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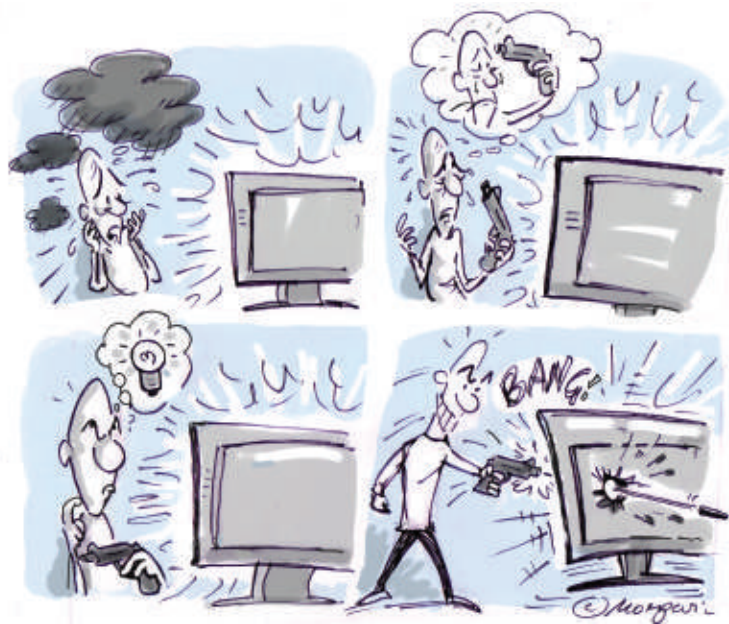
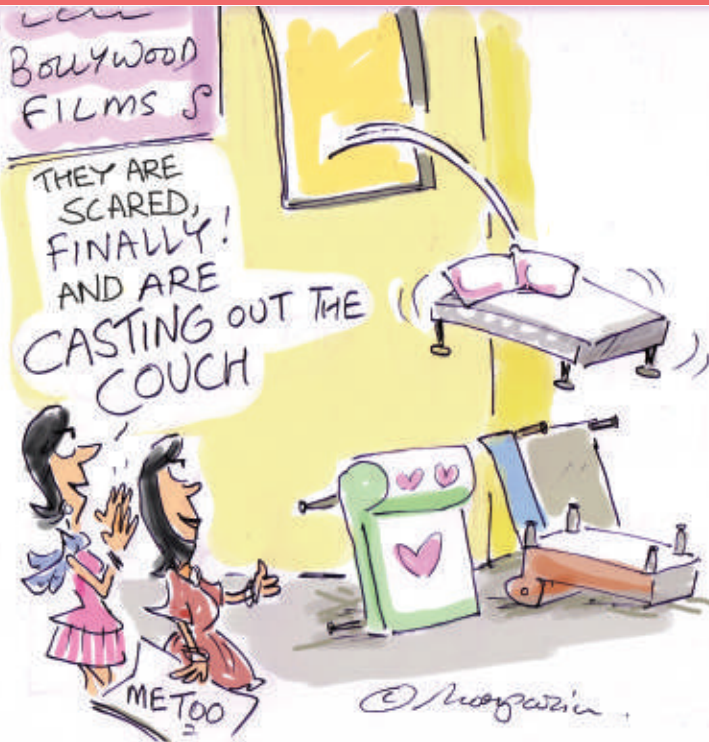
Know India Better

Uphill and down dale in

Igatpuri

Face to Face

Krishnakumar Subramaniam

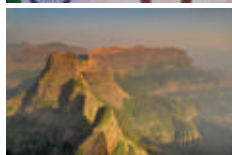


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India all set to get 'Atmanirbhar'!

*As health becomes a priority today, Indians are adopting healthier lifestyles. The health challenges are immense but not unsurmountable as the country braces itself to meet them with panache and grit in the years ahead, says **Manu Shrivastava**.*



unique challenges and innumerable new opportunities too to boot. In the decade gone by, India has fared much better in the various markers of development due to economic growth and simultaneous reduction in poverty.

In the public health sphere, World Bank data reveals, in the period from 2000 to 2015, 'infant mortality in India fell from 66 to 38 per 1,000 live births; life expectancy at birth increased from 63 to 68 years; and maternal mortality ratio fell from 374 to 174 per 100,000 live births.' The health sector in India has made significant improvements in the last few decades. Life expectancy has crossed 67 years and the rate of disease incidence too has been declining. Several dreaded

The Indian government launched the Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana with an allocation of ₹65,560.99 crore to proactively identify gaps in dealing with challenges posed by Covid-19-like pandemics, epidemics and disasters in future. The Yojana, said Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, will focus on pandemic management through investments in research, healthcare and public health infrastructure. He announced this on the first day of the Monsoon Session of the Lok Sabha on 14 September 2020.

Following the onset of Covid-19, the world is much more dynamic and unpredictable. India, the second-most populated and home to nearly a fifth of the world's population has been experiencing rapid changes in her socio-economic segments.

It's imperative that all sections of the society stay healthy and policies and laws focus on public health issues to benefit all segments of the society. It is a given that India won't be able to realise its true growth potential if its youth – about 65 crore below the age of 25 – is unable to contribute adequately and participate productively in nation building.

The challenges are immense but not unsurmountable as India braces to meet them with panache and grit in the years ahead.

India's public health issues

In the public health space, India faces several

diseases such as polio, guinea worm disease, tetanus, etc., have been successfully eradicated.

Certain diseases continue to pose challenges in India and remain major public health problems. These include communicable diseases; endemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria; and vector-borne diseases such as dengue and acute encephalitis syndrome. Sadly, with the thrust restricted to COVID-19 related issues, most of these diseases have not been addressed in the last six months leading to a spike in numbers.

Lifestyle-related diseases need to be checked

India, however, is bracing for a different public health crisis today. Even amidst the entire COVID-19 pandemic, ironically it's the non-communicable diseases that are the leading cause of death in the country --- 60 per cent of deaths in India. Of these, heart diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic pulmonary diseases make up for nearly 80 per cent of the deaths.

All these four major causes of death due to non-communicable diseases share common lifestyle-related health risk factors: tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity. In the years to come India, just like the rest of the developing and developed countries will have to tackle these major national health security threats.

Another disease that's crippling the nation is obesity. Sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy food habits, lack of physical activity are the major cause of obesity. Latest studies have revealed 'the prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased rapidly in recent decades in India'. There is a direct correlation between obesity and many non-communicable diseases like coronary heart diseases, diabetes, etc.

Obesity is an urban phenomenon. Given, more than 31 per cent of the country's 1.3 billion population resides in cities, time has come for a national health policy to curb the increase in such non-communicable diseases.

India's COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed how the world looks at health and well-being. The deadly coronavirus outbreak has triggered a renewed health consciousness and awareness. India is leading the way in terms of use of alternative systems of medicines, yoga and meditation to improve overall health.

India is also faring much better than most countries, including many western nations. Till mid-September 2020, India stood at 61st position and reported 58.94 deaths per million. Compare this with Germany's 112.81 deaths per million, Russia's 128.16 deaths per million, Canada's 248.79 deaths per million, France's 459.19 deaths per million, Italy's 589.26 deaths per million, USA's 591.43 per million and the UK's 626.09 deaths per million.

India has managed to keep COVID-related recovery rates higher and the fatality rates lower than most countries in the world. Still, the COVID-19 crisis has exposed Indians to the vulnerability and fragility of the human body. Preventive healthcare has taken precedence and Indians are now opting for healthier lifestyles.

Pandemic exposed malpractices

The COVID-19 crisis also exposed certain malpractices in the healthcare industry. Even as the nation celebrated the frontline medical workers i.e. the doctors who were risking their lives to protect the country, there were far many medical practitioners who chose to shut shop and stay back at home instead.

For the entire duration of the lockdown, many doctors shut down their clinics and stayed at home, depriving patients of medical care and evading their primary duty as a doctor. This, despite the State constantly cajoling them to attend to the crisis, even paying them well. Many senior citizens, those with serious illnesses and with emergency needs were left unattended and in need of medical attention. Not only that, at a time when the country was facing a shortage of face masks and hand sanitisers, many chemists and pharmacies resorted to selling these essential items at hiked prices taking advantage of the situation. The government had to issue notifications to cap the prices even crack down on the offenders.

Similarly, there were many pathology labs and diagnostic centres that remained shut during the lockdown. Diagnostics is an essential part of healthcare and plays a crucial role in the management of diseases, even critical ones. Depriving the patient of access to diagnostics especially at such trying times is nothing short of medical negligence.

Lessons learnt from COVID-19 outbreak

"In our country about 92 per cent of the cases are reported to be having mild disease. In only about 5.8 per cent of cases oxygen therapy is required, and the disease may be severe enough to require intensive care in only 1.7 per cent cases," stated Health Minister Harsh Vardhan. The going for India doesn't seem to be as bad as has been for the rest of the world. It was at the very onset of the COVID-19 outbreak that India went into an immediate and total lockdown. The essential service providers were stepping out to ensure life for the remaining population was not disrupted and supply of essential items and services continued unabated.

