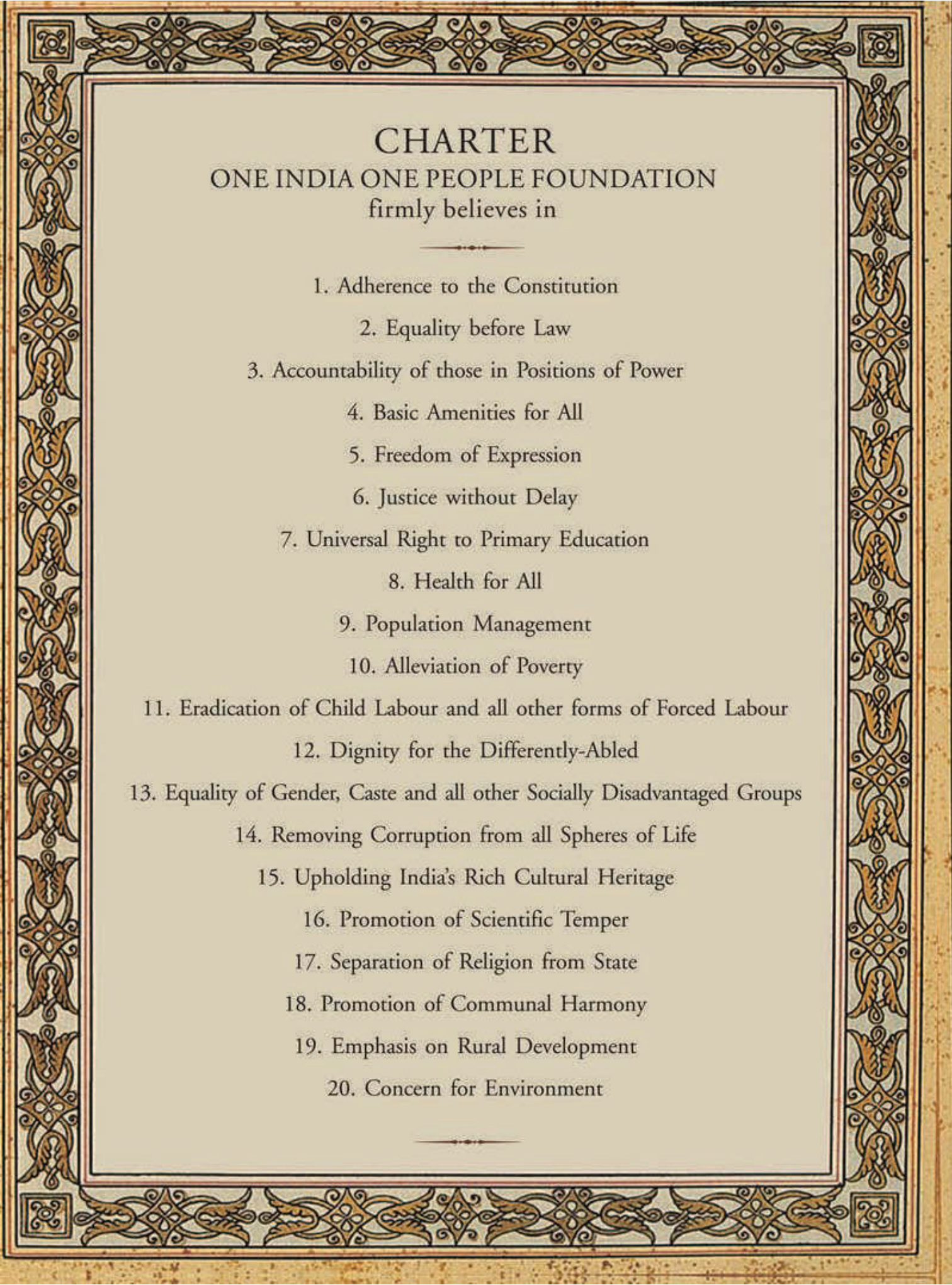
She was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Vidisha constituency in 2014 winning by a record margin of over four lakh votes, and took over as the External Affairs minister in the NDA government headed by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi. She was only the second woman to head the Ministry of External Affairs after the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who held additional charge of the ministry.



As External Affairs minister, she rushed to the rescue of thousands of Indians stranded in strife torn countries like Yemen. Particularly poignant was her herculean effort to rescue and rehabilitate a young speech and hearing impaired girl, Geetha, stranded in Pakistan for fifteen years. Equally impressive was her role in securing the repatriation of Indian national Hamid Ansari who had been illegally detained by Pakistan for six years.

Sushma Swaraj's husband Swaraj Kaushal served as a Governor of Mizoram and practiced in the Supreme Court. Their daughter Bansuri has graduated from Oxford University, and is a Barrister in Law from the Inner Temple. Sushma Swaraj, a recipient of the Best Parliamentarian Award, was also conferred with the prestigious Grand Cross of Order of Civil Merit by the Spanish government for her role in ensuring India's support for Spanish citizens in Nepal during the massive earthquake in 2015. The eminent daily *The Wall Street Journal* termed her India's best loved politician. Sushma suffered a cardiac arrest on 6 August 2019, and succumbed at the AIIMS, Delhi.

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



# CHARTER

## ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

---

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

# WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor  
(Mayoer 9<sup>th</sup> 1930 – February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007)  
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE