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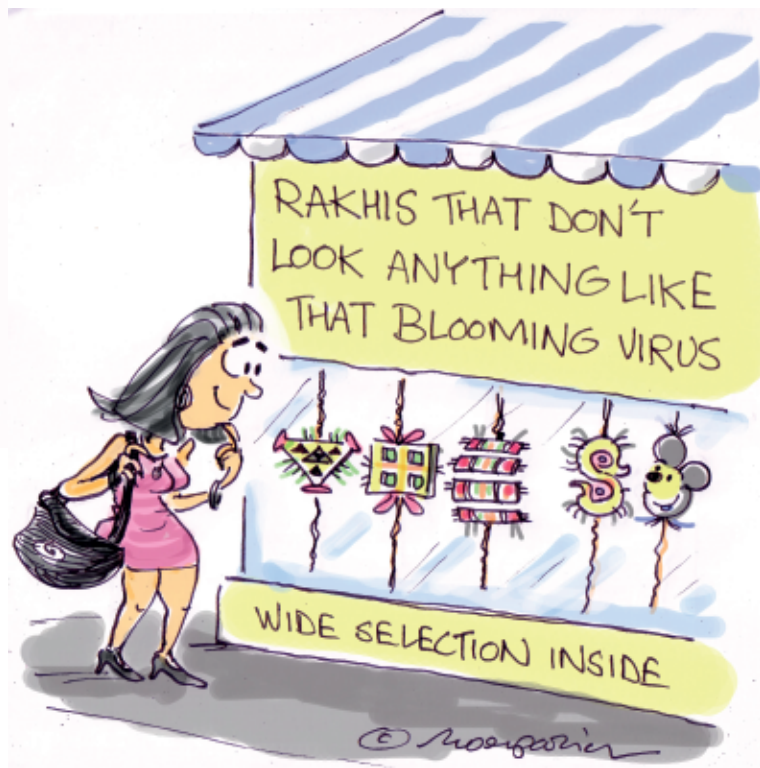
KNOW INDIA BETTER

Patnitop : A view from the sky

Andamans : Barefoot in Paradise

FACE TO FACE

Dr. Anita Viegas

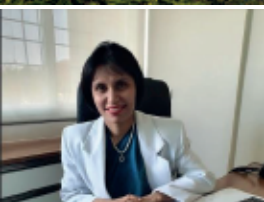


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India's unique heritage needs to be preserved

*Indian citizens must protect and preserve India's rich heritage for posterity. While promoting heritage tourism, care should be taken not to undermine or risk the existence of our ancient heritage, writes **Nikita Shastri**.*



Ajanta caves near Aurangabad

composite culture.”

It's important to protect our heritage

There are several implications at international, national and local levels when a country works progressively in the direction of heritage management and heritage preservation. India, since independence, has been proactive in ensuring the rich heritage of the country is protected, conserved and interpreted in the right light and showcased appropriately.

No nation exists in isolation and its global footprint is critical in deciding how the nation is perceived by

other countries. As part of a Universal Shared Heritage, heritage management leads to building global relations, even economic ties, by establishing connections based on historical trade routes, cultural exchanges and stories and anecdotes from the past. Also, common links of similar traditions and practices also facilitate modern-day economic and social ties between nations.

At the national level, heritage protection and conservation and the pride associated with a unique heritage are important for 'nation building and branding of the country's cultural identity'. India is home to thousands of iconic sites and breath-taking monuments whose history and architecture have trickled down through various dynastic and cultural influences. The multi-layered cultural heritage diversity in India is simply a reflection of how complex, rich and old India's history is. At a local level, heritage protection and conservation is not only a binding force within communities and groups but also a catalyst for economic development. Development of a heritage site leads to infrastructure development, opens up employment and enterprising opportunities and also provides exposure to local communities and furthers social development.

It's important, however, to ensure 'sustainable development' of historical cities and monuments, heritage

India is a land of diversity and the country's rich heritage is a mesmerising confluence of cultures, customs, traditions, religions, ethnicities, practices, art, architecture, landscapes, flora and fauna. The most recently concluded International Yoga Day, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, speaks volumes of India's growing assertion in the global sphere and recognition of its age-old heritage and concurrent processes.

A country with more than a billion people, India's heritage has manifold dimensions and layers that have still not been completely unearthed and understood. It is the responsibility of the nation and its citizens to ensure this 'inherited' treasure is preserved, conserved and protected and propagated to the next generation in its original form.

The Constitution of India has clearly laid down and demarcated the jurisdictions of the central and state governments to administer, manage and protect country's heritage sites, properties, ruins, etc. Article 253 of the Constitution of India enables Parliament to legislate for the implementation of any treaty, agreement or convention with any other country or countries, or any decision, made at any international conference, association or other body. Article 51 A (f) of the Constitution states, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our

sites and ancient ruins. The ecosystem built around heritage to promote 'heritage tourism' should not undermine or risk their very existence.

Proactive government initiatives and schemes

There is a need to digitise and centralise information and data for use by the public and industry personnel. The government is fast working towards creating a National Archaeological Database and a National GIS Database for heritage monuments and sites that 'will be authenticated and validated by ISRO'.

Resources are being directed towards reactivating the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (N MMA), launched in 2007, to complete its listing of built heritage and antiquities. Simultaneously, initiatives are being undertaken to ensure the Archives Data is accessible digitally and the archives are recorded and stored as per the conservation norms for uniformity.

The government is also charting out a strategy to restructure the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), establish connections with people, support the state government and religious trusts for heritage conservation and clearly 'define byelaws for prohibited and regulated areas' around heritage monuments. Special efforts are also being made towards developing heritage as a 'tool for development and employment generation'. Also, establishing partnerships with national and international institutions for capacity building for heritage management is being prioritised in the time to come.

Heritage management as a career

The heritage management industry has come a long way since India got Independence. Today, there are several education institutes and universities offering degree and diploma programmes in heritage management, archaeology, heritage conservation, conservation architecture and several other related specialisations. Students across the country are now understanding and taking up post-graduate and diploma programmes to make a career in the heritage industry. These programmes are also attracting foreign students who wish to live and work in India's heritage management sector.

"Ten years ago, I would not have let my daughter opt for a course in conservation architecture. It was simply unheard of. Today, when she tells me she wishes to pursue this programme, I am supporting her whole-heartedly," says Chennai-based biotechnologist Lakshmi Iyengar. "Earlier, a career in heritage management was perceived to be working in the travel and tourism sector. Thankfully, people are beginning to understand there is more to India's heritage than just taking tourists around for a heritage walk," explains Delhi-based historian Kavita Upadhyay. "When I opted for a career in heritage studies twenty years ago, my parents were upset and didn't talk to me for a week. It's only now they have fully understood what I do when they read

my works and papers," maintains Kavita.

The government is also encouraging more individuals to get involved in the sector through scholarships and fellowships that provide monetary assistance to those engaged in promoting cultural activities in the country. Some of these are: Scholarships to Young Artistes in Different Cultural Fields; Fellowships to Outstanding Persons in the Field of Culture; Tagore National Fellowship for Cultural Research; Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) Scholarships.

Embracing technology is a must

Similar to every other sector, heritage preservation and conservation in India is also preparing to embrace technological advancements. The government is putting together resources and personnel for use of technologies in the immediate future. This includes use of Photogrammetry and 3D Laser scanning for documentation, surveys, excavation and conservation works. Additionally, LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) and Drone Surveys will be undertaken for documentation of monuments and sites.

The government is also working to use advanced technology for marketing and promoting of heritage sites to reach out to all segments of visitors: children, families, travellers, researchers, tourists, etc. The latest in technology and techniques for exploration and excavations will be embraced by striking strategic collaborations with foreign universities already working in the area. And, most importantly, streamlining processes for e-governance and one-window for clearances and permissions is being prioritised.

India's heritage unparalleled in the world

India has 38 Cultural (30), Natural (7) and Mixed (1) sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The first few sites listed were Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves and Taj Mahal in 1983 and the latest site to be inscribed in the list was 'The Walled City of Jaipur' in July 2019.

The current guidelines of UNESCO allow only one site to be nominated for inscription every year. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the nodal agency on behalf of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India for World Heritage matters and is also the 'custodian of 22 out of the 30 cultural world heritage sites.'

India's centuries-old heritage is now being documented slowly and finally getting the recognition it rightly deserves.

Nikita Shastri is a researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders)

ASI reopens heritage sites

*India's heritage is the richest and the most diverse in the world. While most sites are documented, there are many that continue to languish in obscurity and unless documented and revived, risk sliding into oblivion, cautions **Vanshika Jain**.*



A display gallery at the swanky Bihar museum

The recent COVID-19 outbreak and ensuing guidelines disrupted the tourist season, affecting footfalls drastically across all heritage sites in India. On 6 July 2020, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) reopened more than 2,000 centrally protected monuments and heritage sites.

Yet, several popular sites, especially those lying in the COVID hotspots, continue to remain shut. The ones yet to open include the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Akbar's Tomb, Itmad-ud-Daula Tomb in Agra; all ASI-protected monuments and sites in Maharashtra such as Ajanta and Ellora Caves, Raigad Fort and Elephanta Caves. Charminar and Golconda Fort in Hyderabad were opened briefly for visitors only to be shut the same day after opposition from the Telangana government.

About a third of the highest revenue-generating monuments are located within the five-worst affected states during the pandemic i.e. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh. Even in places where the monu-

ments have reopened, few footfalls were registered. These include sites such as Qutub Minar in Delhi, Chittorgarh Fort and Kumbhalgarh Fort in Rajasthan, Bhopal's Gwalior Fort, Bellary Fort in Hampi and the Mattancherry Palace Museum in Thrissur.

Proof of India's diversity

India is one of the most diverse nations in the world and the country's rich heritage bears testimony to that. One of the world's oldest civilisations, India is a confluence of cultures, traditions, religions and customs visible in the multitude forms of dance, music, cuisine, handicrafts, architecture, etc. Several states in India are rich in heritage being home to UNESCO world heritage sites: Rajasthan, Karnataka, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and more.

Currently, Maharashtra has the highest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites among all states and Union Territories in India. These include Ajanta and Ellora Caves, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Elephanta Caves and the Victorian Gothic and Art Deco buildings of South Mumbai.

The most popular tourist circuit in India is the Golden Triangle comprising Agra, Delhi and Jaipur. The three cities have continued to enamour international tourists for decades who visit these cities to cherish the rich cultural and architectural heritage left behind by the Mughal and the Rajput rulers of the region. The three cities offer a unique opportunity to visitors to experience the royal extravaganza and vibrancy.

Taj Mahal, the most visited monument

"The first name that came to my mind when my

husband told me we were going to India was the Taj Mahal at Agra!" says 50-year-old British teacher Amanda Moss. Husband Brian, a history lecturer teaching at a school in Birmingham, "had wanted to see the Taj Mahal since he started studying world history in high school and had been talking about it since we got married." Like Brian, most tourists who plan a visit to India, have Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world, on the top of their list.

In 2018-19, nearly 5.7 million domestic tourists (6.9 million total visitors) visited the Taj Mahal, a steady increase over the previous years. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Taj Mahal continues to be the most-visited monument in the country. The second position is now held by Red Fort in Delhi that overtook Qutub Minar as the second-most visited monument in India and drew three million domestic visitors (3.6 million domestic and foreign visitors). The third and fourth positions were held by Qutub Minar and Agra Fort with 2.6 million (2.9 million total) and 2 million (2.5 million total visitors) domestic tourists respectively. Domestic visitors also flocked to the Sun Temple in Konark, Odisha and the twin monuments Charminar and Golconda Fort in Hyderabad that lay at fifth and sixth positions respectively.

Tourists visit Agra to capture the architectural marvels and heritage of the Mughal Empire. Under the Mughal influence, several monuments, mausoleums, gardens and other structures were built that still remain the most visited in the country.

Jaipur, became a UNESCO World Heritage City recently. The capital city of Rajasthan was founded by Rajput king Maharaj Jai Singh II in 1727. Jaipur is a coveted destination for both domestic and international tourists who visit the 'Pink City' to experience the royal magnificence at its best. The heritage sites, forts, palaces and age-old bazaars draw a large number of tourists. Some of the most visited sites include Amber Fort, Hawa Mahal, Nahargarh Fort, Jal Mahal, City Palace, Jantar Mantar, etc. Udaipur, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer in Rajasthan are also popular tourist destinations.

"I have been fascinated with the Rajasthani culture since I watched movies depicting Rajput kings and princesses," says Mumbai-based media student Janhavi Desai. "So, when most of my friends chose to visit Goa after we finished college, I took off to Rajasthan, alone! And, it was the best decision I ever made. The vibrant colours, rustic forts, palatial havelis and royal palaces are simply breathtaking," says a nostalgic Janhavi.

Unmatched skill of Indian sculptors on display

India is one of the few countries where every inch of land is rich in history and heritage. In Madhya Pradesh, Khajuraho is a unique heritage site, home to magnificent temples with marvellous sculptures depicting human emotions and passion. The sensuous stone carvings of human form stand testament to the skill of Indian sculptors

of the time. Ahmedabad or Amdavad, popularly known as Karnavati, is India's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a city steeped in history, culture and tradition. In the 11th century, Karna of Chaulukya dynasty ruling from Anhilwad Patan, (1072–1094) made the town his capital, adorned it with two temples, and named it Karnavati (Karna's town).

The rich heritage of Ahmedabad is testimony to the seamless blending of cultures, dynasties and consequential art and architecture over centuries, especially from the sultanate period such as the walls, gates of the Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs. In the later years, several Hindu and Jain temples were built. Some of the most visited sites include Adalaj ni Vav stepwell, Jhulta Minar, Sidi Saiyyed mosque, etc. The densely-packed, traditional and gated settlements (pols) with characteristic features such as bird feeders, public wells and religious institutions are also frequented by domestic and international tourists.

Maharashtra's Ajanta Caves, located about 107 km from Aurangabad are a cluster of 32 rock-cut Buddhist caves dating back to the 2nd century BC. The caves are either chaityas (shrine), chapels or prayer halls, or viharas (monasteries) or residential cells and are described as among the finest existing examples of ancient Indian art. Ellora Caves are a cluster of 34 monasteries and temples extending over two kilometres dating from 600-1,000 AD. This is one of the largest rock-cut monastery temple cave complexes in the world featuring Hindu, Buddhist and Jain artwork and monuments.

In Bihar, the archaeological site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda holds the ruins of a Buddhist monastic and educational centre where the main stupa was built by Emperor Ashoka in 3rd century BC. The site is also home to 11 viharas used for studying and housing.

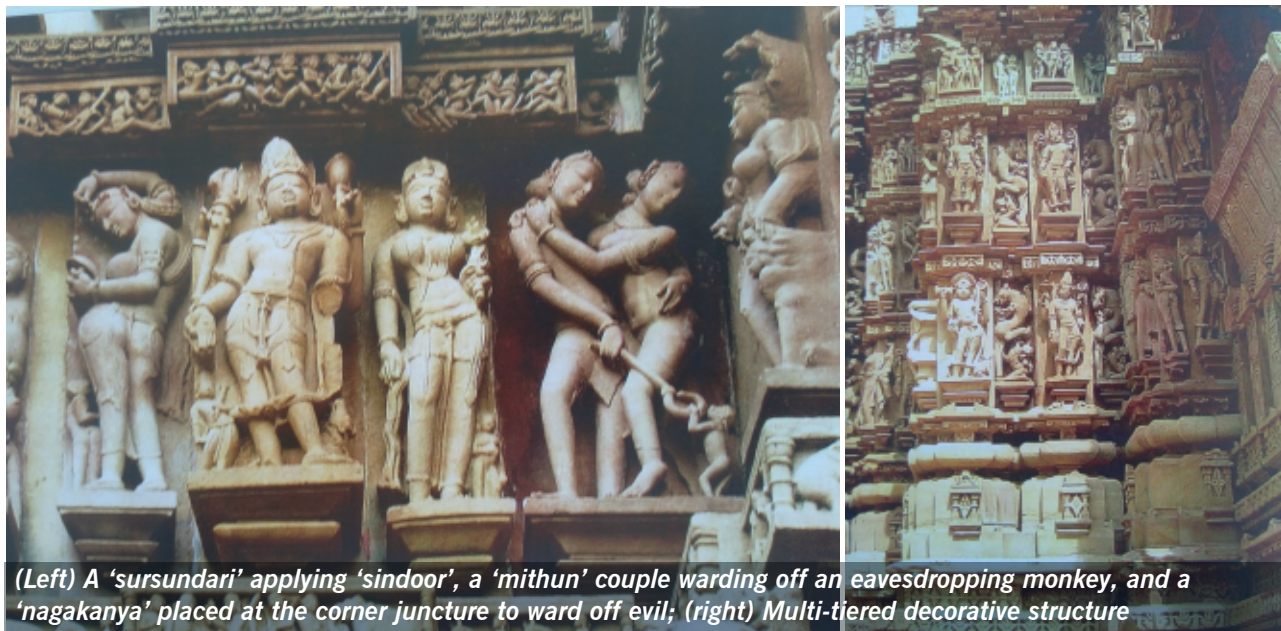
Hampi, an ancient village in Karnataka, was the last capital of the Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagar. Hampi's ruins are spread over 4,187 hectares and it has been described by UNESCO as an "austere, grandiose site" of more than "1,600 surviving remains of the last great Hindu kingdom in South India that includes forts, riverside features, royal and sacred complexes, temples, shrines, pillared halls, mandapas, memorial structures, water structures and others."

India's heritage is the richest and the most diverse in the world. While most sites have been documented, there are many more that continue to lie in obscurity and, unless documented and revived, risk sliding into oblivion.

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Khajuraho: Poetry in stone

*The Khajuraho group of monuments is a fine example of Indian ideology, mythology and artistic tradition. The myriad moods of love are captured and frozen for eternity at this World Heritage Site, writes **Anuradha Pittie**.*



(Left) A 'sursundari' applying 'sindoor', a 'mithun' couple warding off an eavesdropping monkey, and a 'nagakanya' placed at the corner juncture to ward off evil; (right) Multi-tiered decorative structure

Khajuraho in Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh stands apart as a masterpiece of Indian temple art and architecture, with an aesthetic appeal beyond cultural boundaries. It is listed as a World Heritage Site for its 'human creative genius' and 'outstanding universal value'.

The temple complex was built between 10th and 12th centuries, under the patronage of the Chandellas, the Rajput chieftains ruling over Bundelkhand region. This dynasty was at the height of its power under Kings Yashovarman, Dhanga, and Vidyadhara, who were great warriors, builders and patrons of art.

Khajurvataka or 'garden of date palms' was the earlier name of Khajuraho, a small village in Madhya Pradesh, enroute the pilgrim centre of Kashi (Benares). It was the religious capital of the Chandellas, but disappeared into oblivion. In 1838, T.S.Burt, a British officer, rediscovered these temples. Alas, only 25 of the original 85 temples, exist today. In 1980, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) began exploring for the missing temples, and in 1999 excavated the remains, of perhaps, what was the largest temple built there.

Ancient folklore

There are some interesting tales about its origin. Hemvati was the beautiful daughter of Hemraj, the royal priest of Kashi. She was bathing in a forest pond, when the

Moon-god bewitched by her beauty, seduced her. Stricken with shame, she left home. She was blessed with a son of extraordinary skills, who at the tender age of sixteen could combat with a lion. He was Chandravarman, founder of the Chandella dynasty. He initiated the construction of temples, under the divine architect Vishwakarma, as atonement for his mother's sin.

Another folklore states that Maniram, the royal priest of Kalinjar, wrongly predicted a dark moon night as a full moon night. His daughter prayed to the Moon-god to save her father from the king's wrath, by appearing in his full glory. The Moon-god accepted, but the price to be paid was her ravishment. She bore a son who founded the Chandravanshi or moon dynasty of Chandellas.

Cradle of stylised art and architecture

In 1864, Sir Alexander Cunningham referred to this temple complex as "the most magnificent and costly temples in northern India".

The temples are divided into Western, Eastern and Southern groups according to their geographical location. Each temple is dedicated to a specific deity and has many unique features. Visvanatha originally had an emerald Linga enshrined, Kandariya Mahadeva has an elaborate design structure of 85 spires, inspired by the peaks of Mount Kailash, the Himalayan abode of Lord Shiva, Matangeshvara is the only temple with ongoing ritual worship, with

thousands of pilgrims flocking on the auspicious occasion of 'Mahashivratri', Chausath Yogini is the earliest temple dedicated to Shakti- mother goddess in her 64 aspects, Chaturbhuja, the only temple without erotic sculpture, sports a very rare statue of Narsimhi, consort of Lord Narasimha and an outstanding sculpture of Shiva as Ardhanarishwar, Varah with 674 figures of gods and goddesses carved in parallel rows on its body surface, Parsvanatha with an unusual image of a ten armed yakshi Chakreshvani, riding on 'Garuda', and so forth.

Khajuraho is the culmination of the finest example of Indo Aryan architecture. It is constructed on the Nagara style which has a distinctive ground plan, elevation, cruciform spread and curvilinear spires. The temples are built of fine grained sandstone in buff and pinkish colours, brought from the quarries of Panna, on the banks of river Ken. Chausath Yogini, Brahma and Lalguan Mahadeva used local granite.

The ornate *makara torana*, or carved garland like archway with crocodile heads, slender pillars with brackets carved with celestial maidens, cusped and coffered ceilings with floral and geometric motifs are common to all temples. Irrespective of whether the usage is for Vaishnavite, Shaivite or Jain worship, the temples had a continuity of style from one generation of Chandella rulers to the next. A single lion placed in front of the temple platform is the emblem of the Chandella dynasty. The *kalasa* or 'pot with nectar of immortality' placed on the ribbed disc of the spire, was a prominent feature, symbolic of freedom from the cycle of life and death.

The architectural refinement from plain roofed *mandapas* to elaborately ornated ones, two-looped toranas to at least five-looped ones (Javari temple has an intricate twenty four looped one), flat walls to balconied windows with canopy, simple *shikhara* to complex multi-tiered ones, single shrine to five – shrined ones, and *panch-ratha* sanctums to *sapta-ratha* ones, make these temples distinctive.

Art historian and museologist Dr. Grace Morley says that "the art of carving, modelling and casting has been refined as a tradition in India for over 4000 years". This is amply proven by the Khajuraho sculptures with their sensual appeal and highly decorative embellishments.

They can be classified into seven main categories-- the cult image in the main shrine, the pantheon of gods and goddesses, celestial maidens, secular themes of everyday life, erotic couples, real and mythical animals and floral and geometric patterns.

The sculptures are not limited to wall niches alone, but cover the wall surfaces horizontally and vertically. Angular modelling, anatomical details, facial expressions picking up every nuance of thought and emotion, breathe life into the figures. The high degree of ornamentation complement the decorative integral pattern.

Says Dr Shashibala, Research Professor at the International Academy of Indian Culture, New Delhi, "Divine images enshrine devotion and dedication, and are not mere objects of skillful creative celebration". The Khajuraho sculptor was obviously indoctrinated in the discipline of the ancient texts such as Vastu Shilpa Shastra on sculpture, Agama-shastra on religious iconometry; had a deep understanding of related art forms of music, dance, literature and a spiritual vision, to achieve works that tap an element of transcendence that captivates and inspires.

There is not a single 'rasa' from the 'navrasa' theory, which has not been incorporated in the multitude of images on the temples. The entire religious imagery is based on symbolism. The depiction of the *navgrahas* and the carving of *panchagni* (five headed fire god), is one of its kind in the whole of India.

Love etched in stone

Shobita Punja, author of *Divine Ecstasy - the story of Khajuraho* refers to Khajuraho as "India's gift of love to the world". The erotic art constitutes a small percentage of its sculpture, but draws forth global tourists. The Lakshman temple has the largest number of these erotic sculptures, which Alexander Cunningham observes, "are the most graphic representations of sexual scenes in world art". Interestingly, *Hermann Goetz* identifies an elixir preparation scene in the orgiastic panels carved there.

The myriad moods of love are captured and frozen for eternity. Couples embrace with ardour and abandon. The language of puns, conceals a deeper hidden symbolism under the apparent erotic art. The sculptor introduces a sense of humour in creative ways, such as a woman pulling her lover's beard while accepting his overtures, an elephant distracted by a couple's amorous behaviour, inadvertently tripping, and a monkey being warded off indulgently by a romancing couple.

Khajuraho is also a fine example of the co-existence and interaction of the Jain artistic tradition with that of Hinduism. It showcases Indian ideology and mythology, medieval socio- cultural environment, and religious attitudes of the people with visual lyricism. It illustrates the richness of Indian symbolism and sentiment by its complex sculptural idiom. The temples exemplify the technical and stylistic accomplishment of an era, resulting in enchantment and ecstasy. George Michell, eminent scholar and world authority on South Asian architecture states that "the art of Hinduism constitutes one of the world's greatest traditions", and Khajuraho bears testimony to this. It is sheer poetry in stone.



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

Need for tourism to go 'local'

*Lakhs of Indian tourists have been forced to call off their international travel plans due to the pandemic. India must grab this opportunity to nurture and boost local heritage tourism, says **Nandini Bose**.*



Nalanda, a World Heritage Site in Bihar attracts domestic as well as foreign tourists in large numbers

In February 2020, the government announced the Union Budget for FY 2020-21 which included several measures to enhance India's stature as a tourism and cultural destination. These included the development of iconic tourist sites, setting up new museums and better infrastructure for connectivity with a special focus on heritage sites. Additionally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also called upon Indians to reshape India by going 'Vocal for Local'. For FY 2020-21, the government allocated Rs 2,500 crore to the Ministry of Tourism and Rs 3,150 crore to the Ministry of Culture to help further its decisions related to tourism. Heritage Tourism has always been about local culture, traditions, festivals, cuisine, art, handicrafts, dance and music. The newly-announced steps by the government and the push for 'local' will certainly help revive and restore heritage tourism in the post-COVID world.

When the deadly COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, the biggest of nations and the most robust of economies fell to their knees in trying to control the spread of the virus. India, despite her astronomical population, took the outbreak by the horns and till date has managed well to maintain the lowest fatality rate in the world. The credit goes to the hardworking corona warriors and the

quick-thinking government updating policies swiftly to keep pace with the fast-evolving virus.

Heritage tourism vastly unexplored

A few decades ago, when heritage tourism started garnering attention and popularity especially in countries like India, the main draw for foreign tourists was the local art and culture. Heritage tourism is still popular in some states in the country that are promoting it well such as Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala to name a few. India's heritage potential is unlimited and vastly unexplored. There are thousands of indigenous groups, communities in far flung states where the heritage tourism potential has not been tapped completely, if at all.

Travellers, especially from the Americas and Europe have a keen interest in experiencing local culture and they often stay back for several months travelling through the country to destinations offering a chance to intermingle with locals and live like them. Such destinations are concentrated in the tourist hotspots in India where separate packages are developed for such tourists in same locations. Newer zones have not been explored and developed fully so far.

"I first visited India during the 90's when I was still in college and decided to make a month-long trip with my batch mates. All of us wanted to see how people live in villages as that was something completely alien to all of us," reminisces Houston-based advertising professional Emily Hart.

"We had a great time living with the villagers in the outskirts of Udaipur. We tried our hand at traditional cooking including *dal-bati*, pottery, colouring *dupattas* in vibrant Rajasthani colours, even participating in the local temple congregations (*aarti*) every evening. It was a magical experience!"

Emily's close friend Brenda, who had accompanied her for the trip to India says, "That trip was memorable and completely unadulterated with no touts, tour guides or agents involved. I visited Rajasthan again five years ago but things are not the same. Even the 'local heritage' is completely commercialised now," Brenda maintains.

Varanasi-based travel consultant Upendra Singh organises heritage tours for foreign tourists interested in experiencing local culture. He says, "The tourists who come today are very well read but they want everything 'short and sweet'. No one has time to stay longer and get the full experience. So, 'instant local experiences' are created for such tourists. Also, there is a lot of competition in the local market, so agents and touts have crept in all tourism-related operations and activities."

He adds, "To keep up with the demand, somewhere the 'quality' has suffered. I am sure after the COVID-19 crisis is over, if enough attention is given in promoting local art, culture and heritage, there will be many 'serious' takers – both foreign and domestic."

Preserving local traditions and customs

The Union Ministry of Culture plays a vital role in not just promoting but preserving of art, culture and handicrafts of indigenous groups across the country. It also works towards developing ways through which the basic cultural and traditional values remain active among the group. "It's important to preserve local traditions and customs as they are vanishing, and rather swiftly. The younger generation does not wish to stay in traditional settlements or continue with traditional occupations and vocations. When they move out or migrate to towns and cities, they leave their culture behind with no one to inherit those values," comments Delhi-based anthropologist Kusum Pandit.

The ministry also undertakes programmes for the promotion of contemporary art. A scheme titled 'Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India' initiated by the Ministry of Culture works towards 'reinvigorating and revitalising various institutions, groups, individuals, identified non-MOC institutions, non-government organisations, researchers and scholars so that they may engage in activities/projects for strengthening,

protecting, preserving and promoting the rich Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India'.

The Scheme covers several important domains of ICH: Oral traditions, customs, expressions, including language as a vehicle of our intangible cultural heritage, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festivals, folklore, cuisine, traditional knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, totems, traditional craftsmanship, handicrafts, art forms, music and dance, legends, etc.

In a world where everything is available on the internet and most travellers, young and old, Indian or foreign, 'look up' everything on the internet before visiting a place, authenticity often takes a backseat. Mumbai-based tourism graduate Hiral Shah feels, "It's all about how well you can market yourself. Today, in most heritage zones with reasonable internet penetration and connectivity, locals are listing their properties on the millions of portals available at a click. It's a democratising platform but often the authenticity of such listings and key aspects such as safety, hygiene, etc. cannot be verified. Everyone knows even the reviews are often rigged."

Russian traveller Anastasia Yahontov visits Goa every year, without fail, in the Russian charters that start floating in from September onwards. "I often rent out a Portuguese-style bungalow and live by myself to get the full Goan experience." Most Russian travellers rent out houses and apartments in Goa, mostly along the beach line for the three-six month of their stay in the sun-soaked state. "Most of my friends stay in groups but I prefer staying alone. I have had my fair share of bad experiences since I started visiting Goa ten years ago where either a listing did not exist or the reviews were fake and the place was really bad." But like all free-spirited travellers, Anastasia believes "it's an integral part of exploration and only makes you wiser."

In India, like everywhere in the world, there has also been a tsunami of travel blogs where the credibility of the writers is more often than not ignored. "Most of these portals are only interested in uploading content and very often information verification is bypassed. So while going local is good one must be smart and aware as a tourist," maintains Hiral.

According to estimates, more than 50 million Indian tourists will call off their international travel plans this year. Experts believe it will give a great boost to the local tourism industry. If the local heritage tourism is nurtured properly, it will boost domestic tourism and help preserve the cultural heritage of the country: a win-win situation!

Nandini Bose is a media researcher working with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

A lucrative career in Heritage Management

*Heritage Management has emerged as a lucrative career option in the last decade. The post-COVID world, however, will change the meaning and avenues for a career in Heritage Management that anticipates extensive digitization, writes **Gauravi Patel**.*



Heritage Management has emerged as lucrative career option

Heritage Management is not the ‘first preference’ for a career for most students who prefer traditional, ‘secure’ options such as engineering, medicine, banking, law, media, management, marketing, civil services, etc. The numbers of those engaged in heritage management as professionals are too few and far beyond, particularly in a country rich in cultural and natural heritage. Even among those who call it a career, most either have a family business, an inherited heritage property or some kind of a vested interest that nudges them towards this ‘occupation’.

A non-conventional’ career

“It’s a fact that most people are not even aware of what heritage management is all about. When I first informed my parents that I wished to pursue a degree in heritage management, they thought I was kidding. Upon realising I was serious, they thought I am set to ruin my life and labelled it as the worst decision of my life,” recalls Chennai-based Nithya Iyer who pursued a Master’s programme at Lincoln, UK and returned to India, just in time, before the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed the world. “It’s not funny the number of options that have opened up for me after my education. I am sure my parents will understand in a few years that I did the right thing,” says Nithya.

With a degree in heritage management, one is qualified to work as a ‘heritage manager’. “The job of a heritage manager is to manage and conserve heritage sites. It

also entails providing supervised access to heritage sites that could include ancient monuments, historic structures and buildings, museums, etc. My dream is to work at a UNESCO World Heritage Site,” says Kolkata-resident Anandita Ghosh. “My mother is a history professor and I developed an interest in history early on. She would show me documentaries on heritage sites around the world and I knew I want to work on one of them. So next year after I finish my graduation, I will be applying for a post-graduation programme in heritage management.”

Myriad specialisations and opportunities

There are several programmes offered by colleges, universities and education institutes in India and across the world. Most such degrees and diploma programmes are offered at a post-graduation level in several related fields, including: Conservation, Preservation and Heritage Management; Ancient History and Archaeology; Archaeological Anthropology; Architectural Conservation; Museology and Conservation; Urban Design, Sustainability, and Conservation; Heritage Tourism and Travel Management; World Heritage Studies; Conservation of Cultural Heritage; Cultural Tourism; Religion and Cultural Heritage; Heritage Studies; and some recent additions such as Digital Cultural Heritage; Human Rights and Intercultural Heritage, etc.

Bhubaneswar-based Education Consultant Ravi Mohanty explains, “There are several lucrative options after one finishes a degree or diploma programme in a field related

to history and heritage management. One can work with heritage trusts, independently-owned houses and heritage properties, heritage hotels, churches and cathedrals, conservation organisations, museums, tourism operators, civil society, local authorities, etc.” Apart from private entities, archaeological sites and museums, a degree in heritage management or a related field opens a sea of opportunities to work with local, state and central government departments and authorities working towards conservation and preservation of historic sites and monuments.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is an Indian government agency attached to the Ministry of Culture that is ‘responsible for archaeological research and the conservation and preservation of cultural monuments in the country’. The ASI administers more than 3,500 ancient monuments, archaeological sites and remains of national importance including palaces, forts, temples, mosques, churches, tombs, cemeteries, step-wells, rock-cut caves, ruins of ancient civilisations, etc.

The ASI has several departments where opportunities exist. These include: Excavation, Restoration, Monuments, Museums, Documentation, Conservation and Preservation, Publication, Photography, Architectural Surveys, Underwater Archaeology, etc.

Academia plays a vital role

In India, Ahmedabad has been a pioneer when it comes to conservation and preservation of heritage where academic institutions have been proactive in initiating dialogue, setting pertinent discourse, conducting national and international seminars and conferences. All these are designed to increase awareness and further discussions on issues related to heritage management, conservation and contemporary issues.

Students from across India and around the world make a beeline to these world-renowned academic institutions. These institutions strive towards fostering critical discourses on the broader domain of heritage and promoting a holistic heritage management approach as guidance for sustainable and just social development. “It’s important to make academics practical, contemporary and socially relevant. There is no point in just reading books on history and not understanding why things are the way they are. It’s important to draw co-relations and interpret history to help the society today. I wish to use my education for the upliftment of society,” says Guwahati-based Ananya Bora enrolled in a heritage studies programme in Ahmedabad.

Academic institutions across India focus on development of diverse aspects of heritage management. These include understanding, planning, managing human habitats and ruins of ancient civilisations and deepening the understanding of human settlements and cultures. Ananya maintains, “Most such academic programmes endeavour towards creating professionals and professionalism in a field that is perceived to be highly ‘unprofessional’ and ‘unorgan-

ised’.” There is a new role that the academia has undertaken in the last few decades. Academic institutions doling out degree and diploma programmes in heritage management, history, conservation architecture, etc. often take up ‘advisory’ positions in projects that aim to make urban habitats and settlements liveable and sustainable.

Government initiatives offer opportunities

In 2018, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the Fifth International Biennial Conference of Indian Heritage Network (IHCN). At the event, he said, “along with development of modern amenities and facilities, our cities should also be vibrant with the socio-cultural life, centered around heritage, art and craft. There are several cities in India and abroad where this has been done and I am hopeful that the conference will be a platform for exchange of ideas and best practices in this field. At the same time, I also hope more cultural sites of Odisha to come into the purview of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. My Government is committed towards taking steps towards identifying, preserving and protecting these sites through listing and documentation, preparation of tourism promotion and conservation plans and developing heritage resource management plan.”

There are several Indian states such as Odisha, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana that are promoting tourism, particularly ‘heritage tourism’ to stabilise income generation through tourism. Such programmes and initiatives often hire candidates with a diploma or degree in inclusive tourism, tourism management, heritage travel and tourism management, etc. There are several institutes and B-schools that offer such specialised management programmes.

Outside India, an academic background in heritage management or related fields opens up opportunities around the world. There are several international organisations, international think-tanks, heritage trusts, conservation organisations, museums and many UN affiliated agencies that offer rewarding opportunities. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre established in 1992 is the focal point and coordinator within UNESCO for all matters related to World Heritage. Through its various programmes and internship opportunities, thousands of students get a chance to experience and explore and further their interest in heritage management.

In times to come, especially after the COVID-19 crisis, the deciding factors in heritage management would be capacity to digitise, ability to use information technology, social media platforms and apps. Career options in heritage management and affiliated fields will only increase and get better with time.

Gauravi Patel is a researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders

Time to rewrite rules, set new norms

*The pandemic has once again brought to focus the ‘Tourism vs Development’ debate. One cannot be at the cost of other writes **Shalini Sood** emphasising the need to address the concerns related to heritage tourism.*



world. In the post-COVID world, policies are being framed to ensure man rekindles his relationship with nature and maintains a balance.

“The restart of tourism means the return of hope and opportunity for many millions of people around the world,” were the words of United Nations’ World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili as he spoke of ‘putting people first’ in the post-COVID world.

Heritage tourism faces scrutiny

Heritage tourism has the most fundamental relationship with development. An effective driver of economic growth and consequential

‘development’, heritage tourism is facing scrutiny in the development debate.

“People don’t realise but there are a large number of tourists who visit countries like India for its rich heritage,” says Mumbai-based tour guide Irshad Khan. Employed with a South Mumbai tour agency, he earned well as a tour guide for the past decade or so, before the pandemic outbreak turned his life topsy turvy.

He had been taking large groups of tourists around the heritage precincts in South Mumbai, home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the Victorian Gothic and Art Deco ensembles of Mumbai concentrated in the areas adjoining the Marine Drive and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) or Victoria Terminus (VT) as it was previously known. The Colaba heritage precinct is also very popular among domestic and foreign tourists who love strolling along the Colaba Causeway, shooting the heritage buildings and hanging out in the famous bars and restaurants in the zone.

“I am not highly educated but I can speak more than ten languages to cater to the majority of foreign tourists that employ the services of my agency. This is the only work that I know and now the uncertainty over resuming of tourism has been worrying me and my family sick,” he says with anxiety.

Tourism creates job opportunities to locals, tour operators, guides and others

Tourism is a significant source of revenue generation for many countries including India. The COVID-19 outbreak has however, brought the world to a standstill and also battered economies hugely dependent on tourism.

The pandemic has brought to fore the historical ‘Tourism vs Development’ debate as both the processes will now be looked at in a new light in the post-COVID world.

Although a few sites have been opened by the ASI (Archaeological Society of India), most tourism-related and tourism-based activities are still on hold due to the very nature of these involving crowds thronging to destinations known for their rich heritage. One of the biggest challenges therefore in the post-COVID world will be to restart tourism and its related activities, addressing health and safety concerns.

Policies are being re-designed, new rules are being set to face the unprecedented crisis and to find ways to make it an opportunity for positive change in the future.

New ‘Development’ discourse underway

The pandemic triggered a new set of inequalities and has brought the world together to shape the development discourse for a more sustainable and egalitarian

Like Irshad, there are millions of individuals directly and indirectly engaged in tourism activities in the heritage-rich zones in the country such as Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra who, along with their families, are staring at a bleak future.

Important to strike balance with nature

Goa-based environment volunteer Jose Fernandes says, “Now it will be easier for people to understand the importance of maintaining a balance with nature.” In the past few years, Goa has witnessed utter callousness of the locals who, to make easy money, had been violating environmental norms blatantly to build structures along the beaches.

“Not only that, illegal structures in the adjoining villages, improper waste management, absence of sanitary infrastructure have polluted the pristine environment of the state. The COVID-19 pandemic has come as a blessing in disguise when nature got a chance to heal itself in places like Goa.”

The tourism versus development debate is not new. There are advantages but also a few concerns. Tourism creates job opportunities, is a source of income for locals at heritage destinations, brings foreign exchange to the country, invites infrastructure development that benefits the local population, creates economic linkages, develops several options of revenue generation for the government and generally positively influences economic growth of the region and the country.

Jaipur-based travel consultant Garima Sharma says, “Tourism has many benefits. It allows growth of SMEs, increases export and the demand of local products and services and attracts foreign investment through hotel and food chains, related projects, etc.” Garima had started a travel consultancy jointly with a friend to financially support their families.

“It was a preferred business choice for us in a place like Jaipur known for its rich heritage and high tourist footfalls. It wasn’t an easy task to grow our business though, as the competition is tough. But over time, we created a niche for ourselves by promoting ‘sustainable and environment-friendly heritage tourism options’ which was appreciated. Just like any other economic activity, heritage tourism has its drawbacks too. “The biggest problem with heritage tourism is exploitation of culture and the native groups of the region,” says Delhi-based anthropologist Savitha Nair. “It is only because of tourism-related activities that tribal groups face health risks, even extinction when they encounter tourists. The Jarawa tribe in Andaman islands is a case-in-point who have already experienced two measles outbreak reducing their numbers drastically.”

Apart from exploitation, there are several other issues: environmental damage, lack of job security, invasion of outsiders in local economy, neglect of other economic sectors, unequal infrastructure development, seasonal



Tourism has its drawbacks too. Miscreants destroying a stone pillar at Hampi, a World Heritage Site.

nature of jobs, etc.

“It’s not just that...we often have to deal with tourists who are inconsiderate towards locals and their culture and traditions. Such situations get more difficult to handle in conservative and traditional communities who are less tolerant of such rogue intruders,” says Jodhpur-based hotelier Jaideep Singh.

Most people from the industry believe things will improve in the post-COVID world. Industry experts now expect more Indians to travel within the country due to restrictions on travelling abroad. The assumptions are welcome as it will revive and reboot the domestic tourism sector. The challenge remains; in fact it has increased, to ensure tourism and related activities are sustainable, in local interest.

However, only time will tell how the world will cope with and revive heritage tourism in the post-COVID world.

Shalini Sood is a volunteer with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders

Laws protecting India's heritage

*The Constitution of India clearly delineates the jurisdiction over India's cultural heritage, monuments and archaeological sites. However, are heritage laws enough to protect the country's rich heritage, asks **Kunal Singh**.*

India is one of the few nations in the world with an unparalleled cultural heritage. It has also been the reason of innumerable foreign invasions that have marked the country's history for thousands of years.

So, a July 2020 judgment by the Supreme Court upholding the rights of the Travancore royal family to administer and manage the property at Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, one of the richest temples in the country, is deemed to be 'landmark' and a 'game changer' by many jurists. The case has also sparked discussions on whether heritage laws are enough to protect the country's rich heritage.

The Apex Court judgment reversed the Kerala High Court's 2011 order that had directed the state government to set up a trust to take control of management and assets of the temple. The top court also directed preparation of a detailed inventory of the valuables, ornaments and articles in the temple's vaults (kallaras). Former chairman of the Supreme Court Committee on Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple treasures, C V Ananda Bose, applauded the Apex Court judgment and described it as, "A game changer which will value faith and religion, rituals and will respect heritage."

Kerala temple sets example

An architectural marvel, the construction of the temple is an amalgamation of the Dravidian and Chera styles of architecture also featuring a 16th century gopura. In its present form, the temple was built in the 18th century by the Travancore Royal House that integrated into the Indian Union in 1947. Lord Padmanabha (Vishnu) is the family deity. The royal family had also been protecting the temple treasure for more than a thousand years, including keeping it safe from the preying British who eventually took over the temple administration in 1811. Even after India's Independence, the erstwhile royal family continued to govern the temple through a trust.

The five vaults opened from 2011 onwards are said to have a treasure trove comprising gold, silver, precious stones amassed during the rule of the Travancore kings. The opening of the temple vaults led to the discovery of the treasures and initiated a debate on who owns the temple property and how it must be regulated. The assets of temples are governed by statutory laws and regulated boards



Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, one of the richest temples in the country

controlled by the state government. The laws were introduced to ensure temples are treated as 'public land' and 'all' including untouchables are welcome to pay obeisance. With time, however, several temples got into legal battles to assert ownership and independence.

Constitution of India delineates jurisdiction

According to the Indian Constitution, the jurisdiction over India's cultural heritage, monuments and archaeological sites is as follows:

The Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological sites and remains, declared by Parliament, by law to be of national importance are under the Union List (central government). The Ancient and Historical Monuments, other than those declared by Parliament to be of national importance, are under the State List (state governments).

Besides the two categories, both Union and the States have 'Concurrent' jurisdiction over Archaeological Sites and Remains other than those declared by law and Parliament to be of national importance.

Article 253 of the Constitution of India enables Parliament to legislate for the implementation of any treaty, agreement or convention with any other country or countries, or any decision, made at any international conference, association or other body. Any such legislation can be enacted even if the subject matter of the legislation is an item in the State List of the Constitution of India.

(continued on page 28...)

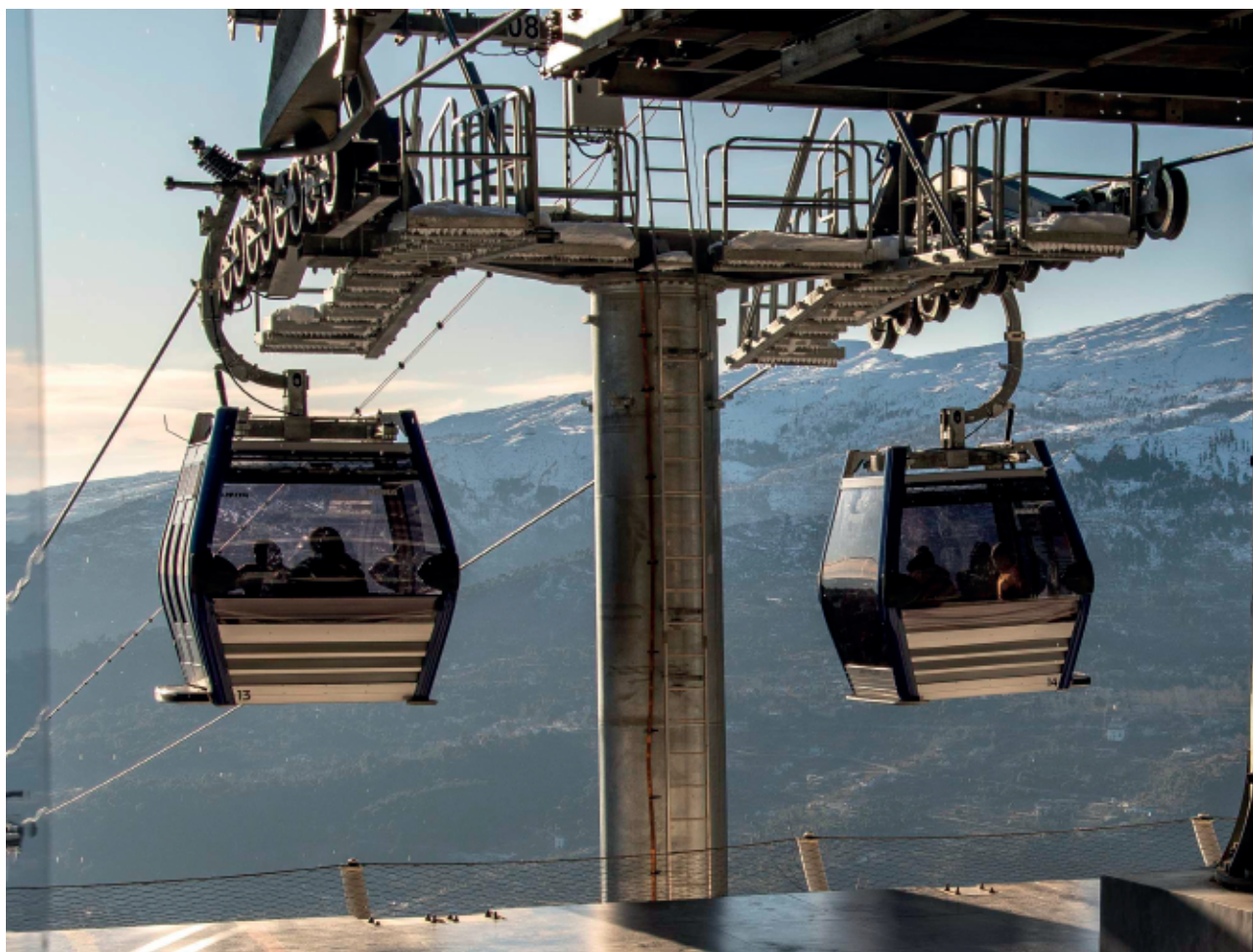


PATNITOP

A view from the sky

Taking a leap of faith mid-air, travel couple Jeroo and Gustasp Irani glide across Asia's longest ziz-zag zip line in the misty mountains of the Shivaliks at Skyview Patnitop in Jammu, reveling in the sight of the snow-clad world, 4500 ft. below.

Text & Photographs : Gustasp and Jeroo Irani



Skyview Patnitop gondola at the upper terminal

As we stood on the first platform and viewed the sturdy cables strung across 10 platforms that seemed to sway in the misty distance, we were overwhelmed with fear and the thrill of anticipation. Our legs shook and our hands trembled as we were strapped into a secure harness and reached out to grasp the overhead cable. Soon we would jump into a bottomless void and perhaps the world, 4,500 ft below, would tilt to meet our knee caps!

We took a leap of faith and the whoosh of the wind in our ears was almost deafening as we glided across what has been dubbed Asia's longest zig-zag zip line at Skyview Patnitop by Empyrean, a two-and-a-half-hour drive away from Jammu.

As we skimmed down the cable, humped hills and deep valleys seemingly gouged into the earth unspooled around us like a film. Were we being fast forwarded into the future? Another world inhabited by aliens? Another dimension? Other holiday makers revelling in the country's newest adventure destination vanished in the misty depths below as we traversed 1,900 feet and landed triumphantly on the last platform!

A dream destination in the Shivaliks

Our sneak peek at the recently launched Skyview Patnitop by Empyrean happened in December 2019 and came with lashings of snow which added to the beauty of the landscape of pine-clad hills and 10 ft snow banks. Skyview Patnitop is a public-private partnership adventure destination spread over 11 acres with a state-of-the-art aerial ropeway, and dollops of adventure, entertainment and culinary hot spots thrown in. This multi-season multi-entertainment destination in the Shivaliks, the foothills of the Himalayas, is now on the bucket list of tourists who are bored with the tried and tested tourist trails.

After our zip line odyssey, we hurtled down the country's first dry tubing sledge, over a 780 ft artificial grass strip that seemed to slither, much like a serpent, down a mountain slope. We were assured at the start that the drying tubing sledge adheres to the highest safety standards and has an excellent braking system. We sat in the tube, a trifle awkwardly and pulled in our legs. The ride started with a gentle roll down the incline but soon gathered momentum. The tube seemed to acquire a life of its own and our screams of joy were laced with fear. After a while, the "speed demon"

shuddered to a halt and we sprang out of the tube, a little shamefaced because of the ruckus that we had created with our fearful cries!

The snow-muffled hill resort of Patnitop beckoned and so we boarded the gondola, with its out-of-cellophane look, and it shimmied up from the Lower Terminal at Sanget to the barren beauty of the Upper Terminal which is the gateway to Patnitop. As we swayed upward, the landscape went into overdrive, a shiny moon scattered its pale beams on a snow-clad landscape and the dark green pines stood tall like pagan totem poles.

That night, we hunkered down under our blankets at a cosy little hotel even as snow buffeted the resort. The next day, we woke up to a deceptively clear morning. Black-as-night ravens streaked across blue skies and the world around us seemed to groan softly under its burden of immaculate white snow. But our plans to hike up to higher reaches had to be shelved as snowflakes again fluttered down like confetti and banks of packed ice made exploration impossible. We spent two days at Patnitop revelling in the sight of vast snow-scapes, unmarked by foot prints, and warmed our chilled fingers in front of a crackling fire place.

Days flew past in a blur of trudging down ice-slicked trails, building snow men with our gloved hands

and hurling snow balls at each other. In spring and summer, hikers can trek to Madhatop (2,000m), Sanasar Lake or Nathatop (2,711m) or go river rafting on the Baglihar Dam where dew-spattered green slopes are interspersed with flower-spangled meadows.

An emerging adventure tourism hotspot

When we glided down in the gondola for the last time, we saw white tableaux – icicles hanging like swords from the sloping roofs of homes, where snow flakes drifted on the wind like flecks of cloud. At the Lower Terminal, we met the dapper Syed Junaid Altaf, the 34-year-old managing director of Empyrean Skyview Projects who described his pet project with the passion one reserves to describe the virtues of one's children. The ropeway is one of the country's highest (in terms of clearance) soaring 65 m above the ground, safest (CEN European standard certified), with the longest span of 849 metres between two of the eight towers.

And he has reason to be proud of what he and his team of young engineers, construction workers and other staff have achieved. They toiled despite inclement weather, high winds, rain and snow to give firm contours to what seemed like Altaf's impossible dream. "This is the largest Indo-French collaboration in mountain infrastructure development," he revealed, "and the gateway to developing a



Skyview Patnitop Zip Line



Horse riding in a snowy pine forest

nascent destination – Patnitop.” The forbidding wall of the Shivaliks, the foothills of the Himalayas into which much of the ropeway is carved did not deter them and they carved it without cutting a single tree though they had permission to fell 26. Dr Viqar Yousuf who ran a civil construction company was hired as the project head. Fondly called The Mad Man by his team because of his single-minded passion for the ropeway, Dr Yousuf’s magnificent obsession dovetailed nicely with Junaid’s visionary leadership.

The result was a project which, in the normal course, would have taken eight years to see light of the day, being completed in a record time of two years and four months and at a cost of Rs 180 crore!

Today, it all exudes a sleek and modern air – the Lower Terminal with its ticketing block, an area for food kiosks and restaurants that are in the pipeline and the more spartan Upper Terminal. The wood buildings (constructed from responsibly sourced timber) with pitched roofs, abundant use of glass and skylights that haul in wraparound views of a magical landscape of misty snow-whipped mountains and forests of cedar.

Labour and materials were sourced locally – traditional craftsmen hand-chiselled and dressed over a million stones for months for the retaining walls and a water reservoir created for construction was fed by a natural spring. Native indigenous plant species budded to life in the gardens.

But perhaps what makes this ropeway more than a form of transportation for those who wish to travel to Patnitop in comfort is the fact that Empyrean is aiming to

make the site a culinary and adventure hot spot as well. Banana Leaf (vegetarian), Skyview Café, Pine View, etc., will cater to the palates of vacationers at Sanget while The Terrace, at the Upper Terminal, will cater to epicures in search of a more exquisite fine dining experience. Food Festivals will enable celebrity chefs to showcase their culinary skills.

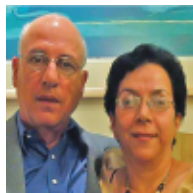
Despite the magnitude and scale of the project, it did not seem to violate and ravage the land. There seemed to be an exquisite balance between the handiwork of man and nature; part of a promise to nurture and protect that Junaid and his team had made to the mountains into which they had carved their ropeway with such care.

As we gazed at the mountains looming above us, and the gondola swishing upward like a pirouetting

prima donna, Altaf’s words rang in our ears: “If you take care of the mountains when building, the mountains will take care of you.”

Fact File

Nearest airport is in Jammu from where Skyview Patnitop is a two-and-a-half-hour drive away and the nearest train station is Udhampur. Sanget, the Lower Terminal, is just 3 km away from the 9.2 km Chenani Nashri Tunnel (renamed Dr Syamma Prasad Mookerjee tunnel) on the Jammu-Srinagar highway. Skyview Patnitop is a pleasant diversion for pilgrims to Vaishnodevi who travel via Katra. Patnitop has a spectrum of accommodation. Visit: <https://skyviewpatnitop.com/>



Gustasp and Jeroo Irani are travel companions for whom life is a never-ending journey. Over the last 25 years they have travelled extensively across India and the globe, taking the rough with the smooth; sampling different cultures and cuisines. In the process they have trekked in the Australian Outback, slurped snake soup in HongKong, have danced with the Samburus in Africa, stayed with a local family in a Malay village, cracked the Da Vinci Code in Paris... For them, writing and photography are more than just freezing moments of that journey; it's a passion.



ANDAMANS

Barefoot in paradise

The sun-drenched Andamans, marooned in the bluest of blue oceans, even today exude a delicious sense of adventure and are a visual feast, with nature as the sole travel companion.



Text & Photographs : Gustasp and Jeroo Irani



Havlock Island Elephant Beach - virtually deserted and private

The waters of the Bay of Bengal rippled below our aircraft as it nosed down on Port Blair, capital of the Union Territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which lie 1,250 km south of Kolkata. Those hues, an ocean shot through with vivid shades of blue and islands that were humps of green, were as evanescent as the colours on a butterfly's wings.

When our aircraft soft-landed at Port Blair, we felt like we had been air-dropped in an alternate universe, un-ravaged by man. Mainland India, abuzz with a sense of desperate hustle, congestion and noise, seemed to exist in an alternate reality far, far away. Indeed, the archipelago of 572 islands (of which only 37 are inhabited and eighty-six percent are protected), is closer to Myanmar and Thailand than mainland India. Even fewer are accessible to tourists and have sandy stretches with nary a footprint on them.

The two-hour catamaran ride from the marine terminal at Port Blair to Havelock island across a heaving ocean would be bumpy and even gut-spilling, we had been warned. But it turned out to be enchanting for we watched a capricious ocean change colour outside our large picture windows - from blue to teal and then a deep jade-green. Another visual feast lay in store --- a scenic drive via dense forests, parakeet-green paddy fields and areca nut plantations. By the time we arrived at our resort, Barefoot at Have-

lock, lush nature had ambushed us at every turn. And the salt-laden air was heavy with whiffs of romance.

Snuggling in an unsullied corner of the island on Radhanagar Beach, Barefoot at Havelock intensified the feeling of romance. A complex of villas, cottages and tents, made from environmental-friendly, indigenous materials, Barefoot at Havelock yeasts out of the land in an organic way. The small foot-print resort encourages its guests to move around barefoot, and in our bamboo, wood and palm-thatched villa with its capacious wood deck, it seemed like the most natural thing to do. Sitting on the deck to bird watch became a favourite pastime with nature as our sole travel companion.

In harmony with nature

The air was heavy with the trilling of birds and the sigh of the wind; and scented with the fragrance of tropical foliage. At night, the chorus of crickets lulled us to sleep and we understood why on check in, we were handed small flashlights... "We do not light the pathways at night so as not to disturb the owls and other birds that roost on our property," the receptionist answered our puzzled look. It revealed the eye for detail that this, the first privately owned resort on Havelock is known for. Barefoot threw open its doors in 1998 in its initial avatar as Jungle Resort, and in

2004, was re-christened Barefoot at Havelock.

At the time, Havelock island merely sported a government guest house. Today, a clutch of mid-segment hotels has sprouted on Havelock island's Beach No 5 but all the other beaches are relatively untouched. The resort is framed by a rainforest that grows in matted lushness as you drive in, and in front of it, is a mahua forest with sky-high mahua trees which lead to pristine Radhanagar Beach. This sandy stretch seemed so off the grid that we felt like we were the first people to set foot there.

The 31 elegantly designed thatched-roof villas, cottages and tents with timber floors and deep patios recall the local vernacular while on-the-edge-of-the-forest lounge bar is a modern touch. And at the fragrant Oma Spa, local ingredients and aromatic oils were kneaded into our sun-burnt bodies by light-fingered therapists.

The ghosts of the past

The sun-drenched Andamans, marooned in the bluest of blue oceans, even today exude a delicious sense of adventure; of being unmapped. Not too long ago, the mere mention of them struck terror in the hearts of many and they were dubbed Kala Pani or Black Water. This was because the British imprisoned inconvenient political activists in Port Blair, the capital of the Andamans. They became the most forgotten of men; serving painfully long sentences or perishing at the gallows.

The problem, from the British point of view, was

that the prisoners were getting a break in alluring environs rather than suffering a fate worse than death as they were supposed to. So they whipped them out of their lethargy and got them to build the Cellular Jail at Port Blair, a three-level building complex of tiny cells in which they were confined, mocked and tortured by their jailers.

Today, the jailhouse comes alive with the ghosts of the past who briefly inhabit it during a gripping Sound and Light show. The sadistic British jailer struts around once again, unrepentant political prisoners, heads unbowed, are whipped at a whipping post while in a sacred spot, the condemned make peace with their Maker before slipping their neck into the noose.

There is not much to do in Port Blair apart from visiting the Archaeological Museum and the local market. One may also sail across the waters to Ross Island and browse the cob-webbed ruins of the little enclave the English built for themselves: tennis court, hospital, church, water treatment plant, printing press, cemetery and other facilities...

Lost in paradise

Back at Barefoot at Havelock, butterflies wove colourful arabesques in the air, while dense foliage and fruit trees came alive each morning with the call of parakeets, emerald doves and fairy blue birds. We woke up to days lived in harmony with nature, the supreme conductor. Fishermen would pull out to sea from isolated villages and the fresh catch would sizzle on our dinner plates. Hearty



Cellular Jail - Entrance to the dreaded Kala Pani Jail



Light and sound show at the Cellular Jail

Beyond, more lovely cameos came alive; etched on a canvas of jade-green waters that lapped an untracked beach...

Fact File

Tourist traffic to the Andaman & Nicobar islands is restricted to the islands of Port Blair, Ross, Havelock and Neil.

One can reach the islands by air (the airport is at Port Blair) and sea.

By way of accommodation, The Nest is a no-frills Bed and Breakfast style accommodation, ideal for a day and night to take in the sights in Port Blair.

Barefoot at Havelock with responsible luxury as its mantra is an associate of the Bangalore-based Serai group.

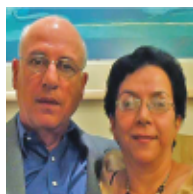
The Nicobar group of islands are not open to tourism. Foreigners need special permits (obtained on arrival) to visit the Andamans. Indian tourists do not need a permit but must carry some form of identification.

lunches were followed by relaxed noons spent in our villa and only the promise of flaming sunsets on the beach would draw us out of our comfort zone.

True to the spirit of the land, we trod barefoot on the sands, revelling in the feel of powdery grains slipping between our toes. Indeed, on Havelock's cinnamon-coloured beaches, no one indulged in hard sell, trying to hawk local crafts or sun glasses. The resorts are staffed by locals, a gentle and happy people, conscious of living in a paradise of their own.

Rosy dawns saw us swimming, snorkelling and diving amidst the islands spectacular coral reefs while on our last day, we set off on a trek to Elephant Beach where elephants used to be trained for logging the forests. (Now that logging has been banned, the sandy stretch is often deserted except for a sprinkling of snorkelers and divers.) We then forged ahead through a tropical forest, listening to bird song, and later ducked into a forest of mahua trees where tall trees lay sprawled on the ground like drunken giants.

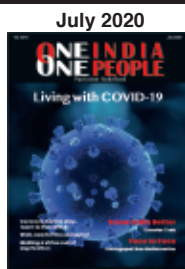
For more information, visit the official website of Andaman and Nicobar Islands Tourism www.andamans.gov.in or <http://barefootholiday.com>



Gustasp and Jeroo Irani are travel companions for whom life is a never-ending journey. Over the last 25 years they have travelled extensively across India and the globe, taking the rough with the smooth; sampling different cultures and cuisines. In the process they have trekked in the Australian Outback, slurped snake soup in HongKong, have danced with the Samburus in Africa, stayed with a local family in a Malay village, cracked the Da Vinci Code in Paris... For them, writing and photography are more than just freezing moments of that journey; it's a passion.

Our Last Six Issues

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“Over the counter skin products are dangerous, especially if they contain steroids.”

Pune-based dermatologist **Dr. Anita Viegas** speaks to **A. Radhakrishnan** on a wide range of issues related to skin, skin care, latest treatments available for skin ailments and the do's and don'ts for a healthy, glowing skin.



Briefly describe yourself.

I am meticulous, paying attention to detail and give of my total self to anything I undertake. Taking the more difficult path somehow comes easily to me. With an organiser personality, I like it when things go as per plan.

Your educational achievements?

I am blessed to have studied in two great institutions – MBBS from St John's Medical College, Bangalore and MD from CMC Vellore, where the focus is not just on teaching medicine in all its intriguing intricacies, but on looking at the patient as a precious human being and serving that person. Hard work and academic achievement they say, go hand in hand, especially in the medical field. I won several prizes and stood 1st in my college at the final MBBS examination. My post graduate thesis was the largest study from India on Neurocutaneous syndromes. Karyotypic abnormalities in pigmentary mosaicism were studied for the first time. This series was presented at the World Congress of Dermatologists in Rome, in July 2004.

Why did you choose to specialise in dermatology?

To start with, the excellent teachers I had at St John's - Drs. Elizabeth Jayaseelan, Anil Abraham, Sujata Harshad and others kindled the interest. My internship posting in dermatology was marked with having to look after several dermatological emergencies and ill patients with challenging co-morbidities.

I later worked at a rural hospital, village Palamner, of Chittoor district. There too, I had to treat a lot of patients who had skin issues (the hospital was known as a leprosy hospital). With this background, dermatology somehow emerged as a natural choice!

At CMC Vellore, the unforgettable learning experience, thanks

to Drs. Mary Jacob, Renu George, Susanne Abraham and Pushpa Eapen enabled me to be a learner for life.

What is your personal skincare routine like?

Very simple. I apply a retinoid based cream at night, an oil-free moisturiser in the morning and regularly apply sunscreen.

What are the common skin complaints in India?

One study from rural central India found eczema to be the commonest at 22%, fungal infections 13%, benign skin tumours 6% and pigmentary disorders 4.5%. Various studies show different figures depending on the age of the population.

Have you ever misdiagnosed a skin disease? What steps did you take to rectify it?

Yes and on more than one occasion!

One situation that leads to this is when one sees a patient before he or she has developed all the manifestations of a particular condition...so the early signs may look like quite something else! Diseases do not read books! And so the uncommon manifestation of a common disease can be tricky. So also, the common manifestation of an uncommon disease.

I recall one instance when I had gone down to examine a patient in her car, as she was elderly and unable to come to my clinic on the first floor...the restricted visibility was not in my favour. When the condition continued to deteriorate, I was forced to reconsider my initial diagnosis and search for other possibilities....I suggested a skin biopsy and today she is on the right treatment and doing well.

That is the humbling and exhilarating part of practising medicine...that one can't always be right...that just when

everything seems to be working right, something unusual poses a challenge that forces one to reconsider and research.

What causes skin cancer? Is it common?

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation, smoking, certain chemicals, immunosuppression due to certain viruses or medications, having an affected family member, certain kinds of nevi (birth marks), Caucasian race...are all risk factors for skin cancer.

Conventional wisdom was that skin cancer incidence is lower in Indians due to the protective benefit of melanin. There are indirect indicators of perhaps increasing numbers, compared to the 1980s although nation-wide cross-sectional studies are not available.

What causes acne? What is the difference between acne and rosacea?

The cause of acne needs to be addressed. Adolescent age; hormonal imbalance triggered by medication given for another condition (some anti-TB and epilepsy medicines can cause acne); diet (junk food, sweets, high intake of dairy products, oily cosmetics), etc., and over-the-counter steroid creams, often misused for fairness are causes.

The severity needs to be assessed. Severe forms with pus need internal medications. Mild forms need certain topical (application) medications, so that the process of blackhead and whitehead formation is reduced to a minimum.

Acne is mainly characterised by pimples of varying grades (blackheads, white heads, reddish bumps, yellow pus filled ones). Rosacea may have bumps, but has predominant redness, which is easily triggered off by a number of factors, especially by UV rays.

What's the best way to exfoliate if I have acne?

Exfoliation has a very minor / supportive role in acne. Otherwise one could just scrub the problem away! One needs to assess the entire situation and work out a regime.

Does stress and depression lead to skin ailment?

Yes! The converse is also true where skin ailments that are longstanding cause stress and depression.

Which foods should one avoid?

There cannot be blanket restrictions, as it depends on the skin condition of an individual.

A diet rich in anti-oxidants helps in maintaining a healthy skin.

What to do about skin discolouration?

That is challenging! Sunscreen helps to some extent; it may perhaps prevent worsening.

What are these stubborn rash, warts and other marks that won't go away? Are they harmless?

Difficult to generalise. Warts may be viral. Some people refer to skin tags also, as warts, which indicate a slightly greater risk of developing lifestyle diseases.

What are Brown spots?

That is again a description. Not a diagnosis...some types of fungus and freckles and age related spots may also be brown.

Any cure for the dreaded keloids?

Treating keloids is extremely challenging as some patients respond better than others. The centre of the chest is usually the most difficult to treat. Most often we are able to give some relief; total cure is elusive.

Is it okay to pop a pimple? Or should it be treated right away?

Popping pimples is the surest way to get scars and marks on the face. Treatment helps, although it may be six to seven weeks before the onset of results. Pimples often affect self-esteem. Hence treatment makes sense.

What are the latest treatments for the skin? Is laser treatment advisable?

There are huge map like birthmarks on the skin that are perceived as disfiguring and affect self-esteem, relationships, etc. In such cases, lasers are a big boon. If done for the right indication and with adequate precautions, they do help in reduction of unwanted hair, rejuvenation, scar treatments and even in pigmentation and certain birthmarks.

Is it advisable? The person has to decide how important/distressing the problem is. Yes, every procedure has a possible chance of side effects, like medications. These are discussed to enable decision making.

What is cosmetic dermatology?

It is the application of dermatology for look - enhancement and is also called Aesthetic dermatology. We do have an increasing number of people who do not have a skin disease, but would like to have the best version of their skin and there are numerous options from peels to botox and fillers.

Do facials at beauty parlours increase chances of skin ailments?

That is a tricky one! For those who have no tendency to acne, there may not be much of a risk, if relaxation or the pamper factor is what they are looking for.

What are the do's and don'ts for glowing clear skin?

Do eat brightly coloured fruits and vegetables like broccoli, bell peppers, tomato, nuts, dry fruits like walnut, flax seeds, sunflower seeds, fish, citrus fruits, legumes. Do use a sunscreen. Do use a gentle cleanser and moisturize skin when dry.

Don't eat junk, don't smoke and drink; handle stress and get

adequate sleep.

How useful is Botox?

Botox when used for the right indication is one of the most gratifying of procedures. Definitely useful in dynamic wrinkles (lines seen when we use our muscles of expression); not helpful in static lines (lines present at rest).

How important are biopsies?

Biopsy is extremely useful in evaluating chronic skin conditions. It is not (as is often feared), just to diagnose cancer.

Can lemon juice and baking soda harm my skin?

Yes both are not risk free. Although lemon is a popular home remedy, it can cause dryness, redness and phytophotodermatitis. Baking soda too can irritate the skin.

Does one have to use sunscreen everyday in India?

Preferably. Especially if one is concerned about tanning and skin rejuvenation.

How much can one depend on over-the-counter products and home remedies and any DIY skin treatments, without help of a dermatologist?

Over the counter skin products are dangerous, especially if they contain steroids. Dermatologists often see patients with

a condition called Topical Steroid Damaged Face, due to the inadvertent use of steroids, for fairness and glow.

Several conditions require the judicious use of steroid creams. These have to be used under medical supervision. Our association, the IADVL (Indian Association of Dermatologists Venereologists & Leprologists) is working hard to educate the public as well as to bring about appropriate legislation to curb this menace.

How can I slow down the signs of aging?

Following a healthy lifestyle, using sunscreen to protect the skin, retinoid or alpha hydroxy acid cream and procedures depending on specific conditions help to slowdown the aging process.

Finally, what would be your advice for an issue-free skin?

One can follow the dos & don'ts discussed. However genetic or constitutional tendencies or infections may sometimes still cause concerns. Despite best efforts, it may not be possible to totally avoid skin issues.



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

WHO AM I?



Laws protecting India's heritage

(continued from page 16...)

Responsibility of citizens in protecting heritage

There are several other provisions in the Constitution that lay responsibility of preserving and protecting the country's heritage on Indian state and its citizens.

Article 29 of the Indian Constitution states: "Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same."

According to Article 51 A (f) of the Constitution: "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture; and (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures."

Article 49 of the Indian Constitution protects the country's built heritage: "It shall be the obligation of the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, (declared by or under law made by Parliament) to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be."

Statutory provisions to preserve heritage

The first law protecting heritage was enacted in pre-Independence India through the Bengal Regulation XIX of 1810 and the Madras Regulation VII of 1817. Act XX was passed in 1863 empowering the government 'to conserve structures of historical or architectural value'.

The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904 allowed government authority over privately owned heritage structures. The Antiquities Export Control Act, 1947 and Rules regulate the export of antiquities.

The Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Declaration of National Importance) Act, 1951 replaced the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904. It was later replaced by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 that provides for "preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance, for the regulation of archaeological excavations and for the protection of sculptures, carvings and other like objects."

The Delivery of Books (Public Libraries) Act, 1952 provides for delivery of books to the National library and Public Libraries. It was amended in 1965 and named as the

Delivery of Books & Newspaper (Public Libraries) Amendment Act, 1956.

The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 states, "export trade in antiquities and art treasures is regulated and smuggling and fraudulent dealings in antiquities and ancient monuments are prevented."

The Public Records Act, 1993 empowers the Central Government in the Department of Culture "to permanently preserve public records which are of enduring value."

Heritage-rich states create local laws

Several Indian states with rich architectural and built heritage have enacted local legislations and state heritage laws to protect their monuments and preserve history. The Heritage Commission Act, 2001 of West Bengal provides for the "establishment of a Heritage Commission in the State of West Bengal for the purpose of identifying heritage buildings, monuments, precincts and sites and for measures for their restoration and preservation."

The Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Preservation Act, 1956 of Uttar Pradesh provides for the "preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains in (the state) other than those declared by Parliament by law to be of national importance." Some other examples include Tamil Nadu Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1966; Salar Jung Museum Act, 1961; Victoria Memorial Act, 1903; Rajasthan Monuments, Archaeological Sites and Antiquities Act, 1961; Orissa Ancient Monuments and Preservation Act, 1956; Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority Act, 2002; Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation and Preservation Act, 2010; etc.

The heritage of the country is governed by the law of the land. These are ascertained by constitutional provisions; laws or acts created by the Parliament or a State Assembly; and subordinate legislation created through Byelaws, Rules, Regulations under certain acts.

In independent India's history, several Public Interest Litigations (PILs) have also been filed in the Apex Court to highlight and resolve an issue of public interest and not of a personally motivated interest. Apart from the law, it's the duty of every citizen of the country to protect and preserve the centuries-old rich heritage of the nation.

Kunal Singh is a legal researcher working with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Initiatives to preserve cultural heritage

Kavitha Subramanian gives us details of the several government schemes initiated for heritage protection and management and to enhance tourism potential.

On 27 June 2020, the Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (I/C) Prahlad Singh Patel announced that the Ministry will celebrate Sankalp Parva from 28 June to 12 July and plant trees as desired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Ministry recommended to plant five trees that have been identified by PM Modi and represent India's herbal heritage: Bargad, Amla, Peepal, Ashok and Bel.

The initiative as undertaken at the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to emphasise that India's herbal wealth can help citizens fight the battle and to show the importance of a clean and healthy environment. The Sankalp Parva urged all subordinate offices, academies and other affiliated and attached agencies of the Ministry to plant trees in their campuses and surroundings.

The role of government in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of its country is paramount. Heritage zones often span beyond state boundaries and transcend legal and political jurisdictions so the role of a central authority is crucial in heritage management and maintenance. However, the role of local authorities and citizens, in particular, cannot be ignored.

There are several schemes and programmes initiated by the Ministry of Culture to support the administration and management of country's heritage. The schemes aim to preserve and promote protected and unprotected heritage across the country through a multi-pronged approach by facilitating infrastructure development, funding and upgradation of the sites.

Trust for Public-Private Partnerships

The National Culture Fund (NCF) is a trust established by the Indian government through a Gazette Notification published on 28 November 1996. It was established to put in place a funding mechanism for the arts and culture in India, distinct from the existing sources and chains of funding. This scheme enables individuals and institutions to directly partner with the government to support arts and culture.

Several significant projects are underway through the NCF. These include: Conservation of national monuments in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar; Publication of treasures of Indian museums in Kolkata; Development of tourist infrastructure



facilities at Sun Temple, Konark, Odisha and Kanheri Caves, Maharashtra; Conservation and Development of the excavated remains at Vikramshila; Conservation, renovation and restoration of the monuments of Ahom Kings in Sibsagar, Assam that include Ranghar ruins, Karenghar, Talatal ghar and group of maidans at Charaideo; etc.

Museums open history for the common man

The Museum Upgradation Scheme provides financial help to state governments, societies, local bodies and trusts registered under the Societies Act to set up new museums. Museums play a very important role in preserving history by conserving and collecting artefacts and objects of historical and cultural importance.

Through the scheme, entities can strengthen and modernise existing museums or make new museums. They can also undertake digitisation of objects and cataloguing them to be made available on the internet for public viewing and for the capacity building of personnel engaged in related activities.

"There are many schemes initiated by the government for sister agencies, subordinate entities, private organisations and individuals working towards heritage protection and management. I am closely associated with the scheme that provides financial assistance to Buddhist / Tibetan monasteries for propagation and research. It really helps a lot," says Leh-based Buddhist studies researcher Tsering Wangchuk.

The National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), launched in 2003, documents, conserves and disseminates



A sculpture of Goddess Tara at the Bihar museum

the knowledge in manuscripts and aims to publish rare and unpublished manuscripts for researchers, scholars and the general public. Through local partners, 37,722 manuscripts from 2,389 different monasteries, palaces and individuals of

Ladakh region have been documented so far. Under the NMM, the Ministry of Culture is also planning to reprint 108 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur 'to boost bilateral ties between the two nations'.

Schemes to promote sustainable tourism

Tourism is an important variable in heritage management and maintenance. Through the Ministry of Tourism, the government has launched schemes aimed at 'preservation, sustenance and better interpretative of components in the heritage circuit to meet the needs of the global traveller'. India's heritage circuit is vibrant with a rich history dating back to thousands of years. India is also home to several UNESCO World Heritage Sites that draw tourists from all over the world. The PRASHAD Scheme (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive) was introduced in 2015 to focus on identifying and developing pilgrim sites across India to enrich the religious tourism experience. With seed money of 100 crores, so far 41 sites across 25 states have been identified for development. These include: Kedarnath, Amritsar, Ajmer, Mathura, Varanasi, Gaya, Kamakhya, Dwarka, Puri, Amravati, Kanchipuram, Vellankanni, etc.

PRASHAD Scheme aims to fulfil the following objectives: To enhance tourism attractiveness in a sustainable manner; to harness pilgrimage tourism so that it directly affects and multiplies the employment generation and economic development; to promote local art and culture, handicraft and cuisines, etc. and to develop world-class infrastructure at religious destinations. The Swadesh Darshan Scheme aims to develop theme-based tourist circuits while focussing on the principles of 'high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner'. The scheme also aims to 'enrich tourist experience and generate employment'. Themes identified so far include: Himalayan Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Desert Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, etc. These schemes work towards developing infrastructure at the heritage sites

and circuits. It involves development of illumination with renewable energy sources, establishing eco-friendly and sustainable modes of transportation, installing facilities for drinking water, toilets, parking, first aid centres, cafeteria, markets, souvenir shops, shelter areas, telecommunication facilities, internet connectivity, etc.

'Adopt A Heritage' Scheme

Through a key initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and State/UTs government, the 'Adopt A Heritage' Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan scheme was launched in September 2017 'to develop the heritage sites, monuments, ruins and make them tourist-friendly'. The project aims 'to enhance tourism potential and cultural importance of heritage in a planned and phased manner'. "The best part about this initiative is it encourages active participation and partnership of public and private sector companies and individuals. Also, the focus is on sustainable models and social responsibility, rather than revenue generation," explains Mahendra Rajawat, manager of a heritage hotel in Udaipur.

The project identifies 'Monument Mitras' i.e. public/private sector companies or even individuals to preserve Indian heritage. At the onset, ten heritage monuments were adopted: Red Fort (Delhi), Gandikota Fort (Andhra Pradesh), Area surrounding Gangotri Temple (Trail to Gaumukh, Uttarakhand), Mount Stok Kangri Trek (Ladakh), Hazara Rama Temple (Hampi, Karnataka), Qutub Minar (Delhi), Ajanta Caves (Maharashtra), Leh Palace (Leh, Jammu & Kashmir), Jantar Mantar (Delhi) and Surajkund (Haryana).

Urban heritage gets attention

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) scheme on 21 January 2015 to focus on 'holistic development of heritage cities with the aim to preserve and revitalise soul of the heritage city to reflect the city's unique character by encouraging aesthetically appealing, accessible, informative and secured environment'.

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre has outlined 'tourism strategies, planning and management frameworks to protect heritage environment, engaging broad sets of stakeholders and empowering local communities'. All government schemes aim towards a holistic and multi-pronged approach for sustainable tourism and heritage management that is environment-friendly and economically progressive.

Kavitha Subramanian is an amateur documentary film-maker working with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders

The challenges of boosting heritage tourism

*Addressing socio-economic imbalances and environmental mutilations – both wages of mass and uncontrolled/unregulated tourism – is a task that can be achieved by all stakeholders, feels **Raju Korti**.*

Tourism has unfolded in all its multi-splendoured glory at an astonishing pace in the last few decades. By all accounts this growth rate also signifies the pride of place India occupies on the Heritage Tourism map given its vast expanse of sites that deserve a pre-eminent status.

Tourism has always been triggered by man's desire to understand diverse cultural identities that accrue to become a melting pot and a unifying force. Not just in India, Heritage Tourism thrives the world over for its singularly compelling aspect to promote peace and harmony. This cultural exchange has resulted into the mankind realising the necessity to protect its prized historical monuments and rich legacy. After all, no legacy is as rich as the Heritage.

The exponential rise in the number of people seeking to explore this cultural amalgamation has brought into sharp focus the twin and complementary elements of motivational travel and the obligation to preserve Heritage. While the country has witnessed an unprecedented surge in Heritage Tourism even as it strives to protect its cherished sites, the economy has been the winner.

Heritage Tourism is a magnificent manifestation of the country's diverse art forms and the people who practice them. In this diversity is implicit the human urge to learn and draw from other cultures and broadening one's perspective. Despite a number of irritants in this maze of interactive forces, culture and heritage have formed a backbone of crucial resources for tourism development. The World Trade Organization has conceded that 37% of international tourism is culturally-driven and the heartening news is it is estimated to grow at 15% annually.

As one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry, heritage tourism serves as an effective apparatus in generating jobs, income, tax revenues, diversify local economies, and improve the local quality of life. Although there might be this niggling argument that bringing revenue to historic sites, ruins and other such sites



No legacy is as rich as the Heritage

Heritage Tourism also runs the risk of degradation, there is no denying that with the implementation of laws and public awareness, it satisfies the core purpose of enhancing and safeguarding heritage and culture. Apart from shoring the country's foreign exchange reserves, it also has the potential to rejuvenate traditional buildings and craft industries. This economic boost is also aggregated by strengthening local people's self-respect, values and identity, thereby safeguarding aspects of their intangible heritage and enhancing their development potential.

With its copious legacy, India has always been known for its rich heritage and ancient culture. It is therefore not altogether surprising to see Heritage Tourism gallop on the country's sublime past and cultural diversity, making a robust combination that attracts millions each year to its heritage tourist attractions.

Untapped potential

The Government of India, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Culture has gone out of the way to boost Heritage Tourism by coming out with attractive sops in states that are universally acknowledged for attracting tourists. India's rich heritage is amplified in the variety of its shrines, palaces, monuments, and forts that are scattered through its length and breadth.

(continued on page 33...)

The evils of online targeted advertising

*Social media users would have experienced highly personalised advertisements popping up on their screen every time they use the internet. **Poorvi Bose** tells us how target advertising is blatantly invading the privacy of online users, and calls for stricter laws to protect the privacy of online users.*

For any business to sustain, advertisements are a guaranteed way to attract consumers.

All of us have noticed ads, either on television, newspapers, magazines, radio or roadside hoardings. All these are traditional forms of advertising, which are universal. Advertisers aren't aware of their audience. It could be women, men or children, from any part of the country, with varying interests. With the onset of the digital age, businesses are forced to find better ways to make profits. Websites, social media platforms and businesses today display ads catered accurately to an individual, based on information like gender, age, location, likes and dislikes, online history and behaviour. This is called targeted advertising.

Invading the privacy of users

Today all of us use the internet for work, research, online shopping or leisure. When we go on the internet we observe extremely personalised ads popping up. For example, if you have booked tickets through an online service to another city or country, for the next few days or even weeks, you will observe ads of tourist attractions of that place. It could be about hotels, restaurants, tourist or shopping places or even transport within the city there. Or if you shop online one day, you will see ads for similar products for next few days. These are targeted ads based on your online history.

How does this happen? Big tech firms like Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc., collect data of their users and keep track of their online history and

behaviour. This helps them create better predictive products which they later sell to ad tech firms. These firms create ads specific to a set of people and display it to them on their social media feed or websites they visit. The reason behind such targeting is that the more relevant the ad is to an individual, the higher is the probability of them clicking it. Tech firms are making huge profits from selling this users' data. Google made a revenue of \$134 billion in 2019 just from its advertising business. This helps them provide free services like Google services and social media platforms.

But one question arises from all this, "Who gave them the permission to use our information?". This type of data collection is a blatant invasion of a user's online privacy. When we download apps on our phones or sign up for accounts on various social media platforms, we are provided with lengthy pages of terms and conditions. Rarely does a person read it in detail. Adding on to this, there are legal jargons and technical terms included in these pages, which a common person would find hard to understand. Consequently, one clicks on the "I accept" button without understanding what they have consented to. This type of consent is not explicit but is a tacit consent since the person is not fully aware about it.

Ad tech giants like Google, Facebook and others try to get away with it by saying that it is being done to create more personalised products and customising services based on one's needs. But this is at very high cost to the users. There have been numerous instances where this data

collection has not only invaded people's privacy but even lead to discrimination against some communities. In 2016, Facebook was accused of allowing advertisers to show housing ads to only some communities and not to other like 'women who wear hijabs', 'Puerto Rico islanders' and 'foreigners'. YouTube was fined \$170 million for collecting information about children and displaying ads to them via children's videos in 2019. This data was being collected without the consent of their parents or guardians. Another example is that of Google's Street View, a feature available for Google users where one can see a 360-degree view of the place that they have typed in Google Search. One can visit art galleries, walk through roads, walk along a beach or sit by a river with just their phone even though they are miles away from that place. Google had started recording photographs and videos of these places by using a vehicle or a man equipped with a large camera in his backpack. But what they never sought was the consent of people staying in these places. Houses, cars and even people have been photographed and become permanent parts of the internet through this feature, without securing their permission.

One of the biggest internet scandals involving the Cambridge Analytica firm and Facebook finally opened people's eyes to the loose privacy policies of many social media platforms and tech firms. A type of targeted ad that used behaviour modification techniques was displayed to voters of USA before the general elections of 2016. By understanding a person's online identity

and personality, researchers can create ads that might help change their behaviour which would in turn result in a change in their votes. It is alleged that these types of ads were even used in India for state elections in Bihar.

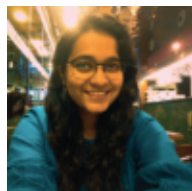
A law to protect your privacy

Policy makers and researchers all over the world have now realized the power these few tech giants hold over nearly the entire population. The known uses of this data collection are targeted advertisements, personalised products and services. But these ads also have the

power to change people's behaviour. Since it has entered politics and our daily lives, countries have begun to make laws to protect their citizens' online privacy. The European Union has come up with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which has been one of the most successful laws in this field. States of the US are creating laws catering to their states respectively.

India has recently introduced The Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 in the Lok Sabha. This is a modified version of the Personal Data Protection Bill 2018 created by the Justice B.N Srikrishna Committee.

The Bill details the rights of the authorities and the citizens and even specifies the penalties upon breaking the laws. Stricter laws are needed to keep in check with evolving technologies and still protect our online privacy.



Poorvi Bose is an Electronics Engineer and a Teach for India fellow, Poorvi Bose is presently pursuing her Master's in Public Policy for NLSIU Bangalore.

The challenges of boosting heritage tourism

(continued from page 31...)

There is a twist in this tale, however. For all the exemplary work that has gone into the making of Heritage Tourism a part of people's consciousness, the country still has a considerable untapped potential. It is perplexing that despite the country's bounteous heritage, diversity of cultures, exotic cuisines and long annals of civilization, it still has a comparatively smaller number of world tourists and tourism revenue.

It is not as if the government is not seized of this state of affairs. It did come up with a policy decision that enabled the funding of domestic travelers and to an extent showed its intent in promoting Heritage and Cultural Tourism. That, however, was not enough. A huge thrust will be required to convert this exercise into one that will yield the big dollars. What needs to be understood is that Heritage Tourism cannot be viewed in isolation. Other ancillary segments like transportation, infrastructure, hotels and hospitality also have a contributing role to play in hiking the revenue. A corresponding and simultaneous stimulus is called for at the same time. Put simply, the entire picture needs to be looked at holistically in the run up to the challenges posed in boosting tourism revenues.

The government's pitch is queered by socio-economic imbalances and environmental mutilations – both wages of mass and uncontrolled/unregulated tourism. It is actually not about the growing number of tourists per se but the lack of character in responding to the growing threats to exceptionally treasured sites. On the flip side, unbridled tourism industrialization also acts as a detriment to fragile areas that call for urgent protection.

The situation cannot be underscored more by the fact that an overwhelming 60% of the global eco-systems,

thousands of animal species and plants classified as endangered by human indiscretion are adversely affected because of human indiscretion and indiscipline. It becomes pivotally important to ensure that while Heritage Tourism multiplies in terms of the number of travelers, there are sensible tourism practices to deal with such drifts.

Striking the right balance

Harsh as it may sound, this calls for reducing the tourist footprint in an environment that has already suffered at the hands of thoughtless people. It should be no rocket science that this could have disastrous consequences for both Heritage Tourism and their protagonists. The challenge lies in striking a better balance between Heritage Tourism development and preservation of Heritage sites/structures. One way of tackling at this disconcerting scenario would be territorial tourism management. Since the fact remains at the end of the day that the natural heritage as well as cultural heritage of a site is the prime attraction, tourism players should not only exercise caution and discretion, they should also be strict when it comes to regulation and compliance.

This should not only include museums and historical monuments but also "living heritage" or "intangible cultural heritage". Promoting this heritage will automatically ensure the cultural diversity and promote inter-cultural dialogue. All stakeholders should rise to the occasion in bringing about this much-needed transformation.



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.

Students left in a limbo

In the times of pandemic, Centre and States fight a prestige issue while adamant UGC is bent on holding university examinations, writes Masooma Sakriwala.

Even as the nation grapples with a raging pandemic, the student community seems to have been caught in the unseemly sparring between Centre and State. Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal (all non-BJP states) had called off university examinations including those for the final year as online examinations did not seem feasible. The University Grants Commission (UGC), however, dropped a bombshell, announcing them as mandatory for final year when a month before, it had expressed strong reservations about holding the exams.

The plight and angst of the students can be understood. Even their parents, teachers and non-teaching staff are left perplexed with this uncertainty. Conducting exams for students hailing from the affected states would be patently unfair. Government's flip flop has put the students under stress and has left them restive.

Students and their career taken for granted?

Following revised UGC guidelines, the Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry issued a standard operating procedure (SOP) for exams. It outlines how examinations can be conducted ensuring social distancing between students, sanitization, distribution of thermal scanners, sanitizers, gloves and face masks and their proper disposal by the colleges/centres.

Even assuming that the situation improves by end September, how will the government ensure proper distance in between seats when there is inadequate space at most examination centers? There are a large number of outstation students who depend on public transport like local and express trains, buses to reach their respective examination centres. This poses a big health risk. If any student gets infected,

will the government take responsibility and provide for their healthcare when the rising number of corona patients are struggling to get a hospital bed?

The news of the revised guidelines by the UGC has put them in a quandary and has needlessly compounded their burden. The students are losing faith, as it were, in the education system. This will be another nail in that coffin.

In case offline mode of examinations does not make headway and the UGC opts for online examinations, wouldn't it be unfair on students who are hamstrung for want of resources like laptops, smart phones and even internet facilities? Have the authorities thought of these crucial factors?

We live in a country where education is unaffordable for many and therefore technology still a delusion. There is a wide disparity between the have and have-nots, which has only increased during the pandemic. In times, where the poor are already battling with job loss, poverty, and a host of other problems, should the government make it more difficult for the students and their families?

If the government wants to conduct online examination anyway, why are the final year students being made to wait until September? Even the top universities of the world have considered it wise to skip the examinations, and it would be good for UGC and HRD Ministry to take a leaf out of their book. The Centre should prioritise the health and lives of students instead

of making examinations a prestige issue with the state governments. Students should not become pawns in the ego battles between the Centre and state.

Health Vs Education

It cannot be overemphasised that health and education need to be given equal priority. Maharashtra State Education Minister, Uday Samant had written to Indian HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal stating that conducting exams in Maharashtra did not seem possible given the serious conditions in the State. It is baffling that the UGC felt compelled to issue a diktat that is fraught with logistical issues. It needs to be noted that the UGC guidelines are advisory in nature and not mandatory. Then how come these guidelines are enforced on the states which had cancelled the examinations?

Students had already started preparing for their future endeavours like applying for internships or jobs to support their families who are going through financial instability due to the lockdown. Some of them even started with online classes for further studies. The news of the revised guidelines by the UGC has put them in a quandary and has needlessly compounded their burden. The students are losing faith, as it were, in the education system. This will be another nail in that coffin.



