

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined

## Living with COVID-19



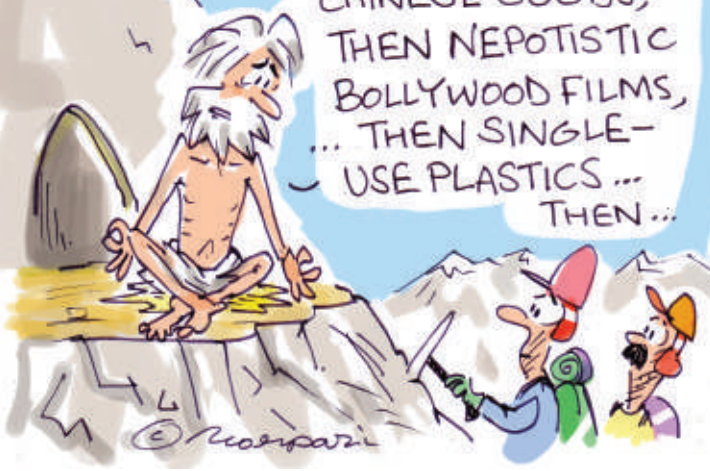
**Corona is here to stay,  
learn to live with it  
Well, now for the economy!  
Making a virtue out of  
deprivation**

**Know India Better**  
Chadar Trek  
**Face to Face**  
Venugopal Rao Nallamothe



How I GOT HERE ?

WELL, IT STARTED OFF  
WITH BOYCOTTING  
CHINESE GOODS,  
THEN NEPOTISTIC  
BOLLYWOOD FILMS,  
... THEN SINGLE-  
USE PLASTICS ...  
THEN ...



MODERN DOCTORS ARE DOING  
IT NOW, BUT WE HAVE ALWAYS  
PUT ON MASKS BEFORE  
EXAMINING PATIENTS.



# CONTENTS

July 2020

VOL. 23/12

THEME:  
**LIVING WITH  
COVID-19**

## **Morparia's Page** 02

Corona is here to stay, learn to live with it  
*Raju Korti* 04

We owe it to the corona warriors  
*Ankita Sharma* 06

Migrants in the circle of love and care 08

When fiction meets facts.... 09  
*Raju Korti*

Well, now for the economy!  
*Umesh Asaikar* 10

How a team of five million beat a pandemic  
*Dev Nadkarni* 11

Making a virtue out of deprivation  
*Nikeeta Nirody-Bendre,*  
*Arushi S.*  
*Madhuri Deshmukh* 12

Baking tales  
*Vijayalakshmi Rajan* 16

## **Know India Better**

Chadar Trek:  
The penguin walk on a frozen river  
*Sucharita D & Ankur K* 17

## **Face to Face**

Venugopal Rao Nallamothu  
*A. Radhakrishnan* 26

## **General**

The making of a master shuttler  
*Anuradha Pittie* 30

Gritty girl with a golden heart  
*G. Venkatesh* 32

Support for Musicians  
*Rashmi Oberoi* 34

**Great Indians** 36



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

**Editor**  
Anuradha Dhareshwar

**Design**  
Resurgam Digital LLP

**OIOP Clubs**  
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



LT-GEN STANLEY  
LESLIE MENEZES



BASU CHATTERJEE



N R MADHAVA MENON

visit us at:  
**www.oneindiaonepeople.com**  
www.facebook.com/oneindiaonepeoplefoundation



# Corona is here to stay, learn to live with it

*The world is nowhere close to finding a cure for COVID-19. In the post-Corona story-line, how will the algorithm of life change? **Raju Korti** throws up some interesting scenarios that may emerge in a future that looks uncertain.*



the new normal will be far from the past normal by all available indications. In the post-Corona story-line, how will the algorithm of life change? That's worth pondering and throws up interesting scenarios.

There are two schools of thought – both diametrically opposite – and both rationalise their optimism and cynicism on whether the world will see the end of the virus in near future. The positive side draws from the past when the Spanish Flu that killed 50 million people worldwide in 1918 was overcome as also the dreaded plague that reared its head again in 1994. While

**W**ho would have imagined, even in their wildest dreams, that a tiny virus of the size of a minute dust particle would turn the world topsy turvy in just three months? Five lockdowns, a frenetic clutch of therapies and a slew of preventive measures later, the country is still none the wiser and the virus continues to be the enigma it was since it landed at its doorstep all the way from the distant Chinese province of Wuhan's wet market.

Taxing the country's creaking health infrastructure and its guardians like never before and inflicting heavy casualties, the Covid-19 pandemic has dealt a body blow by disrupting livelihoods and threatening the World Health Organisation's avowed goal of "Healthcare for All." Social mores have taken a beating with the pandemic forcing people not only in the safe confines of their house but also a radical change in lifestyles.

## Uncertainty ahead

In the thick of grappling with this paralysing scenario, two striking features of human behaviour stand out. Although the world is nowhere close to finding a cure for the latest scourge of the mankind, optimism still obtains that in due course, things will return to normal. However,

it remains to be seen how the country -- which started on a promising note of containing the virus initially and messed it up later partly out of complacency and partly because of lack of awareness -- now approaches the rigours of uncertainty.

Health systems and health security complement each other. The outbreak has underscored that investing in a robust health care system outweighs every other expediency. Beyond the human optimism, there persists a nagging question that we may never be able to produce an effective vaccine against Covid-19 and may have to live with the permanent risk of contracting it any time. This despair comes from the researchers who apprehend that the novel virus could mutate and in its new avatar could render futile the entire process of finding a vaccine.

It is estimated that there are more than 100 vaccines which are undergoing pre-clinical trials, some of them in the human trial stage. While this sounds very encouraging, it needs to be understood that developing a vaccine is a long-drawn and a trial-and-error process. A number of experiments come to a naught in the first, second or the third stage and only a minuscule 10% are able to cross the last hurdle to get approval. Even then, there is no reasonable guarantee that the vaccine found may work

generally. In some cases it has been found to have a negative impact as it happened in Philippines when instead of providing immunity, the vaccine for Dengue aggravated the crisis there.

The World Health Organisation has hinted at the possibility of never be able to deal with the virus – natural or manmade. If that happens, the only way the human race can survive is by developing herd immunity but that runs the risk of large number of fatalities. Clearly, a situation of mind boggling proportions! In India, all eyes are now on the Serum Institute which has invested \$ 100 million for finding a vaccine while elsewhere across the globe; researchers are racing against time with frenetic experiments to find a cure even as infections rise exponentially.

### The flip side of the story

The picture as it obtains now makes a case for co-habiting with the mysterious virus. It has already started showing in cities where life is just a shadow of what life once was. People, cutting across lines, have been forced to retreat into an atomized existence – movements severely restricted, social life reduced to almost nothing and their economic statuses debilitated with uneasy professional ramifications.

For all the diversity in human nature and culture, man remains a social animal. The string of lockdowns has resulted in fewer people reporting to work. With Entertainment, Hospitality and Travel industries at the receiving end, the very social fabric of public life has been torn asunder. The initial stage where the forced leave from work was thought of as a blessing in disguise has now reached a stage where people are being forced to be frugal as they face pay cuts and layoffs. There is, however, a flip side to this dismal story.

Technology advances are providing some succor. Real life has transitioned to virtual, bringing a semblance of relief to harried citizens. Education, Work, Interaction, as also many other human activities, will have to be conducted from within the four walls of the house. Venturing out will become more of a compulsion than luxury.

The pandemic has resulted in what is effectively the largest “work from home” experiment ever conducted in human history. People are accessing more educational resources online for their children; finding unconventional ways to connect with co-workers, friends, and family; and employers are being more accommodative in how they respond to employee needs through more dynamic, cloud-based technology.

Personal hygiene, wearing masks, hand gloves, frequent hand-washing, not to speak of physical distancing, will give rise to a new form of untouchability, especially for the demonstrative people who hug and shake hands either

for protocol or out of personal feelings. The ethos of working with a team spirit and building up human trust will be redefined with watching each other on screens, necessitating a more intense interaction. New entrants to the professional circuit will be severely impacted and will have to act out of their skins to fit in the scheme of things. A disciplined lifestyle -- food consumption included -- will be paramount for survival.

### The silver lining

**In a world where everyone wears a mask, it is a privilege to see a soul. The Covid-19 has ordained that you wear a mask to make sure you don't become a soul.**

The proverbial silver lining to the black cloud will be the redemption of Nature. The social dynamics of extended lockdowns and severe curtailment of human movement will lead to a shrinking urban spread and reduced traffic density. Nature has an auto-correct system robust enough to bring mankind to its knees. All those who have been crying

hoarse on the injustice and abuse of Nature because of human excesses have stood vindicated. It is evident in the way environs have responded to the forced discipline on the humans. Ecological conservation promises to be back on rails and it is argued, with the plausible rationale, that Nature devolves upon itself to teach mankind a lesson when it is pushed against the wall. When one reads about the unusual sightings of birds and animals in what is believed to be human space, it only substantiates that it is not advisable to tinker with the Nature without its disastrous consequences.

In this context, it sounds almost prophetic that the WHO has made Biodiversity as its existential theme for 2020. The relentless erosion of wild spaces has brought humans perilously close to animals and plants harbouring diseases that can jump to humans. Man's relationship with the Nature is symbiotic. If we are to survive as a planet with an unbridled population, there is no way antagonising Nature.

As the country desperately tries to wrest control, trying to stop the tidal wave of infection washing over us, we also ride a high crest of uncertainty. In a world where everyone wears a mask, it is a privilege to see a soul. The Covid-19 has ordained that you wear a mask to make sure you don't become a soul.



**The writer is a prolific journalist with 40 years of experience and has to his credit hundreds of articles and blogs touching upon a variety of subjects.**

# We owe it to the Corona warriors

*While almost an entire population was confined to the safe environs of their homes during the lockdown, there were but a few brave warriors who put their lives on the line, fighting the mysterious virus with a fierce sense of commitment, writes **Ankita Sharma**.*



**T**hroughout the lockdown across India, particularly so Mumbai, it were the essential service providers, the doctors, the civic body staff, the police, the grocers, the fire personnel and more who fought valiantly against COVID-19 and...emerged victorious. These Corona Warriors moved ahead in times of duty against the surge, on empty streets as residents stayed back at home, protected from the lethal virus.

In Mumbai, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) workers can be spotted from afar during the mornings every single day...lockdown or otherwise. Dressed in their peculiar khaki uniforms, they can be seen scattered around the city early morning, cleaning the streets and collecting garbage.

## Civic workers slogged daily

While the city slept fast, BMC sweeper Sameer Waghavale would leave his home every day at 5 a.m. to reach his workplace. He would start work at 6.30 a.m. to

embark on a routine that hasn't changed in the seven years of service. During the lockdown with trains not running and bus service (for essential service providers) irregular, he preferred to ride down on a two-wheeler to start work on time. "I have not taken a single day leave since the lockdown, just like all my colleagues. Our work is very important even if people don't understand", he says.

Indravati Hadale, who works on the same street and on same shift as Sameer, took her husband's 'position' when he died 12 years ago. Since the lockdown was clamped, she has been reporting to work daily even when her friends and acquaintances in a BMC chawl dissuaded her from going to work. "I am better off as compared to several other BMC employees

because my shift ends at 1.30 p.m. There are many others who have been working over-time to make up for the shortage of staff."

## Security staff remain silent workers

And, among all others, there's one category of workers whose work goes unrecognised. The security personnel who guard hospitals, clinics, shelters and other government structures.

Dilip Andhale, a security guard, has been serving the public for 25 years. Currently deployed at a municipal clinic, he has been working round the clock daily as his co-workers are stranded in their villages following the lockdown. The guard while speaking of the risks security personnel are exposed to says that he sleeps at the clinic itself and avoids going home as much as possible. "In fact, I was even deputed at a hospital for some time that was attending to high-risk patients after the coronavirus outbreak," he says. Like most security personnel coming to



work every day, without fail, Andhale feels, “It’s important to fight this demon, if not for your own then for the public.” His only complaint is people don’t understand the importance of social distancing and underestimate the severity of the outbreak.

## Police at risk, yet worked relentlessly

Seconding Dilip Andhale's view is police constable Shailesh Pawar, who despite being posted at several COVID hotspots and containment zones, rues about the apathy faced by their lot despite the selfless, unflinching loyalty and hard work they put in. He laments, “People don’t understand that even we have families, young children and elderly who face direct risk. If we are coming to duty every day to protect the citizens, the least they can do is to obey the orders i.e. wear masks, maintain social distance, sanitise, etc.”

Kolhapur-based female police personnel and widow, Sulekha Shinde has experienced very difficult times during her lockdown duties as she had to report to duty regularly and take care of her young daughter all by herself. She explains, “My mother-in-law had gone to her village in Pune and got stranded there due to the lockdown. She was the one taking care of my eight-year-old daughter when I was away at work. Now with her away, I have to leave my daughter with my neighbour every day when I leave for work. They are helpful, but I am not sure how long they will be able to help me.”

## Mumbai’s bus services was the BEST

In Mumbai, most BMC employees, like other essential service providers, have been relying on the BEST buses that ply on the roads only for people involved in essential services and discharging essential duties. Bus drivers and conductors continue to remain at high risk just like other essential service providers and extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 and other contagious diseases.

## Personnel fought fire and the virus

Since the beginning of the lockdown, besides the stress of preparedness for an emergency or an unforeseen situation, the fire department personnel have been braving several odds to keep residents safe and protected. This, while, all the time quelling the fear of their family members about their own safety, as they leave for work every day.

“We have staff coming from far and beyond, from even beyond Mumbai, for duty. And, everyone has been coming diligently, without fail without a break,” says a South Mumbai fireman Avinash More. Vasant Deshwal, who has been working with the department for 28 years now, travels all the way from Badlapur where he lives with his joint family. In the absence of local train service throughout the lockdown, he commuted by buses plying essential service providers to and from work. “It took me a good three hours to reach my workplace as I took the bus earmarked for hospital and police staff. My wife and other

family members worry about me all the time,” he explains. Like Deshwal, there are a few others who travel from Kalyan, even beyond, all the way to their own places of work.

To eliminate the long hours of travel that employees need to undertake, even during the lockdown, the department has changed the work schedule for the firemen at all stations across Mumbai.

“We are now working on 24-hour shifts instead of the regular 8-hour one since the lockdown. So, we stay at the station itself for a day and then return home to rest for two days,” says More, a veteran having completed 29 years in service in April 2020. “These are difficult times and it’s important for everyone to behave responsibly for themselves and for the safety of essential service providers like us.” The department is arranging for lodging and boarding for its staff during these long shifts.

## Simply clapping for medics won’t help

Amid the frontline workers, it’s the medical practitioners and paramedics that are holding the ‘humanitarian’ front and ensuring maximum recoveries and minimum casualties from the COVID-19 outbreak. If that was not enough, there is a huge stigma towards the medical personnel fighting COVID. In housing societies across India, members have been ostracising against hospital workers, nurses and doctors during this period. This, in the time of COVID and in face of doctors’ die hard approach in the battle against Corona, is deplorable.

“Simply clapping in support of doctors fighting COVID, is only a symbolic gesture. It must be followed up by action or at least empathy towards doctors, nurses and other medical personnel especially during this time,” says Udaipur-based general practitioner Dr. Jhunjhunwala.

These corona warriors fought tooth and nail during the lockdown and even after. Today, when the nation is opening up to salvage its economy albeit cautiously, the warriors despite the casualties – thousands affected, some even dead in the forces and other services – continue to work. It’s this spirit of our Corona Warriors which has helped India battle the virus with ferocity...and successfully too!

**Ankita Sharma is a trainee with the DraftCraft Media Network – an initiative of DraftCraft International – a platform for media students, experts and professionals to quash populist trends and help create ‘unbiased and independent’ news.**

# Migrants in the circle of love and care

*Among the few Samaritans who reached out to migrants and daily wage workers during the lockdown, were volunteers of the Circle of Love and Care.*



**Volunteers of SRLC distributing food to migrants**

**A**fter the country announced a complete lockdown in March following the outbreak of Coronavirus, it posed a daunting challenge for a large number of front liners, migrant workers, daily wagers, and animals to survive its impact on their health (physical, mental and emotional), and finances. The need of the hour was for people to reach out to them in whatever way they could.

Mumbai which is currently one of the major hotspots of the outbreak in India, saw an enormous movement of migrant populations since the government issued transport guidelines for stranded workers.

On witnessing the heart-aching conditions of thousands of migrants wearily waiting in queues spanning kilometres at various railway and bus stations, and travelling interstate in trucks, and on trailers, Shrimad Rajchandra Love and Care's volunteer network across Mumbai immediately stepped in to prepare and deliver nutritious food packets to these migrants in transit.

Inspired by its founder Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai, Shrimad Rajchandra, Love and Care (SRLC) has been extensively carrying out 360 degree initiatives to support and protect all these affected communities, through its volunteer network of thousands in over 50 cities globally.

On 16 May 2020, in Mumbai, over 25,000 theplas (flatbreads) were prepared in less than five hours and distributed among the groups of migrants queued up at multiple areas in the city.

Shrimad Rajchandra Love and Care initiative called the 'Circle of Love and Care' further amassed more support from Mumbaikars across the city, and in just 12 days, they successfully distributed 10 lakh fresh home-cooked theplas along with 125 lakh packs of biscuits and snacks along with one lakh bottles of packed beverages like fruit juices, butter-milk and water, thereby feeding over five lakh migrants across Mumbai. All this while strictly maintaining social distancing and sanitary norms.

To emotionally support these migrants, Mumbaikars also began writing heartening messages on each packet. Owing to the systematic coordination, volunteers have reached out to railway and bus stations, major interstate check points, toll nakas and transit areas including CSMT Worli, Sion, Kurla, Borivali, Dahisar, Thane, Kalyan, Bhayandar, etc.

On witnessing the extensive and instant relief being provided; BMC officials, local police stations, government personnel and Tehsildars often approach SRLC for immediate support. For instance, recently, a trailer with over 70 famished migrant workers and children headed to West Bengal, was identified at Dahisar Checkpoint. When informed by the police personnel, SRLC volunteers hurried to the site with food packets within just two hours.

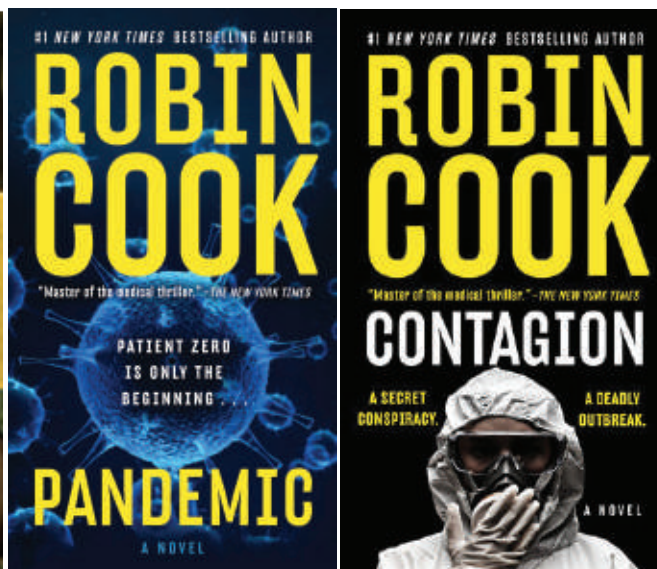
One night, BMC officials sought the support of SRLC to feed over 1500 starved migrants at CST station. Volunteers immediately made an interim arrangement of biscuit packets for two hours, until the BMC kitchen prepared cooked meals. Railway officers have also been updating the SRLC coordinator about scheduled and delayed trains in order to help support timely provision of home cooked food to the migrants waiting for trains.

"It is the collective passion and commitment of every volunteer that makes our initiatives possible in such a short turnaround time. Our founder and spiritual mentor, Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai tells us that there are three ingredients to service: the sincere intent to serve, the power of community spirit and divine help. And the Circle of Love and Care is undoubtedly driven by these factors." SRLC has thus become a strong bridge between the Mumbaikars and migrant workers, uniting scores of city dwellers in a common spirit of selfless service.



# When fiction meets facts....

*Contagion and Pandemic, both fictional books written by Dr. Robin Cook and made into movies later have plots that are peripherally close to the situation arising out of the present pandemic. **Raju Korti** draws a parallel between fact and fiction.*



**T**he power of intuition and anticipation can blur the line between reel and real. There cannot be any other conceivable justification for thriller genres – some made into films later – that are remarkably close to the manner in which the Covid-19 script is unfolding.

“Contagion” directed by Steven Soderbergh in 2011 and “Pandemic” directed by John Suits in 2016 have a storyline that is tantalisingly close to the Covid-19 trappings – almost to the point of being clairvoyant. The first one has China as its backdrop. It tracks a highly contagious virus transmitted when sick people touch surfaces and leave a virus behind that others can catch. Then follows a struggle by health officials to identify and contain the virus amid mass panic while researchers desperately search for a vaccine. It also argues that destruction of natural habitats as one of the ills resulting in the pandemic. A clear case of Virtual closing in on Real! Remember, novels and films about pandemics and outbreaks then fell in the category of medical thrillers. That’s how fiction has metamorphosed into facts.

American physician and novelist Dr Robin Cook deserves to be credited for pioneering myriad fictional plots relating to medical sciences. The 80-year-old veteran, among other books, wrote “Virus”, “Outbreak”, “Contagion”, “Vector”, “Mutation”, and “Pandemic” which are peripherally close to the situation arising out of this pandemic.

Cook was right on track. “Pandemic” (2018 and different from the Soderbergh film) is about a seemingly

healthy woman dying after a heart transplantation necessitated by acute respiratory distress. The protagonist, a medical examiner and a frequent character in his novels, does an autopsy and suspects the death could be due to a flu-like virus. While investigating the mysterious heart transplant of the dead woman, he unearths a larger conspiracy. He meets a Chinese billionaire businessman who holds a double PhD in Molecular Biology and Genetics. Further cases of flu-like virus get reported in many parts of the world and he determines to stop the pandemic from spreading.

Three books in a row that touch upon related subjects steeped in medical sciences make for a remarkable coincidence when you see what the world is passing through with similar shades of grey. The scientific community has long kept changing its collective mindset over what viruses are. First seen as poisons, then as life-forms, then biological chemicals, they are thought of as being in grey area between living and non-living. The classification of viruses as non-living in the modern era of biological science has had an unintended consequence. It has led most researchers to ignore viruses in the study of evolution. Perhaps it is a case of belated wisdom that most researchers are beginning to appreciate viruses as fundamental players in the history of life.



**The writer is a prolific journalist with 40 years of experience and has to his credit hundreds of articles and blogs touching upon a variety of subjects.**

# Well, now for the economy!

*Abolish income tax, let people spend surplus money so generated, focus on the demand side and bring on a slew of robust measures to boost Health and Education infrastructure to put the economy back on rails, argues **Umesh Asaikar**.*

**F**or the government of the day, it was a Hobson's choice – saving lives or saving the economy. Two and half months into the lockdown and amidst a continuing debate, the country seems to be opening up. "Unlock India" has begun in fits and starts across various states from 8 June 2020.

Places that attract clusters like cinema halls, malls and restaurants will remain closed in most states for some more time. Schools, colleges and coaching classes will continue with e-learning. Restaurants in many states have been allowed to deliver food to homes. Some states have opened places of worship, some not. Offices, private and public have been allowed to operate in many states. Inter-state movement has been allowed albeit with the calculated risk of COVID-19 transmissions.

It was jarring to see the educated class undoing the good intentions behind the lock-down by going out in hordes as if they had been assigned to bring herd immunity. On the other side, the approach of the states to unlocking was incongruous and incohesive. With people throwing social distancing to the winds and the slipshod manner in which public places were sanitised, it will not be altogether surprising if a second wave of infection is upon us in July. The death rate in the country in that case could jump from the current 200+ to 500 per day end July. The economy has taken a severe beating as was only expected. FII (Foreign Institutional Investors) money is shoring up the markets as they have money and India seems to be the best bait despite a weakening Rupee. I see a straight 10% drop in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in the April-June 2020 quarter – quarter on quarter basis. The impact on the share markets in the coming month is anybody's guess.

The measures taken on supply side of economy depend on the trickle-down effect and are not very cogent. In any case, these measures deal more with postponement of loan repayment and interest-cost related cash outflows of business entities. They will have no impact on increasing manufacturing capacity utilisation of businesses anyhow – ways since the demand side remains unaddressed. The benefits of these measures have not reached the 10 crore migrant population which is in a complete disarray since the last two months.

Fifty percent of India's population is in the farm sector. Structural reforms announced recently as regards One India One Market will not benefit the farmer fraternity immediately. By all accounts, issues like fair price for farm produce, money lenders taking over their farms and homes;

will remain unresolved this year too. The need of the hour is the Government quickly addresses the demand side of the economy. It needs to draw people out to spend by making them feel financially secure. This can be addressed in two ways --serving both short-term and long term impetuses to the economy.

True to the dictum well begun is half done; begin by abolishing personal income tax. Let people spend this surplus money so generated. It will generate additional revenue on account of GST. Let India move away completely from an individual income tax regime to expenditure tax regime. This will result in spurt in demand, increase in manufacturing capacity utilisation and businesses going in for capacity expansions not undertaken in the last three years. It will give boost to capital goods industry besides cement, steel and other metals. Secondly, the Government should seize this opportunity through deficit financing and take concrete steps in building up India's health and education infrastructure. The Central Government can utilise its own land in every major district to set up an education complex of the standard of AIMS, IIT, paramedical, paraengineering colleges, hospitals etc. Let an allocation of up to ₹ Two lakh crore be made to build at least 300 such institutes in the next three years. This will raise our education and health standards besides generating employment at local level and bring down substantially the persisting problem of migrant work-force.

We cannot escape a fair share of blame for this situation. People have not given a sensible account of themselves and the entire approach to the crisis – from lock-down to unlock-down – shows ad hocism – haphazard coordination and planning. Our woes have also been compounded by Mother Nature which has started giving mankind a piece of its seething mind. It is not as if the cause is completely lost. Mitigation is still possible with a more cohesive and sensitive approach to lockdown-unlock-down management. However, even as efforts are directed towards this end, the focus on economy revival should not be lost.



**Umesh Asaikar**, a mechanical engineer from IIT, Bombay and an MMS from Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai, is also an associate member of Cost Accountants of India. He has over 41 years of corporate experience, 30 of them in leadership positions. He retired recently and now focuses on social work, business consultancy and corporate coaching.

# How a team of five million beat a pandemic

**Dev Nadkarni** tells us how New Zealand was not only able to flatten the curve but nearly eliminate the bug.

On June 8, as the Covid-19 pandemic raged on in hotspots across the world, New Zealand declared itself Covid-free. The last active case was declared recovered and the country's four-level alert system was lowered to Level-1 – the lowest. That meant all activities could resume as normal except for the borders that will remain closed until further notice. However, at the time of writing this piece twenty-four days after no cases were reported in the country, two positive cases sneaked past the borders into and shone a light on the importance of not ever letting the guard down – but more on that later. So how did New Zealand's 'team of five million', as Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern likes to describe Kiwis, not only flatten the curve but nearly eliminate the bug?

Unlike the densely populated countries where the pandemic has rapidly spread, New Zealand is isolated, surrounded by a moat of oceanic proportions and is sparsely populated. Just five million people spread over a land area as much as the UK (pop. 66m) or Japan (126m). That gives the country a huge advantage in preventing the spread of a pandemic like Covid-19 or the ability to trace people who might have potentially contracted the infection. But none of those advantages would have been of any use, if people weren't compliant and did not follow the strict codes imposed during the weeks of lockdown. New Zealand's team of five million followed instructions to the letter.

Nearly all early cases were traced back to overseas travel and New Zealand shut its international borders and imposed a complete lockdown following a four-level alert system. The top Alert Level-4 lockdown has been described as one of the most stringent in the world with all business and social activities closed and people forced to stay indoors in their 'bubbles' – meaning family or people they were with on the day the Level-4 lockdown was imposed. People were advised not to breach their bubbles and were allowed out only to visit supermarkets, pharmacies and doctors.

New Zealand is one of the world's freest countries and Kiwis are simply not used to their freedoms being impinged upon – least of all by government. Yet nearly all Kiwis complied with Level-4 restrictions and opinion polls

have showed that 92 per cent of the population was happy to comply.

One factor that helped in no small measure was the constant communication that the Prime Minister and her top Ministry of Health official shared with their team of five million. Every day at 1pm throughout the lockdown, New Zealanders were glued to their television sets and online devices to watch the daily media briefing by this duo. Media were given all the time they needed to ask questions and

**One factor that helped in no small measure was the constant communication that the Prime Minister and her top Ministry of Health official shared with their team of five million. Every day at 1pm throughout the lockdown, New Zealanders were glued to their television sets and online devices to watch the daily media briefing by this duo.**

every question was answered or clarified later. Meanwhile, as the economy went into a tailspin, the government announced the biggest economic stimulus package in New Zealand history with companies receiving subsidies to pay wages to their employees for 12 weeks and later for another eight. Other benefits were also upped accordingly. A slew of financial packages continue to be announced, which is expected to ultimately cost some \$200 billion to the exchequer.

As the country emerges from the lockdown all activities have resumed, and social distancing is

no longer required. There are no restrictions on the number of people who can assemble, with sports stadia chock-a-block for rugby matches. Cafes and restaurants are filling up and economic activity is rapidly coming back to normal. Unemployment, though, abounds – and is likely to remain high for some time.

But two British women who were allowed into the country on compassionate grounds to visit a dying relative earlier this week have tested positive and thrown a spanner in the works of New Zealand's truly laudable Covid-19 campaign. The border remains the country's Achille's heel and its continued closure will greatly continue to affect the economy, particularly tourism. The country is headed for an election in September and predictably the pandemic and economic recovery will be major issues.



**Mumbai-born Dev Nadkarni is a writer, consultant and an independent director on corporate boards based in New Zealand.**



# Making a virtue out of deprivation

*What seem to us as bitter trials sometimes turn out to be blessings in disguise. It not only takes us down the path less travelled, it also brings to surface the talent that lies dormant inside of us. The three-month lock-down refused to pin down these restive individuals who discovered different dimensions to their creative craft and refused to be drawn into the vortex of negativity and depression. The entire realms of Art and Nature -- from cherishing the canvas of nature to cooking, dancing, writing, and drawing – was explored to keep frustrations away. Moral of these stories: The real you stands up in adversity.*

In the latter of March 2020, the lockdown announced by the government following an outbreak of COVID-19 abruptly brought our lives to a standstill. Hunkered down in their homes for nearly three months resetting their lives, the young and old, found time to connect with themselves or pursue hobbies even as they worked from home. Some sang... some danced. Some cooked, while others baked. Some knitted,

while few others painted. Some did bird watching from their windows, while others participated in various challenges on social media – from posting best books they have read to the most beautiful places they visited. The social media was abuzz with display of talent show of all those who had discovered their new-found talent. Each one had found their own way of dealing with the 'new normal'.

Here, we bring a few positive stories of individuals turning the lock-down to their enrichment.

## Art to spread positivity



*Baby God images by Nikeeta*

I'm an architect by profession and the lockdown in March 2020 forced an indefinite closure of all our sites. A school classmate and my aunt prodded me to start sketching again...it was my love in school days, but later as life got busy, it went on the backburner.

So, one fine day during the lockdown, I started sketching with limited material I had at home. It was a baby Krishna. I posted it on Facebook. It was loved by many and people asked me to do a baby God series. I decided to explore the same and sketched a few more ...I looked at references and found I loved drawing eyes, the naughty expression on the faces and bring out an aspect of God we never thought we'd imagine.



**Hi y'all, I'm Olga the owlet,  
With a pretty bow on my head,  
I dig the night life big time  
For mommy gives me worms in bed!**



**I am Hola the Hedgehog  
I love the woods  
Look at my lovely fur  
Ain't it good?**



**I'm Buzzy the bumblebee,  
Oh so lively as you can see,  
While flying I fall down at times,  
So resting as I got an ouchie.**

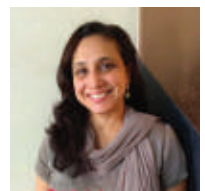


**I'm Elli the elephant,  
In the river I love to swim and dive  
Why would you humans wanna  
kill us...  
Don't we have a right to stay alive?**

After this, I explored doing baby animals...cute little cows, deer, cats and dogs, each making us feel like petting them and looking forward to seeing them. My sketching activity made a lot of people look forward to their day and inspired many others to take up their passions and hobbies. I was happy I could light up smiles on people's faces. My job during lock-down...to spread positivity was done...in my own small way!

This brought me sheer joy, calmed my frayed nerves and I made tons of new friends. The lock-down turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

– Nikeeta Nirody-Bendre





# Cooking up a story

**S**eventy seven days of being locked inside our home! No way, I shouted as conflicting thoughts and emotions raced through my mind. At first, both my seven-year-old sister and I protested. But as we began to understand the seriousness of the situation—an attack of a mysterious virus which had turned our lives topsy-turvy, we began to think of how best to deal with it.

The smart phones, the laptops and ipads, which were kept away from us (I was in the midst of my board exams and my sister was awaiting her school exam results) were brought out from their lockups. Our afternoons wafted with popcorn and instant snacks, and our evenings became resonant with board games and cards and karaoke and laughter. We binged on reruns of Mahabharat and Ramayan and discussed the episodes at night.

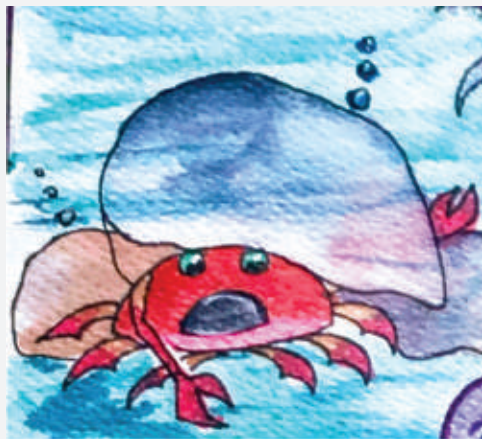
It wasn't all play though. Chores were assigned to each family member including the youngest. Study, work from home all this began in full-swing. My little sister taught us to dance. It was gruelling session daily as we tried to match her steps and energy. But also a lot of fun!

Slowly, our world adjusted to an online life - work from home, virtual sketch walks, online workshops - writing workshops, art webinars, a (science) story telling camp; even virtual birthday parties! Of these, the story camp led to a fine story writing 'CRABBY and OCTO' by my little sister. Looking back I feel triumphant that as a team we did it!

**(Contributed by Arushi S. Short story 'Crabby and Octo' by her sister Mihira and illustrations by their mother Varsha)**

## CRABBY and OCTO

Once upon a time, there lived a crab called Crabby. He was not happy because he had no friends. The other fishes went to school, but Crabby did not go as he didn't have any friends. In the same ocean, there lived an octopus named Octo. Just like Crabby, Octo also didn't have any friends and didn't go to school. Octo often felt sad as he had



no friends. One day, when Crabby was wandering in the ocean, a large rock fell on him when he was not looking. Crabby got stuck under that rock and cried

loudly for help. Octo was swimming nearby. And he heard Crabby's voice. He immediately turned to Crabby. He told Crabby "Don't worry, I will save you from this giant rock. I have eight hands - I can easily lift this rock using them". Octo bravely pushed the rock aside using his strong hands. Crabby then could come out from under the rock. He said to Octo "I am really grateful to you for saving me. What is your name?" "Hi - my name is Octo.

What is your name?" "I am Crabby. Can we be friends?" Octo replied "Yes of course! I am so happy to meet you,



my friend Crabby!" Octo then told Crabby "I didn't have any friends till now, and that is why I didn't go to school." Crabby replied "You are my first friend! From tomorrow onwards, we both will go to school together." After that day Crabby and Octo went together to school. At the school, they met many fishes, turtles, octopuses and crabs. They both made many new friends. They were both happy as they were not lonely anymore. Crabby told Octo "Even though we have many friends now, you will always be my best friend." Octo said "Thank you Crabby! But please don't get stuck under a rock ever again!" Both Octo and Crabby laughed heartily on this, hugged each other and remained best friends forever.





# Bird watching is what she did



*Coppersmith Barbet*



*Black Naped Monarch female*



*Golden Oriole*



*Shaheen Falcon was a rare sighting*

For Madhuri Deshmukh, an avid photographer and birder, waiting patiently with her DSLR camera, looking out of her son's bedroom window that overlooks a Peepal is not something new. It has been her morning routine, every single day for more than five years since she started capturing exotic birds on her camera from her Vile Parle (east) home.

Says Madhuri: "The Peepal fruits all round the year, which attracts many insects, flies, butterflies, moths and bees and many species of birds that come feed on these insects. I have observed till date 102 bird species like flycatchers, warblers, Orioles to name a few.

The clean air and no noise pollution during the lockdown was the best time this summer to watch these beautiful avians, who seemed in no hurry to leave the tree, she says. Summer is their breeding season, so one gets to hear bird calls all day, especially early mornings. I could shoot many birds at leisure."

Madhuri was a part of an SNGP team that has compiled a three-minute audio-visual (AV) on birds that can be identified in Mumbai's residential areas during the lockdown.



# Baking tales

*Discovering a new passion for baking, **Vijayalakshmi Rajan** refused to give in to despair and used the lockdown time to bake and bond with her family.*

**T**he lockdown of the last few weeks has taught me three things. One, I can bake. Two, my hubby, son and I can actually tolerate each other, in fact, get along very well, 24/7! And three, working from home is fun. I do miss my office and colleagues, but it's been fun working in our respective niches at home, breaking for coffee and meeting for lunch!

I was determined from word 'Go' of the lockdown that I wouldn't allow feelings of panic to overwhelm me. Believe me, the lockdown though initially for just a week, had looked interminable. If I had anticipated that it would eventually continue for more than two months, I think I would have thrown in the towel then and there. Seeing it as an opportunity to spend some time with my son, I soon succumbed to his demand for cakes which I used to bake quite often in the past. I started I remember, with a pineapple upside cake, which the family not only enjoyed, but it triggered a huge interest in experimenting with other kinds of cakes. I made an apple cake, a banana cake, a lemon cake, a sponge cake and even a jam cake. Even then, I only flirted with cakes and cupcakes. The thought of baking breads was not even on my radar.

I think it was around the second extension of the lockdown. One day, late in the evening, when the family had gone to sleep, feeling extremely restless, I opened one of my baking books and searched for yet another cake to bake. Suddenly my eyes fell on a twisted herb loaf recipe. I scanned the recipe and realised that not only did it look simple, but I had all the ingredients for it. Feeling emboldened by the quietness of the hour and the blessed lack of an audience, I embarked upon this project. What one doesn't realise about bread baking is that the dough has to be kneaded for many long minutes, proofed (set aside to rise) and perhaps proofed again, which literally adds a couple of hours to the process. So by the time I popped it into the oven, it was past midnight. But the elation I felt when I presented the perfectly baked herb bread to my family the next day, was tremendous. I had finally baked a bread!

## Hot cross buns, croissants and more

Baking bread had always seemed like an unnecessary activity to me. The gourmet shops and bakeries are full of artisanal breads and multi-grain breads and croissants and all sorts of buns and dinner rolls. Why on earth would I even want to bake one? But believe me, baking bread, any kind of bread, is the most primal and satisfying activity one can



undertake. It's basic sustenance and bread is a part of my family's staple diet. Ingredients like yeast and baking powder were not always available. To source them took every bit of ingenuity and luck. Frankly, I would have stopped with my twisted loaf, but for a twist in circumstances. The following evening the little mart in our building complex ran out of bread. The lockdown effect was slowly being felt, with groceries and vegetables not as plentifully available as before. When the mart started running out of breads as demand far outpaced supplies this little store was able to provide, my blood ran cold. A chill went up my spine.

I came back home, seized my recipe books and for once, instead of looking at cake recipes, I searched for bread recipes. The very next day I baked the local pav (bless Sanjeev Kapoor!), followed by dinner rolls, and feeling very brave, baked hot cross buns and croissants over the next few days! Okay, maybe they were not the most professional, flaky croissants and buns, but they were rather good! I even tried whole wheat varieties, finally making a largely whole wheat focaccia which hit the sweet spot of health and taste. I was in baking paradise!

I believe that baking is what helped me preserve my sanity in the bleak days of the lockdown. World over, I believe, women and men have baked during the worst of this pandemic, as a coping mechanism. Just like I did. All I can say is, how lucky were you, world!



**Vijayalakshmi Rajan works for an education consulting firm and in her free time blogs at: [www.my-goodearthblog.wordpress.com](http://www.my-goodearthblog.wordpress.com)**





# CHADAR TREK

## The penguin walk on a frozen river

*Walking in freezing temperatures on a frozen sheet of ice for four days, a group of adventurous trekkers have one of the most challenging but exhilarating experiences of their life in Zaskar Valley in Ladakh. At the end of the trek, they were rewarded by the most spectacular sight - a mighty, frozen waterfall and wonderful memories to last a lifetime.*

***Text & Photographs : Sucharita & Ankur***





*The confluence of Zanskar and Indus River*

**C**hadar means a sheet. Imagine a river flowing with all its might. And suddenly it freezes... and you can walk on that sheet of ice. Isn't that cool? Well, this is exactly what happens in Chadar, in Ladakh --- a dream destination for adventure enthusiasts.

On Chadar trek, you walk on a vast sheet of ice, which is none other than the frozen River Zaskar. This beautiful tributary of River Indus, freezes in winter in the extreme temperatures of -25 to -30 degree Celsius, and you get to trek on it. The journey is adventurous and the dream destination spectacular!. While on other treks there is a summit at a higher altitude to look forward to, in Chadar trek there is no gain in altitude. Basically it's a walk at an altitude of 11,500 ft and the final destination is a mighty frozen waterfall at Nerak. The shorter version of the trek to Nerak is five-day long. There is a longer route too, which is an 18-day-trek that takes you upto Padum village in Zaskar valley, but we decided to do the shorter version.

What makes Chadar trek challenging are the

extreme temperatures and the fact that throughout the course of the trek, you walk on a frozen sheet of ice. Not snow, but ice. And you need to learn to adapt your walk and the rhythm of your pace.

### **The prep for the journey**

Chadar can be trekked only in the month of January and February, when the sheet of ice is 9-12 inches thick and can withstand the footfalls of the trekkers. An incomplete formation of chadar or loose sheet of ice can be very risky, and may even cost one's life. Hence, it is advised to attempt the trek with help of local guides. By doing this, you not only safeguard yourself but also their economic interests.

### **Permit for the trek**

The trek requires a permit which you can get in Leh at the Tourist Reception Centre (TRC). The permit is mandatory to commence the trek and includes a wildlife

permit of Rs 2000 and medical insurance of Rs 3000. So the combined cost of the permit works out to Rs 5000 per person - in addition to the trek fee. This rule of permit-based trek was issued recently - in 2019 by ALTOA (All Ladakh Tour Operator Association). The permit ensures that you are fit enough to commence the trek. There is a medical test that checks your blood pressure and oxygen levels. If your blood pressure is normal and your oxygen levels are good (generally above 80), you are deemed fit and provided with the permit.

## Our story

We attempted the Chadar trek last year and our excitement had no bounds. We were a group of 10 trekkers, all experienced, but sadly only seven were able to complete it. We took a flight to Leh from Mumbai, connecting via Delhi. The first day when you land in Leh, your head might be spinning a little or you might feel a little dizzy, basically a sudden altitude gain of 11,000 ft takes a toll on you. So it's good to take the day easy and rest. A stay of two nights in Leh is compulsory before starting the trek as it helps in acclimatisation to the

weather. So we chilled, acclimatised ourselves after landing by soaking in the beauty of Leh city.

On the second day, we did local sight-seeing in and near the city of Leh.

On the third day, our guide had asked us to meet him at the tourist centre near the main market at 10 a.m. It is the busiest place at that time of the day, especially in January and February months because everyone is here to get their permits.

After we got the permits, we headed to the market to purchase essentials required for the trek.

## Packing essentials

It is better to purchase all the essentials from your own city, when you are planning any such trek; but in case you have not been able to, no worries as Leh is such a place where you find all the essential clothing and accessories required for your trek.



*Our group just after taking first steps on ice*





***Porters- the unsung heroes carrying the essentials***

Some of the things that you need to carry on this trek are: a 50/60 ltr backpack along with a 20-30 ltrs daypack, 5-6 layers of upper clothing including warm clothes, thermals, down jackets and wind cheaters (along with the spare), few layers of lower clothing including trek pants and thermals, few pairs of woollen and military socks, a pair of gumboots along with a pair of floaters, gloves, mufflers, woollen caps, balaclava, goggles, quick dry towels, torch, thermos flask, hiking poles etc.

After we were done with our shopping, we headed back to our lodge, packed our backpacks for the big day and dozed off.

## **The trek begins Day 01**

This is the day you would want to take a good hot shower before leaving for the trek as the next shower you can look forward to will only be on your return. We had two hours of road journey ahead of us to the base village Chilling --- the starting point of our trek. Earlier the base village used to be Darr but now the roads have been extended till Chilling and the work is still in progress. The

plan is to have the roads reach the last village - Padum, on that route.

The drive to Chilling is beautiful, especially when the first sight of confluence of River Indus and Zaskar unravels itself in front of you. Both the rivers were frozen and the milky white hue of the confluence was a beautiful panoramic sight to behold.

We reached Chilling around 12:30 p.m., and were given some instructions by our guide for our journey ahead. (Those who cannot carry their heavy backpacks can take help of porters by paying extra. However, the decision has to be made while booking the trek. My wife and I had decided to carry our own.)

Finally, with gumboots on our feet, six layers of clothing and a heavy backpack, we started our journey. It was windy out there in the valley and we were freezing. We were numb with cold even after layers of clothing. Our feet were frozen and it was difficult to walk. And this was just the beginning of our journey! We were wondering how we were going to manage walking on frozen ice for the next four days.



I still remember our first step on the ice -- the first touch of chadar. We fell. It may sound funny now, but then it hurt a lot. Ice is slippery. The first day went in falling, rising, balancing, and striving to reach the campsite. A distance covered in mere 15-20 minutes by our porters, took us an hour and a half to reach. But finally we reached our first campsite - Shingra Kogma.

The Zaskar river takes a beautiful turn right in front of the camp site. Shingra Kogma has a big camping ground on the right as you walk up the stream. Camps were already set by the time we reached. We had another round of medical checkup at Shingra Kogma. There was a medical camp, where the doctor did the basic checks but we were all fine - freezing but fine and full of energy, zeal and enthusiasm.

Talking about food - it is well taken care of. Our cook was great, he had set a different menu for each day and the food used to be delicious!. Our day used to begin with black tea at around 7 a.m. followed by a breakfast

around 8 a.m. before leaving the camp. Midday meal would be around 12 noon, evening tea and snacks on reaching the campsite and finally the day would end with a sumptuous dinner by 7:30 p.m.

Days in the valley are short. It gets dark by 5:30 p.m. The whole valley becomes quiet. No matter which campsite you are at, when you look around, there is only beauty everywhere. The whole valley is like a frame right out of a poet's imagination -- like a beautiful maiden with exquisite curves, mysterious and terrifying but beautiful.

As night fell, we retreated into our tents. The sleeping bags were double layered and designed to give us comfort in freezing temperatures. But it's a task getting inside the bag. It takes a lot of effort and a good 15-20 minutes to get inside the bag and make yourself comfortable. The nights are biting cold and unbearable -- and one may not get good sleep the first two days. But luckily, we managed to sleep even the first night.



***Zaskar valley in all its beauty***





*Lunch break on a rock patch*

## Day 2

Our next day began with a wakeup call of morning tea and a served breakfast. We started for our next destination - Tsomo Paldar about 3 to 4 hours from Shingra. As we moved ahead - we were informed that the chadar ahead was broken and the waters were above knee level. Our guide Donchok gave us the confidence to give it a shot, and if at all we encounter any broken chadar we would return, not taking any further risk.

When you're in Chadar, the weather extremities are such that the first two days feel like you are subjecting your body to torture. But your body learns to adapt after two days, and that is when the fun begins as you start enjoying the trek. As we moved ahead, we were happy to find that the chadar was well formed, at least on the side of the river which we were walking. The other group, we thought, may have walked the other side of the frozen river.

Our guide inspected the dependability of the icy road to walk on, and with his experience, he made our trek trouble-free. There is always a notion about the

guides and the porters you choose to take along. They are often taken for granted, as tourists/trekkers feel that they are doing their daily jobs and being locals, they are accustomed to extreme temperatures, so not a big deal. But to be honest, they are the real unsung heroes out there. Without them Chadar would always have remained a trade route rather than becoming a trek for us to enjoy.

After a number of falls, we realised that the trick to balance on the ice is to do the penguin walk. Do not lift your feet too much off the ground while walking. You will still fall but far less than before. The more cautious you are - the more you fall - atleast that was my firsthand experience.

Tsomo Paldar was a campsite which was quite restricted in area in contrast to the previous one. While we were tired after a long, strenuous day, there was a magnificent sight to behold at night – the twinkling stars in the sky. Millions of them watching over us. The Chadar Trek is a haven for stargazers. We had never seen so many stars at a glance with our naked eyes. It was an unforgettable sight.

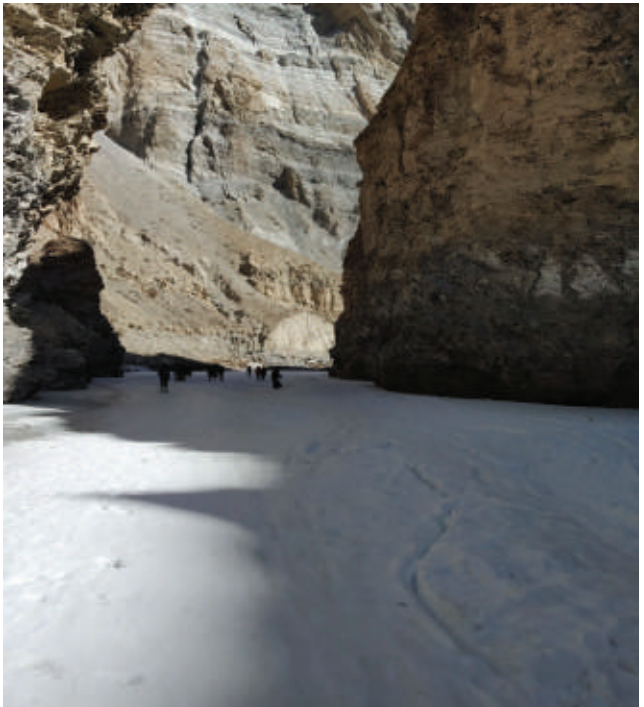


### Day 3

We opened our eyes to a cloudy day. Apparently if the weather is cloudy, the chadar formation is not good. So, Donchok came and announced that we would be heading only till Hotung Caves, a campsite about an hour and a half before Tibb Caves - our designated campsite as per the initial itinerary.

This campsite is a bit special as the valley divides into two here. It is the most beautiful campsite we stayed at. And since our tents were surrounded by valley in all three directions, it was all the more windy. But we had reached the moment where the chills were bearable and enjoyable. The Chadar had a broken patch, from which the emerald green waters were flowing, making the whole experience magical. As the name suggests, there are few large caves at Hotung. But again, it is generally the porters who take refuge in the caves. The trekkers stay in the pitched tents.

We had our dinner, enjoyed a small campfire over the rocks, dried our wet clothes and headed to our tents.



***Hotung caves campsite***





*First view of Nerak - the frozen waterfall*

## Day 4

It was the day when we would reach our final destination – Nerak, the frozen waterfall. Today was supposed to be the longest walk for us. Since we had not reached our designated campsite the previous day, we had to cover that distance as well, reach Nerak and then return back to Tibb - our campsite for the day.

We were asked to start early as sunlight in the valley can be seen only after 9 a.m. and lasts for only two hours. It's not that it gets dark that early, but you can't enjoy the warmth of the direct sunlight, which you crave for so much in the ice cold valley. The pace was a bit faster today because over the past three days we had got accustomed to the ice patterns making it a little predictable to walk. During the walk to Nerak there are several small waterfalls frozen into dangling icicles. But you forget all the previous ones the

moment you set your eyes on the magnificent waterfall at Nerak.

We were in awe of its grandeur. The rendezvous just swept us off our feet. For a few moments you just stand still and want to soak in the sight in silence. The waterfall is 56 ft high and about 30 ft wide. You see tinge of blues in that waterfall. You want to go near it, feel it, bow to its splendour, even kiss it. You just fall in love with it. This was the sight for which we had endured everything on the way since we began the journey. There were not many groups with us because most of them had returned to the base midway or a little after the start of the journey. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise for us as the valley was quiet. Time stood still and the solitude was bliss. We were there for almost an hour taking in the sight as much as we could. Before turning back, we all gave one last hug to the waterfall that stood still – overwhelming us, and then headed back to our campsite.



***Banjaaraa couple at the mighty Nerak waterfall***





*The trail goes all the way to Padum village*

## Day 5

It was the last day of our trek. Chadar was broken at many places and we had to wade through water at many places. It was a whole day walk back to the starting point. But finally we made it. We had fulfilled our dream - we had one more life time experience added to our travel diary. We finished the walk by 5 p.m. and headed to the resort.

Chadar was one trek, where the whole journey was as exciting as the final destination.



Sucharita D and Ankur K are an avid travel couple who have travelled India extensively and trekked in difficult terrains of the Himalayas and Sahyadris. Both are working professionals. You can follow their travel stories on Instagram handle @banjaaraa.couple or visit their blog - <https://www.banjaaraa.com>

## Our Last Six Issues

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



***“A little bit of negativity is way better than a tonne of positivity.”***

He is a multi-faceted maverick.

**Venugopal Rao Nallamothu** has been a journalist, writer, author, trekker, hiker, cycle traveller, farmer, positive thought practitioner, etc., and is at peace with himself and the world.

**A. Radhakrishnan** ferrets out his world views.

**How would you describe yourself?**

I am a learner on the loose. Hailing from a small village in Andhra Pradesh, like every other villager I was also born with the notion that I know nothing. And fortunately, since I really knew nothing, I wanted to learn everything that I came across.

That curiosity took me to Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, where I studied for two years only to observe the outside world. Not to pursue any degree. So that is how I didn't complete my M.A. I didn't need to. My decent writing skills, and the broadminded thinking imbibed at the University was good enough for me to get a job as a newspaper journalist.

After working for a couple of years in Hyderabad in various capacities as a sub-editor, political reporter and ultimately as the magazine editor, destiny forced me to leave for Pune as part of my wife's baggage. In Pune, I worked for the Maharashtra Herald and The Times of India before I went on a long bicycle ride and called it quits.

**Your opinion on the 10-day Vipassana course in Dhammagiri.**

It is a great way to come face-to-face with your spiritual self. Otherwise, who has the time or the inclination to spend ten days without talking? Yogis are a different ball game altogether. But before taking the course, it would be helpful if you could practice meditation at least for a couple of minutes every day. Then you can even write a book like me!

**What inspired your book *Who Stole My Breath?* and *How I Survived S.N.Goenkaji's 10-Day Guerrilla Vipassana Course?* What were the learnings?**

There is an empty, gnawing feeling in all of us that there is something weird about the way we are leading our lives. It drove me to spirituality pretty early in life and during that time I attended this course.

I learnt that this world is an illusion, and we are desperately trying to give meaning to the insignificant things in our lives,



only because we want them to be there.

**Any other books in the pipeline?**

If You Don't Know Where You Are Going, Any Road Will Take You There on Kindle, on my 3000 kms bicycle ride is coming up.

I am also completing a book on Zen, not the philosophy, but about how we are like frogs in the well with our tunnel vision thinking, taking a leaf or two from my understanding of it.

**Does writing energise or exhaust you?**

It takes some time and quoting Sidney Sheldon's autobiography 'All good writing is rewriting', I keep rewriting till I get into the flow, and then my brain cells start dancing with ecstasy. So it is a happy learning process.

**What are the ethics of writing? What kind of research do you do, before beginning a book? Do you believe in writer's block?**

Even if you write trash, and you know that you write trash, be true to yourself. I write books based on my experiences, so I don't need any kind of research to write my books.

Oftentimes, we use writer's block as an excuse for our laziness. The only way to write is to keep writing nonsense till it makes sense, and rewrite it. Everything will fall in place.



### Is negativity self-defeating?

Not exactly. A little bit of negativity is way better than a tonne of positivity. It gives an insight into our limitations; we can see where we are going wrong, correct ourselves accordingly, and move ahead without any false pretensions or expectations.

Positivity, on the other hand, gives us superficial strength. It is like telling ourselves lies all along the way even when we know they are lies.

And that is where all the motivational self-help books have failed to bring about any difference in our lives. Good to read, but there is no such thing as fast-track growth like they promise. Life is a very slow learning process. And the sooner we learn it, the faster we can reach our goal!

### How to be grateful when life is hard?

Realise that the hard times teach us valuable lessons that enable us to tide over any crisis. And we face crises at every stage in our journey. So, that hard-times experience is very valuable.

### How does one derive happiness?

Happiness is not a byproduct, but an end in itself. The moment you become aware of your every action, you are happy. That is what spirituality and meditation is all about. Know thyself. And you are happy. And you take that happiness into every aspect of your life. It is a lot of struggle. It takes years to reach that ideal. Becoming aware of your every action is just the first step; living it fully is a long-drawn process.

### Share your best experience on trekking?

The Alang-Madan-Kulang trek in the Sahyadris that I did a decade ago was most adventurous and involved rappelling and rock climbing. That put me on the adventurous path and I haven't stopped trekking since.

But the most romantic one was walking on the frozen Zaskar river in Leh in subzero temperatures, an out-of-the-world experience. Similar is the Kashmir Great Lakes trek. A week of circling around the great lakes in the Kashmir Himalayas, walking on the rising and falling meadows amid breathtaking scenery was an otherworldly experience.

The Bhirgu Lake trek in the Kullu Himalayas was another memorable experience. Trekking also introduced me to adventure sports like waterfall rappelling, river rafting, etc.

### How important is travel to you?

It is like oxygen to someone like me, exploring his spiritual self. It is like going to the gym, but here you flex your spiritual muscle.

I generally prefer to travel alone because I love to experience



### Getting to know people and their cultures

different cultures and different people at my own pace. I do travel with a group, but only of my trekking friends who share the same sentiments. The advantage is we tend to explore a wide variety of places. Like for example, I wasn't a keen wildlife enthusiast. But when I went to Ranathambhor to see the tiger, I was hooked to birdwatching. And I've gone to Pench and Nagzira in Madhya Pradesh, Jhalana in Jaipur, and the desert of Rann of Kutch in Gujarat to satiate this thirst.

The same goes for my trip to the Northeast in 2019. I had been there twice in a span of two months – once to explore the sanctuary of the clouds, Meghalaya, and the second time to have a firsthand experience of the cultural extravagance of the Naga tribes that is showcased every year in the name of the Hornbill festival.

From wildlife parks to historical sites to spiritual retreats I've had quite a spread on my plate. But for some strange reason, Himachal Pradesh is my favourite.

### Talk about your 3,000 km bicycle ride from Pune to McLeodganj. What did you learn?

It was not a physical act, but a spiritual retreat, wanting to be with myself riding across the length and breadth of the country observing my fears, my anxieties, my frustrations, my joys, and my whole life unfolding before my eyes. And cycling is the best way because the physical exertion silences the mind and enables you to retreat into the inner core of your being.

It was in 2002 that I rediscovered the pleasures of cycling and found that it was only when I was in the saddle and pushing the pedals that I experienced life in capitals — yes LIFE.

In 2009, the urge took hold of me to get away from the grip of headlines and deadlines and I set off on a long, long ride to



**(Left) Venugopal Rao on a 3000 km bicycle ride from Pune to McLeodganj; (Right) Travelling solo allows you to get in touch with your inner core**

just about anywhere. Not having a plan, following one's heart, that was a big part of the thrill...

Initially, I was unsure how I would survive, but all my apprehensions vanished once the road began opening out to me, a whole new world, offering a fascinating potpourri of cultures and cuisines, sights and sounds, and people and places.

The first magical spot that I encountered was the Kannad Ghat in the Satmala Hills that separated Khandesh from the Deccan like a rocky curtain. Its perpendicular scarps plunged thousands of feet deep into the bottomless valley and were so breathtakingly beautiful that they blew my mind away.

The extra smooth Golden Quadrilateral, with its eight-lane roads, overpasses, underpasses and service roads, spoke of an India speeding towards globalisation, with all its promises and risks.

The vistas of Parwanoo, as the road rounded the bend in Kalka to reveal the first Himachal town beyond the Haryana border, were a classic story of the transformation of the plains into the hills.

Then there were the box-like Tibetan monasteries housing stunning clay sculptures in Kinnaur and Spiti, and the Kalka-Shimla toy train chugging up dense green valleys cut through by zig-zagging lines, a marvel of engineering - as is the Hindustan -Tibet Road which hugs the mountains in a tight embrace to keep from falling off into the River Sutlej thousands of feet below.

If sights like these enchanted me, the people's concern touched my heart. At the many eat and tea stops, any number of people were at hand to show interest and concern, and offer advice.

While it had its moments of irony and touches of humour, the ride was no picnic, and definitely not a non-stop party. The moment I got on the road, I felt like Russell Crowe in A Beautiful Mind surrounded by a whole cast of imaginary ghosts egged on by their cheerleaders. I could feel the fear in my

throat, in my mouth, in my shaky hands, in my legs, and in everything.

Many a time the headwind pushed me back and forth testing my patience and my perseverance. Saddle sores hurt me so badly that it was like sitting on pins and needles.

The many mountains I had crossed in Kinnaur and Spiti, and the blasts of wind on the highlands were a brutal test of my physical endurance. And I almost died of exhaustion battling the fury of the heat on the outskirts of Ambala.

But I pedalled on. For more than 60 days. And when I stopped, I logged 3,000 kilometres, ending my journey in the Dalai Lama's abode, McLeodganj, affectionately called Little Lhasa, after having criss-crossed six states — Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh.

I have tried to chronicle my encounters with peoples and cultures with a directness and simplicity which, it is hoped, will engage the interest of the general reader in my book, titled If You Don't Know Where You Are Going Any Road Will Take You There, written in the diary form and is peppered with accounts of sights and conversations.

#### **What advice do you have for writers and budding authors?**

Nothing. I'm a pompous fool, and you don't learn anything from people who are pompous, and fools don't have anything to teach!



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



# The making of a master shuttler

**Anuradha Pittie** traces the journey of the gritty para badminton world champion *Manasi Joshi*, who has earned a string of accolades, blazing a trail of hope and courage for para athletes around the world.



*Manasi Joshi after winning her maiden gold in 2019*

**‘W**hen life throws lemons at you, make lemonade’, is the popular adage, and this is exactly what a spunky 21-year-old, Manasi chose to do, when she met with a dreadful accident.

Manasi's childhood is something many a Mumbaikar can relate to. Her father, Girishchandra Joshi, worked as a scientist at the prestigious Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). Even though academic performance was a priority in the Joshi household, Manasi's parents encouraged her to participate in various extracurricular activities, such as music, art and sports. She tried her hand at volleyball, football and basketball, but badminton remained her all time favourite.

matches, while working as a software engineer.

## The fatal U-turn

In 2011, on her way to work, Manasi was taking a U-turn under the flyover, when a truck coming from the opposite direction collided with her motorbike, crushing her left leg and injuring her arm.

People who gathered around her were well meaning but ill equipped to help her, as she lay bleeding profusely and in excruciating pain. Strong survival instincts made her cling onto her consciousness and with commendable presence of mind, she requested them to contact her family and send for an ambulance.

At the tender age of six, she received her first lesson in badminton, with her father teaching her how to hold a racquet and shuttlecock. She grew up playing this sport with her siblings and at summer camps in school. She continued to pursue it as a hobby for fitness purposes and enrolled for district level tournaments while studying at K.J.Somaiya College of Engineering, and later competed at corporate

However, it was only after nine torturous hours that she received proper medical care. In an effort to save the 'mangled mess', she knew her leg to be, the doctors subjected her to several surgeries during her 45-day hospitalisation, but alas, gangrene set in and amputation became mandatory.

## Starting afresh

By some strange quirk of fate, Manasi had taken an X-ray of her legs, just two weeks prior to her accident. She finally saw herself in the mirror, came to terms with her loss, despite the 'phantom leg' sensation, and decided to move forward with hope.

Whilst her colleagues were forging ahead in their careers, it was disconcerting to be reduced to the most elementary level of relearning to walk again, but Manasi was happy to be alive, and determined to make the best of the situation. So for the next eight months, she struggled with crutches, before she could gain her balance using an artificial limb. She says, "the wonder called human body, knows how to adapt".

Sporting courage, Manasi hiked from Gulmarg to LOC (Line of Control) point, over uneven terrain in extremely cold weather, proving her point that "once you accept a disability and practice around it, it suddenly disappears".

## Dare to dream

Manasi believes that "Time by itself, does not heal. It is what we do with our time, that makes all the difference. So, it is important to do something today to make our tomorrow better". She restarted badminton as part of her rehabilitation

programme and made a new circle of amputee friends. Her positive attitude and friendly demeanor drew forth a lot of goodwill from colleagues and caretakers. Noticing her passion and agility at the game, a fellow player suggested that she try for the National team. Daring to dream, she started practising for it earnestly and went on to play her first international tournament in Spain.

## Game changer

While working in an Ahmedabad bank, quite by chance, she met Pullela Gopichand, the ace player and legendary coach to stalwarts like P.V.Sindhu and Saina Nehwal. Boldly, Manasi approached him with a request to coach her. Taken aback by her focus and grit, he eventually agreed. It was a challenge for him also to coach a para athlete, and he would put himself in her predicament and experiment, to be able to guide her properly on the finer nuances of the game. In 2014, Manasi changed the course of her life, when she decided to play as a professional. She left her job, invested in a light weight prosthesis, and started rigorous training of three sessions daily, at the Pullela Gopichand Academy, Hyderabad.

## Shining star

The International Paralympic Committee's vision is to enable para athletes to achieve sporting excellence and recognises BWF (Badminton World Federation) as the global body promoting and regulating para badminton activities. Depending on the type of physical impairment, there are six sport classes for this event. Manasi qualifies in the SL3 category, wherein the para athlete must play the entire match, standing up. In 2015, Manasi represented India and won a silver, in her first BWF Para-Badminton World Championship held in England, followed by a bronze in 2017, in Korea. She participated in Asian Championships, claiming a bronze in 2016. She won two more bronzes in 2018 at the Asian Para Games, Indonesia and the International Championships, Thailand.

## Smashes of victory

The courts were alive with thunderous applause and constant cheering of 'Vande Mataram' and 'Bharat mata ki jai'. Defying all odds, Manasi had won her maiden gold in women's single, Para Badminton World Championship 2019, in Basel, Switzerland.

This was no mean feat. An 'Arjuna' awardee and undisputed World No1, Parul Parmar was a rival to be reckoned with. To make matters worse, she was Manasi's idol and role model, who had beaten her hollow in the rallies held earlier that year. Facing an opponent who was more accomplished and experienced than her was a definite setback, but Manasi, recalling the guidance of her coach, took a firm grip on her emotions, became calm and started concentrating on the match, to the exclusion of all else. There was an imperceptible shift, uplifting her morale and boosting her confidence. Suddenly, she felt she was in command of the situation and that the scales were tipping in her favour. Her hand moved with a mind of its own, and with effortless master strokes and smashes of victory, she beat Parul, scoring an awesome 21-12 and 21-7.

Manasi comments, "I am super excited and super elated. It is a matter of great pride for me to win this title." She continues, "Disability does not matter. What matters is what you have inside of you."

28 August 2019, PM Narendra Modi tweeted, "130 crore Indians are extremely proud of the Indian Para Badminton contingent which has brought home 12 medals at the BWF World Championship, 2019. Congratulations to the entire team, whose success is extremely gladdening and motivating. Each of these players is remarkable". The Government gave 1.82 cr cash prize to this team of medallists.

## Shuttler for a cause

Manasi finds herself being

treated as a celebrity of sorts. She uses this new status to voice her concerns for the betterment of the disabled in our society. She reveals that a whopping 20-25 lakhs is the cost of a prosthesis, which needs to be replaced every five years, and for competing athletes, a spare one is essential as an emergency backup. Unlike foreign countries, no insurance is available in case of damage or loss of the prosthesis. She feels a waiver of GST on an artificial leg is reasonable because "it's like I have to pay tax for walking". She appeals to the government to provide enablers that make local transport accessible to the handicapped. She also urges corporates to sponsor para athletes as their personal savings are insufficient to cover their special needs.

## Moving ahead

In a short span of five years, Manasi has earned a string of accolades, blazing a trail of hope and courage, for para athletes around the world. "Try to become your Best", says Manasi and raises the benchmark for herself by setting a tougher goal of entering the para badminton debut in Tokyo Paralympics 2020-21. Undaunted, that among the 14 badminton events to be held, her SL3 category for women is not listed, she aims to qualify for mixed doubles, and has started rehearsing for it.

Her journey from being an unfortunate victim in a tragic incident, to becoming a master shuttler of merit, is unquestionably a narrative of triumph. A forehand of focused vision and fortitude, coupled with a backhand of disciplined determination and hard work, have paved the way for Manasi to win, not only in her sport, but also in the game called Life.



**Anuradha Pittie** is a freelance interior designer, floral decorator and creative arts enthusiast.



# Gritty girl with a golden heart

*The urge to make a change, led Aarti Naik to become a tutor to over 300 underprivileged girls in Mulund, Mumbai. She is a shining beacon for several other youngsters who could spearhead small projects in their own towns, cities and villages.*

**G. Venkatesh** tells us her inspiring story.

It takes guts and supreme goodness, imbued with something bordering on the divine (which is said to reside within all human hearts), to dream of helping future generations to surmount those very obstacles which impeded you when you were young. This is obviously what parents would do for their children, but what about someone doing it for little girls not related to her in any way, apart from residing in the same locale and sharing the same environs? Meet Aarti Naik from Mulund, who is the founder of Sakhi for Girls' Education

## India has a lot of catch-up to do

Today, the Covid-19 menace has derailed most of the strategies for sustainable development which countries had laid out for themselves before this year commenced. But come Covid or high water, efforts of individuals like Aarti will go on, reminding us one of Kishore Kumar's memorable songs - 'Ho kitni andheri raat, diya ban jalte jaana re..usi raah pe rahi chalte jaana re.' (No matter how dark the night, you shine on like a lamp, and keep moving ahead along your chosen path).

All the nitty-gritties about Sakhi for Girls' Education is there to be read from the website<sup>2</sup>, . There are Youtube videos which readers may wish to view and take a virtual tour of the locale Aarti teaches in.

Adversities are powerful motivators. They are like Petri dishes in a laboratory on which you grow and culture ideas. Aarti Naik had to drop out of school over a decade ago, and just when the night seemed darkest, there was a glimmer of hope - Ashoka's Youth Venture. In 2008, she set up the venture - Sakhi for Girls'

Education (the word 'sakhi' means a female friend, in Hindi and Marathi). Just that little flame of discontent, and the urge to make a change, led this changemaker to become a tutor to over 300 girls from her community in the north-eastern region of Mulund in Mumbai. Indeed, learning from a girl from the same community is a morale-booster and infuses little girls with a little more confidence. The willingness to learn, and the trust in the teacher comes about automatically, and Aarti without saying so, becomes their role model! She is didi -- an elder sister to all of them, and that attitude towards your teacher is surely a strong enabler of education. Aarti rightly believes that the girls' mothers must also be educated so that they may be able to help their daughters at home later. This is a very progressive thought, a carefully-thought-out one, and when one considers that Aarti has been a student of psychology, one immediately understands that she is well aware of not just how little girls think but also how their mothers do, and how mothers can play a key role in this regard - education also begins at home, in a way, just as charity and generosity do.

## Prerna (inspiration) from Prerna



Aarti's pride in the achievements of her wards is heart-warming - the way she felt jubilant when she shared information about the trilingual audio-stories recorded by a student of hers - Prerna Ghodake, recently - this won Prerna a Changemaker Award from Generation Share UK. That is a sincere teacher for you.

Prerna is an 8th standard student and is very eloquent, gifted with a voice which enraptures and enlightens, educates and enlivens, and true to the meaning of her name (in Hindi and Marathi), inspires most of all! The stories she narrates entertain over 5000 girls in slums in Mumbai. Prerna is motivated to come up with new stories to record every day and surely, her fans - the 5000-odd girls are keenly waiting for the audio, when they wake up in the morning each day. Aarti is just 27 years old, and she has already thought of someone to pass the baton to, at a later stage, and that is Prerna. It is



**Aarti Naik with her girl students at Mulund**

commendable that at such a young age, she is also concerned about grooming her successor.

## **Pain prepares the path to progress**

Motivations which are strong and unassailable often have a poignant element too. Owing to the inability of her parents to put her through higher education, Aarti herself could not do so, but that did not deter her from conceiving this brilliant and blessed idea of 'capacity-building within the slums, by imparting basic literacy and numeracy skills, which little girls there could capitalise on, and grow up to stand on their own two feet, be employable and also be in a position to educate their own children at home.

Big and meaningful projects are almost always conceived by 'one-man/woman-armies', before recognition draws like-minded do-gooders to support it. What is needed is that leap of faith, which Aarti took in 2008, and very humbly sought and got support, guidance and inspiration from around the world. However, it is still not. Arise, awake and fait accompli for her. She wants every girl in every slum in India, to get access to basic education, and here, she is a shining beacon veritably for several

other youngsters who could spearhead small projects in their own towns and cities and villages. While she looks up to experienced do-gooders for inspiration, those who wish to emulate her could look up to her for the same.

Aarti's rise to popularity is well-deserved. In 2018, she was felicitated at the University of California (Berkeley), by the Institute of South Asia Studies. Two years prior to that, her initiative was commended by the International Literacy Association. The same year, Femina felicitated her at the Femina Women's Awards ceremony. The Thriving Women in Business Giving Circle based in San Francisco sponsors Sakhi's efforts for the cause of slum girls' education in India.

## **The future is female**

A young student of English literature in Mumbai – Masooma Sakriwala - had recently shared with me some slogans which she had come up and one of them was 'The Future is Female'. I am a man, definitely not a chauvinist...and I will be happy if the future is described thus. This world will be a safer place in the hands of our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. Girls with minds of their own, would evolve into ladies with hearts of gold and thereafter women with

beautiful souls.

Aarti Naik needs to be supported in her venture consistently and she is surely destined to scale new heights in the future. The surfer-friendly website will enable readers interested in donating to Sakhi to do the needful. Young girls out there in university – if you are keen on volunteering as tutors, and helping out Aarti, feel free to get in touch with her. There is a lot to be done and sustained for sure and all of you could form a small army of dedicated young.

- 1 <http://sakhiforgirlseducation.org/>
- 2 <https://www.facebook.com/SakhiForGirlsEducation.India>
- 3 <http://sakhiforgirlseducation.org/donate/>
- 4 Aarti can be contacted at [aartidnaik@gmail.com](mailto:aartidnaik@gmail.com)



**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.**



# Sounds of music fade

*Musicians in India and their tribe across the globe have been entertaining fans on social media throughout the lockdown. However, freelance artists are struggling for survival in the rough and tumble of the crisis brought in by the pandemic. **Rashmi Oberoi** urges people to support their favourite bands and musicians till such time live concerts return.*

**S**ocial media is full of beautiful musical tributes as the world battles with COVID-19. It is remarkable how musicians across various genres have got together virtually and fused their pieces for an experience of a lifetime - all for us. My personal favourite is ONE WORLD... ONE SONG with friends of Nagaland, India.

We need to thank these musicians who have been entertaining us across continents since the time the pandemic broke out. They have kept us cheerful and engaged through music. But has anyone given a thought to what these musicians must be going through? The music industry cannot survive without our support and that they too need sustenance and a bailout plan from the government at large. It is time to also look at the flip side on how musicians are battling for survival and trying to figure out ways and means to endure these turbulent times.

Like other businesses, the music industry too has been hit hard - singers, songwriters, lyricists, musicians, artists, engineers, technicians, all of them have been impacted by the lockdown.

There are questions coming to my mind: Is it time to do virtual concerts and charge a fee for the entertainment provided? Should there not be some fixed charges for live-streaming music etc? There are no free lunches you know! Freelance independent musicians not working with the movie industry / big labels / established companies need our support. And I speak in support of them. The smaller labels are facing an existential threat with drastically reduced cash flows. I doubt if this government will pitch in to bail them

out when they have done zilch for the daily wage workers.

This pandemic has brought together composers, musicians and singers from across the globe who have made recordings in their homes/make-shift studios, for us to be entertained. The songs are soulful, combining lyrics through multi-lingual languages spreading the message of love, harmony and the world being one big family and focusing on our never-say-die attitude in our collective fight against the coronavirus. Musicians have taken part in online concerts for relief funds even though their own gigs and concerts have been cancelled worldwide. Favourite venues, bars, and after-gig hangouts are likely to remain shut for the foreseeable future.

A well-known and popular guitarist who prefers to remain anonymous says that she has used this time to complete an unfinished song and has now ventured into merchandising her logo and music to earn money. In fact, she goes a step further and says, "Since going out and playing is currently not an option and there are no more gigs or open mics, make a post letting people know an exact time you plan on live-streaming, with an option to buy tickets and prepare a small set just like you would for a normal gig."

Rudy Wallang, the iconic blues guitar player/singer/songwriter and member of Soulmate, says, "Yes, as far as Soulmate is concerned we are planning to start playing live stream gigs in lieu of payment. The problem is, Facebook, where we have a substantial following hasn't started allowing monetisation as yet - at least not in India. We will have to work out

other ways of earning some money. Secondly, we need a decent audio and video equipment so as to bring quality music to you all when we stream live. Professional musicians keep getting asked to do live streams to raise funds but we need to raise an income as well. We have a lot of genuine music lovers and fans and I know that they will support us when the time comes and I know we cannot remain like this forever."

As an independent musician, singer, music composer/producer Ambar Das says, "The recent outbreak of COVID-19 has really changed the whole scenario. No one really knows what the future holds. Most musicians and freelance artists are daily wage earners in a way. Now, everything looks uncertain. Freelance independent musicians who are not working with the movie industry, major labels or companies, are the ones who are hit the hardest. As a result, most artists are doing a lot of virtual concerts which are mostly unpaid. A few likes and nice comments are good for the soul but it doesn't pay the bills. To begin with, most artists don't even get the royalties of their music. Live shows

and studio sessions are a major source of income but with that gone, the future looks bleak indeed. One solution can be OTT services that are artist-friendly, unlike major labels who fleece the artists. Ideally, the government should pitch in to help, but that also seems unlikely under the circumstances. At the same time, we are an optimistic lot and believe there will be a solution."

Shankuraj Konwar, singer, music composer/producer in Mumbai says, "The sudden turn of events is

unprecedented for the music industry to respond to. My personal take is that we need to relax a bit, research and have discussions amongst ourselves as to how to go about live streaming and having online gigs.”

Nilanajan Samadder, an independent musician/songwriter/composer/guitarist based in Mumbai says, “The present situation is scary - we have not earned any money for the last few months but having paid all the bills our savings are slowly getting exhausted. It goes without saying things will not be normal for a while. Seventy percent of my earning comes from live gigs. I pay tax for each of my gigs and contribute to the nation's income. But when I need the nation/government to take care, all I get to hear is ‘atmanirbhar bharat’ with a bogus economic package that is of no use to any of us.”

Rudy Wallang sums it up beautifully by saying, “If artists and musicians think that they need 'likes' more than they need money, they are mistaken. We have to put a stop to this. The government attitude is one of concern. The government feels it is doing us all a favour... Be it

musicians or artists or daily wagers or whoever the workforce in the country is. They forget that they are where they are because of us and it's not the other way around.” His positive smile with a ‘We shall overcome’ sets the tempo.

Priyanku Bordoloi, music producer, guitarist, proprietor of Brahma Studio, based in Guwahati, Assam stresses on the fact that the current situation demands that musicians need to concentrate on digital medium with nominal charges for performances. “Also this is the time for musicians to unite and help each other and decide their fate not the record labels.”

One of indie music's biggest influences, singer-songwriter Uday Benegal, who is best known as the lead singer and founder of India's leading rock band Indus Creed (previously known as Rock Machine) has a very positive outlook to this whole situation. “As professionals of the music industry we have been through various ‘Boom or Bust’ scenarios throughout our career. Of course, facing a pandemic is a first. But this is a temporary situation and we will all

evolve from it. Times are hard and taxing but humans have this remarkable ability to adapt and so we shall overcome. There is a brave new world waiting to challenge us in every way. Live streaming music via various platforms like YouTube/Instagram where you charge the audience for tuning in are already taking off. Of course, one has to be mindful of having control on the quality and sound effects. Online concerts have already started with systems and checks in place, and the way ahead would be through this medium.”

And one day soon: The live concerts will return! Till then, let us support our favourite musicians and bands.



**Rashmi Oberoi, an army officer's daughter is passionate about writing and has authored two story books for children - *My Friends At Sonnenshine* and *Cherie: The Cocker Spaniel*.**

## WHO AM I?





# LT-GEN STANLEY LESLIE MENEZES

The Partition hero (1922 – 2012)

**S**tanley Leslie Menezes was born in a Goan Catholic family on 13 November 1922 in Mumbai and graduated from St John's College, Agra. He wanted to join the civil service but recruitment in the civil service had been suspended so he joined the Army. He was commissioned into 4th Grenadiers on 30 May 1943.

At the time of Independence, his battalion was located at Thal Fort in Kurram Valley in NWFP (North West Frontier Province, Pakistan). There was wide spread violence in the country following Partition. The Commander-in-Chief of the newly-formed Pakistan Army, General Sir Frank Messervy, believed that it would be safe to bring the battalion to India by train.

But the railway line had been blocked by boulders by the hostile frontier men. As the train stopped, it came under firing from rifles and machine guns. The soldiers travelling by the train found it difficult to counter the attack and the crew of the train fled away. The Commanding Officer was wounded and Menezes, then an acting major, assumed command of the unit. He persuaded the crew to return to duty and got the track cleared. He travelled to Mumbai by the train with the wounded soldiers. It took about seven weeks for the train to reach Santa Cruz railway station. He was awarded Shaurya Chakra (SC) and Commander-in-Chief's commendation for gallantry award for his heroism.

Menezes was a staff officer at Delhi HQ in 1947 and had the opportunity to follow the progress of war in Kashmir from that vantage point. He was soon after posted to Baramulla and had an opportunity to meet some of the people who had taken part in the war. He commanded 3 Grenadiers in 1960-62.

He attended Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and was an instructor there. Later, he was appointed instructor in Infantry School, Mhow, Madhya Pradesh. After holding various command and staff appointments, he was appointed GOC 14 Infantry Division at Dehradun. He was awarded PVSM in 1971. He commanded IV

corps in Tezpur in 1973-75 and then took over the appointment of Vice Chief of Army Staff at Army HQ in 1978-80. He retired on 31 July 1980. After retirement, he wrote many articles in the USI journal on military matters and also wrote a book, 'Fidelity and Honour', a comprehensive history of the Indian Army. The book deals with all aspects of the history and evolution of the Indian Army. All the operations have been well documented in the book. Of great interest is the contribution by Indian Army in World War I.

Over two hundred thousand Indian soldiers had taken part in the war and 62,000 of them had laid down their lives. In addition, 67,000 had been wounded. A funeral ghat was cleared at a spot 500 feet above sea level at Brighton for cremation of the bodies of Hindu and Sikh soldiers. The ashes would be dispersed into the sea. The victory of the Allies was thanks to the contribution by the Indian Army. This realisation has recently led to refurbishing the war memorial in honour of the Indian soldiers. Prior to World War I, Indians were not eligible for Victoria Cross (VC). Award of 18 VCs signifies the esteem in which Indian soldiers were held.

Gen Menezes was able to persuade the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to refurbish the burning ghat at Brighton and inscribe the names of Hindu and Sikh soldiers who had died during World War I. He acted as honorary liaison officer between the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Government of India.

He retained an extraordinary memory and was often contacted by film makers and publishers for help. He regularly visited London. He passed away on 11 May 2012 at the age of 89, and was cremated in Delhi with full military honours, and his ashes immersed in the River Ganges as per his wishes.

- Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



# BASU CHATTERJEE

Chronicler of simple romances (1927 - 2020)

**B**asu Chatterjee was a legendary film producer, director, screenplay writer, dialogue writer, and a master of middle-class minutiae. Ajmer born Chatterjee discovered humour in the commonplace, a streak often attributed to his 18 - year phase, as an illustrator and cartoonist with the Bombay weekly tabloid Blitz of Russi Karanjia, before switching paths to filmmaking.

Fondly called Basuda, his interest in filmmaking was nourished by the 1960s film society movement. A quiet, soft - spoken, gentle human, who delved into social and moral issues, he was a director ahead of his time, an effortless genius, and pioneer of a new cinema universe, with lifelike characters, in tandem with his namesake Basu Bhattacharya and Hrishikesh Mukherjee.

His relatable, light-hearted brand of cinema always retained simplicity. It resonated strongly with middle-class India which had only films as a refuge from reality. His characters were seeped in reality. There was nothing larger-than-life about his films. His path allowed Hindi cinema to move away from its obsessions with glamour, love between impossibly good-looking people, violence and, nationalism.

Basuda found beauty in the quotidian; made the ordinary extraordinary and discovered poetry in everyday things. He made middle-class love stories endearing and enigmatic. A Bimal Roy School of cinema product, in his world, women were as equal and as fickle as men when it came to relationships. His films had no heroes, no heroines; just simple, heartfelt stories of common people. Mumbai was his lasting muse. He made uncommon films about common lives and immortalised the city making it as much a character in the movie as its residents. He made critically-acclaimed cult films on a staggering range of subjects, from rural comedies to social issues, without being preachy. There were also socially-conscious movies that were darker and sadder, but always, always relatable and well-told. Good music was also one of the highlights of his films. Three years after working as an assistant to Basu Bhattacharya in the 1966 National Film Award - winning Raj Kapoor-Wahee-

da Rehman starrer Teesri Kasam, Chatterjee debuted as a director with the 1969 movie Sara Akash and soon earned the tag of balcony class director. It won him the Filmfare Best Screenplay Award and a long cinematic association with literature began.

Soon followed popular films in the 70s and 80s like Piya Ka Ghar, Us Paar, Swami, Priyatama, Chakravyyuha, Shaukeen, Chameli Ki Shaadi, Ek Ruka Hua Faisla, Rajnigandha, Chitchor, Khatta Meetha, Choti Si Baat, and Baton Baton Mein, Dillagi, Manzil, etc.

Chatterjee made a star out of Amol Palekar, as a slim, medium-statured mild - mannered person at a time when the '70s were dominated by Amitabh Bachchan's volcanic Angry Young Man persona. He made it a point to cast relatively unknown faces to inject realism into his films. He later presented reputed stars in unique avatars.

Basuda also directed many Bengali films and expanded his range with the small screen. The protagonist of Rajani, which promoted consumer rights, became a symbol of the conscientious middle-class homemaker, Darpan unveiled gems from regional literature, Kakkaji Kahin was a masterly portrait of a canny small-time politician and the 34 episodic Byomkesh Bakshi became a benchmark for detective shows.

His Awards included IIFA Lifetime Achievement Award (2007), National Film Award for Best Film on Family Welfare for Durga (1992), and six Filmfare Awards. He was also a jury member at the 10th Moscow International Film Festival in 1977 and a member of the International Film and Television Club of the Asian Academy of Film & Television. His death at 93 after an almost five - decade career left Bollywood celebrities in despair. He is survived by daughters, Sonali Bhattacharya and Rupali Guha, the latter, a film director.

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





# N R MADHAVA MENON

A brilliant legal mind (1935-2019)

**N**R. Madhava Menon, the legal luminary was born on 4 May 1935 at Trivandrum to a law graduate father. He enrolled for his graduate studies at the SD College in Alappuzha and passed out with a BSc in Zoology. A keen interest in law saw him take up a course in law in the Government Law College in Trivandrum from where he completed his Bachelor of Law degree in 1955. He then apprenticed under a local advocate before appearing for the Civil Services Exams which he cleared and found placement in the Central Secretariat in New Delhi. The academically inclined Menon pursued his studies vigorously and completed a Master of Arts Degree in Political Science in 1960 securing a distinction in the examination. Thereafter he found employment as a Law Faculty in the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) taking time off to do his post graduation in Law, LL.M. An University Grants Commission (UGC) scholarship came his way and Menon also did his PhD. Later while serving as a Professor of Law in AMU he received a coveted Fulbright Scholarship from the University of Berkeley in California and this enabled him to present a paper on 'Legal Aid'.

One of Madhava Menon's most significant achievements in his long and eventful career in the field of Law was the setting up of the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) in Bangalore where he served as a Director for 12 years. NLSIU set up in 1987 was the first National Law University to be established in India and it was also one of the first to offer the five year integrated undergraduate Law degree course. This brainchild of Menon is recognised as one of the finest universities not just in the country but across the world as well. Menon was also instrumental in establishing the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal. In 1998, at the instance of the West Bengal government he set up the West Bengal University of Judicial Sciences and served as its first Vice Chancellor. The Supreme Court of India appointed him as the Director of the National Judicial Academy, a training centre for judges and Menon held the post till his retirement in 2006.

The distinguished jurist was a member of several committees set up by the government and by autonomous

bodies and prominent among these were the Law Commission of India, Committee on Legal Aid, Civil Services Exam Reform, Criminal Justice Reform, Policy Act Drafting Committee, Committee on Draft National Policy on Criminal Justice, Commission on Restructuring of Higher Education in India and Committee on Centre-State Relations.

Menon also distinguished himself in his role as the Secretary General of the All India Legal Teachers Association and was a member of the Committee for the Implementation of Legal Aid Schemes constituted under the Chairmanship of the Supreme Court Judge, the late V.

R. Krishna Aiyar. He also served as the Secretary of the Bar Council of India.

His legal acumen and expertise in law also stood him in good stead in his tenure as the Principal of the Government Law College in Puducherry and as Chairman of the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum. Post retirement Menon also set up an NGO, Menon Institute of Legal Advocate Training (MLAT).

The advocate was also a prolific speaker and author of several books of which some were best sellers. His autobiography 'The story of a Law Teacher : Turning Point' provided a vivid insight into his career as a civil servant, lawyer and a legal educator. Several

honours came his way including an Award from the International Bar Association hailing him as the Living Legend of Law and a Plaque of Honour from the Bar Council of India. The Central Government conferred on him the Padma Shri in 2003 and the Padma Bhushan in the field of Public Affairs posthumously in 2020.

Madhava Menon breathed his last in Trivandrum on the 6 May 2019 at the age of 84 after battling liver cancer. His passing left the country bereft of a leading light in the field of law who strode across the legal firmament like a colossus.

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





**WORLD CLASS  
QUALITY MEDICINES  
AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

**BLUE CROSS LABORATORIES PVT LTD.**

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



# WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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