Masooma Sakriwala is a student of English Literature who is extremely passionate about reading and an ardent writer. She is a non-conformist and she questions and if needed, even challenges various societal norms. Currently, she is a spoken word artist and she believes that this world needs more poets than politicians.

The taming of the Dragon has begun

*The Government of India can adopt the twin strategy of imposing 10% special import duty on all Chinese products/services and initiating a "Be Indian, Buy Indian" campaign to arouse mass sentiment, says **Umesh Asaikar**.*

In a clearly discernible, retaliatory move, the Government of India early July 2020 banned 59 Chinese apps and removed Chinese bidders/ contractors from all the surface transport projects. This move needs to be lauded wholeheartedly.

It is important for Indian citizen to understand that using a Chinese product or service is tantamount to denying fair opportunity to an Indian enterprise/competitor. It also has an adverse effect on the economy in terms of foreign exchange reserves, under-utilization of capacities and under-employment among others.

To say that the Chinese product is 5 to 10% cheaper than its Indian equivalent is a specious argument. There is no overlooking that the quality and life of these products are also compromised. In a cost-quality nation, Indian producers are faced with a piquant situation. Despite being cost-conscious, they also realise it is difficult to be commercially viable while competing with China with respect to prices. The plant capacity of the Chinese manufacturing units is 5 to 10 times that of the Indian manufacturers. The Chinese are also content with profit margins as low as 2 to 5 %.

Be Indian, Buy Indian

The government can adopt a two-pronged strategy on this. It can impose up to 10% special import duty on all Chinese products and services. This can be complemented with a sustained "Be Indian, Buy Indian" campaign to whip up mass sentiment. Over a period of time, this will encourage Indians to buy Indian products

and services. The government has another strong measure to marginalise the Chinese. It can encourage Indian traders to import from Vietnam, Taiwan and Indonesia in case of shortages. These countries offer products at the same price level as the Chinese.

A check-list for the Govt.

1. Impose up to 10% special import duty on all Chinese products & services.
2. Identify services where Chinese companies/ individuals have equity stake and give promoters six-month time to reduce their stake to zero by arranging Indian citizens /body corporates to buy the stake in Indian rupees. Allow the Chinese promoters to take the money out by converting into US dollars at prevailing Rupee to Dollar conversion rate.
3. Devalue Indian currency by up to 10% (pt no. 1) to make our exports more profitable and imports more extensive.
4. Identify specific products for new capacities/capacity expansion as alternative to Chinese products and encourage MSMEs to invest. Let banks offer loans for such investments at interest rates at least 1% point lower than the prevailing interest rate.
5. Give income tax exemption on profits made out of Chinese import substitution based investments in manufacturing capacities.
6. Actively engage with Trade Commissions of Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam and Indonesia to lead Indian traders into importing from these countries.

Boosting domestic manufacturing

The government must introduce a comprehensive promotion and protection package to boost domestic manufacturing of electronic products, pharmaceutical intermediates & active ingredients so that India does not have to depend on China. We are independent of China in other sectors except for the 5 to 10% cost disadvantage which can be countered by imposition of special imports duty up to 10% on Chinese imports as suggested above.

Role of media

Media, especially the social media can play a significant role in bringing about this mindset change. These platforms can make people aware about part-owned Chinese companies like Zomato, Ola, Oyo Flipkart, MakeMyTrip so Indians learn to use non-Chinese competitors like Uber, Reliance Fresh, Indian hotels, etc that offer scope for hard bargain. It's time we take China head-on on commercial imports and steer clear from an 'unmake India' situation that threatens to emerge later if not sooner. The taming of the dragon has begun well. It should be a stepping stone for "Make in India."



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 now focuses on social work, business consultancy and corporate coaching.

BEJAN JEHANGIR DARUWALA

The affable astrologer (1931 - 1920)

Bejan Jehangir Daruwalla was a world-renowned astrologer and prophet was revered by many. Born into an Ahmedabadi Parsi family, he became a professor of English. His passion for reading, made him study astrology. He later moved to Mumbai.

Exuberant, gregarious, affable, imbibed with a fantastic sense of humour and not averse to using invectives, his jolly nature and easy accessibility won all hearts. His life mantra being, Live, love and be happy, his voice boomed *Shree Ganeshaya Namah!* on the phone. Five feet tall and weighing 200 pounds, there was nothing athletic about Bejan. But his girth matched his mirth. He would not lose any opportunity to talk about his days as Ahmedabad's 100-metre sprint champion and of when he played cricket and hockey for the varsity and his interests in poetry and literature.

Though a practicing Zoroastrian, he was a self-professed Ganesha devotee. An astrology columnist for many newspapers, a generation was hooked to his *Ganesha Says* column. A host on various television channel shows, his psychic reading won him accolades and awards throughout the world. In fact, he is acknowledged as one of the 100 great astrologers in the last 1000 years in *The Millennium Book of Prophecy*, published by Harper Collins, U.S.A

As the common man's astrologer, he made the subject so relatable and accessible that it became popular, without him being a people-pleaser. He made so-called futuristic predictions, and naturally gifted with a spectacular intuitive prowess, he listened to and relied on his inner voice, and sought Ganesha's blessings to foresee and predict.

He used to predict on political developments, cricket, film industry and film stars, through various techniques/ divination practices which included a combination of the principles of Vedic Hindu and Western astrology, I-Ching, Tarot card reading, Numerology, the Kabbalah, Hastha Rekha Shastra and even Palmistry to make accurate predictions, many swore by. He also often predicted stock market fluctuations.

Among forecasts, he is credited with the victories of several Indian Prime Ministers like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Morarji Desai and Narendra Modi. He even apparently predicted the assassination of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, Sanjay Gandhi's plane accident and the Bhopal gas tragedy, the Gujarat earthquake, etc. A few days before his passing, he had predicted India, despite its poverty and joblessness, would rise like a phoenix and emerge as a superpower.

On astrology, Daruwalla emphasised that intuition is the key. He summed up his general approach and technique of making predictions. *First of all, if the person is there I look at him and get vibrations. Secondly, the time the person comes is important. Thirdly, what type of day is it? Good, bad or indifferent? Fourth, lines on the palm. Fifth, the Indian horoscope and lastly, the Western horoscope. So all this goes into a computer called the brain. And after that I look at Ganesha and make a prediction.* Bejan had his detractors too. If being forthright was an important part of Daruwalla's legacy, some aspects of his legacy were uncomfortable. His critics argued that one needed to differentiate between astrology, which is a pseudo-science, and astrophysics. His legacy included a celebration of the irrational. Even under basic scientific scrutiny, astrology does not hold any scientific merit.

Bejan died nearing 90 years. His family denied the rumours that he was Corona positive, but said he had pneumonia and lung infections and was on ventilator support. Death, even after a materially rewarding life, is a tragedy. He had always wished to be given a grand farewell. Unfortunately, the lockdown denied him that. He is survived by two sons, Nastur(also an astrologer) and Fardun, and a daughter Nazeen.

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



PYARELAL WADALI

Sufi music legend (1943 - 2018)

Ustad Pyarelal Wadali was the younger of the Wadali Brothers/Bandhu of Sufi singers from Amritsar, Punjab, known as India's foremost exponents of Punjabi Sufiana *qalam*. The musical duo, 81-year-old Puranchand and 75-year-old Pyarelal, had a diverse repertoire. The fifth generation of singers and musicians, the brothers lived in their ancestral house in *Guru Ki Wadali* teaching music free to those who promised to preserve it. They led a very simple life devoted to divinity. Prior to becoming Sufi singers, Puranchand was a regular in an *akhara* (wrestling ring) for 30 years, and Pyarelal contributed to the meagre family income by playing the role of Krishna in the village *RaasLeela* for more than 20 years, travelling to villages.

On their father, Thakur Das's insistence, Puranchand studied music from celebrated masters such as Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan of the Patiala *gharana*, and Pandit Durga Das. Pyarelal was trained by his elder brother, who he considered his guru and mentor till his death. In 1975, the brothers went to Jalandhar to give their first musical performance outside their village at the Harballabh Sangeet Sammelan but were not allowed to sing because their appearance did not pass muster. Disappointed, they decided to make a musical offering at the Harballabh Temple, where an executive of All India Radio, Jalandhar, spotted them and recorded their first song.

They began performing at the temple, starting off as *bhajan* singers but later ventured into the Sufi genre with distinction, carrying on the legacy of famous saint poets such as Baba Bulle Shah, Sarabjit Sinha, Kabir, Amir Khusro and Surdas for years. They also sang in the *gurbani*, *kaafian*, *ghazal* and *bhajan* genres. Few brother singer duos displayed their kind of chemistry, with creative differences non-existent. Always on the same page, they were careful to not exchange glances in each other's direction while performing, as they could sense each other in their hearts.

Fondly called Chite Ustad, his singing complimented his brother's and in tandem they gave some memorable and soulful performances, incorporating sufi poetry and

philosophy. They abstained from Bollywood music for decades feeling it was a limiting factor for untamed lion hearts like them. But their range and proficiency drew the likes of director Chandraprakash Dwivedi who convinced them to experiment with Hindi cinema.

In 2003, Dwivedi suggested to composer Uttam Singh to try out the Wadali brothers for his magnum opus *Pinjar*. In their Bollywood debut, they rendered music director and writer Gulzar's soulful lyrics in their unique style and then went on to sing in four other movies including *Tanu Weds Manu*, *Dhoop*, *Mausam* and *Ik Tu Hi Tu Hi*.

Soon they earned fame both in regional and Bollywood cinema and gave several memorable compositions. They considered themselves as a medium to pass on the preaching of great Sufi saints.



From traditional instruments, stressing on aalap and taans, they soon experimented with instruments like a drum kit, keyboard and guitar in the orchestra, to make the sounds unique, adding western sounds only to help the youth experience its power. Apart from their love for food and drink, and performing on stage, they also judged TV reality shows. They preferred to stay away from the commercial rat-race, despite record companies chasing them, and newcomers earning lakhs of rupees by imitating their music. In 2005, Puranchand was honoured with Padma Shri. The brothers also received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award Tulsi Award, Punjab Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and Life Time Achievement Award 2015 in PTC awards.

To Pyarelal, his music was akin to prayer. In an electronic age of rap music no one could harm Sufi and folk music. Its soulful music, was like truth that can never die. Pyarelal, died aged 75 due to cardiac arrest in Amritsar. He is survived by wife Surjit Kaur, two sons and three daughters. One simply cannot imagine the existence of the Wadali Brothers without Pyarelalji.

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

LT. COL ELAMBULASSERY KALANKKAL NIRANJAN (SC)

The Pathankot hero (1981 - 2015)

Niranjan was born on 2 May 1981 in Palghat District of Kerala. His ancestors had originally belonged to village Elambulassery. His father, E K Sivarajan, was employed in Bharat Electronics Ltd., at Bangalore where Niranjana grew up along with his two brothers and a sister. He lost his mother at a young age. After completing his engineering from Sir MVIT College, Bangalore he joined the Academy at Chennai in September 2003. He was commissioned into Engineers on 17 September 2004. He was posted to 10 Engineers Regiment at Tezpur in Assam. He was later deputed to the NSG(National Security Guard) and was placed in the Bomb Disposal Squad. He carried out this risky task willingly and with confidence.

He visited his ancestral home regularly and got married in the village in 2013. He had visited home on the occasion of Onam in September 2015 and had promised to join the 87th birthday celebrations of his grandmother in November. But he missed that date, for his final return two months later.

Six armed terrorists dressed in Indian Army uniforms entered the high security area of Pathankot Air Force base on the morning of 1 January 2016. They had probably scaled the high wire perimeter wall by looping across with the help of a nylon rope. One of the militants had climbed the eucalyptus tree along the fence and landed on the wall. The floodlights were not working or the angle of the flood lights may have been changed by an accomplice at the base. The intruders were able to move 400 metres into the base but were prevented from entering the area housing the high value assets. They were stopped from the IAF aircraft about 700 metres away by Garud commandos. According to an intercepted message, the attackers were aiming to destroy aircraft and helicopters of the Air Force. The militants were armed with assault weapons, grenades and 50kgs of ammunition.

On 2 January, four terrorists and two security personnel were killed in the encounter. Four more security personnel succumbed to gunshot injuries. Subedar Fateh Singh of Dogra Regiment, Commonwealth Shooting Medal-

list, then serving with the Defence Security Corps was amongst those killed. Following the attack Pathankot-Jammu highway was sealed off and Hindon Air Base put on high alert. The Western Air Command issued orders for shoot at sight to all its bases. The gun fight continued till neutralization of the attackers was reported on 5 January. The attackers were in constant touch with the handlers in Pakistan.

The attackers had left behind considerable ammunition and explosives and Niranjana Kumar was carrying out clearing operations. As per standard procedure, he examined the body of one militant who was killed and found it to be devoid of any explosives. His colleagues dragged the body of the second terrorist closer to Niranjana and he noticed that he had a hidden chest belt loaded with explosives. Niranjana shouted at his colleagues to take cover. At the same time, he rolled over the dead attacker and tried to lift his body to throw away. The explosives got triggered and blew off. Niranjana was not wearing any protective gear at the time of the operation and was fatally wounded. Earlier, the brave commando when talking to his father had told him that he was in the midst of an operation and would call him later. The father was in a state of shock when he heard the news of Niranjana's death. R C Tayal, Director, General National Security Guard observed, "Niranjana was a brave soldier. His professionalism and dedication to work will inspire everyone in NSG for many years to come. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said "The nation salutes him."

Niranjana was brave and fearless in devotion to task. He was awarded Shaurya Chakra for his work in face of danger and risk. His body was airlifted to the Air Force Command Hospital and carried by NSG commandos and officers of Madras Engineers. He is survived by his wife and 18-month old daughter.

- Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)





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