At the same time, healthcare providers, civic health workers, government health officials, scientists and researchers worked endlessly to tend to COVID-affected patients. The most important lesson learnt being: In the absence of a vaccine and to prevent one from unknown 'deadly' infections in the future, the best remedy remained a strong immune system.

"I keep telling my patients that prevention is the best cure when it comes to diseases like COVID-19. It's so difficult to understand this virus and the symptoms keep changing. We may get a vaccine sooner than later but the fear of another outbreak looms large and the best defence is that as a nation we work towards improving individual health and immunity," says Mumbai-based general physician Dr. Sneha Shetty.

During the lockdown, many Indians quickly resorted to home remedies and the good ol' grandmother's *kadha* (decoction) to boost their immunity. "It was extremely scary to see the news every day. Cases of infections were increasing like wildfire and in some countries, people were dropping dead as if it were the apocalypse. It was then I started preparing the herbal decoction with tulsi, turmeric, cinnamon, pepper and dry ginger for my family to strengthen their immunity," says Bengaluru-based homemaker Meenakshi Moudgil.

India has learnt her lessons and a new India is making significant changes in healthcare. Indians are changing their lifestyle and adopting healthy practices such as more physical activity, healthy eating, meditation, pranayama, and yoga. It's like a home-coming of sorts for them all.



Manu Shrivastava is a media legal researcher with DraftCraft International, and co-convener of 'The Woman Survivor' initiative that documents abuse of women and children within families.

Plundering amidst the pandemic

With the panic thrown up by the Covid situation spinning out of control, hospitals are make a killing by fleecing helpless patients and with no respite in sight, says
Jehangir B. Gai.



The logistics of getting ambulances and other facilities were chaotic, not to speak of the patients being exploited with over-charging.

Hospitals were unable to cope with the pandemic what with no proper line of treatment. The number of patients swelled with each day with severe shortage of beds. If the situation was bad with the government quarantine centres, private hospitals made a killing. The poor stood no chance while those being treated at private hospitals were bled white by fleecing.

There are dark clouds to the proverbial silver lining in this marauding pandemic. While on the one hand doctors are risking their necks out treating the patients, some hospitals are making a fast buck with their daylight loot.

The lockdown following the outbreak led to the expected panic with people stocking essentials and throwing all social distancing norms to the winds. Apparently, ensuring adequate provisions over-rode the risk factor compounded by a thoughtlessly imposed curfew.

Giving just two hours to a cluttered slum area to purchase their essentials was an ill-advised move that led to overcrowding and needless panic. It was inviting disaster and rapid spread of the infection. There were not enough face masks, sanitizers and PPE kits and their prices shot through the roof. With quantity, quality of these equipment also suffered.

The entry of substandard equipment came with their attendant risks as people complained about rashes. The PPE kits were found to be defective; making doctors themselves vulnerable. Instead of arresting the spread, it accelerated it.

The conditions at the quarantine centres were pathetic. People shied away from getting tested despite being sick. Precious time was lost before treatment was offered, leading to more patients requiring intensive care.

The flourishing healthcare segment

While the lockdown resulted in an economic downturn with many losing means of livelihood, the healthcare segment flourished at the cost of hapless patients. The unholy nexus between agencies of healthcare caused ruthless profiteering. In the guise of safety precautions, some hospitals started looting patients. A pancreatic cancer patient on a treatment of chemotherapy was made to undergo three Covid tests in four weeks when she had no symptoms. Despite testing negative, the hospital did not start treatment on the pretext that it was necessary to keep a high-risk vulnerable patient in hospital to rule out erroneous results. The patient was shifted from the holding ward to the ICU, merely to jack up the bill. All through this the patient remained untreated, leading to anxiety and stress. The patient fell into depression with no family member allowed to meet her. The family sought a discharge but the hospital was reluctant. It was only when the family threatened the hospital with adverse media publicity and a consumer case that the hospital agreed to discharge but with the remark "against medical advice". The bill for 48 hours hospitalisation and that too without treatment came to ₹99,000!

Some hospitals tied up with diagnostic centres in a quid pro quo. Patients were shown Covid +ve though they were not. It was difficult to know whether the person wearing the PPE kit was actually a doctor. In one case, a patient was prescribed multi-vitamins when the doctor had

not even visited the hospital. To add insult to the injury, the patient was handed a hefty bill that he paid through his nose.

There were also instances of patients visiting the hospital for routine check-ups or follow-ups and declared dead within a couple of days. Relatives were not allowed to even see their dead with the body totally packed and sealed on the premise that it could infect others. Covid infection does not spread with dead bodies as they do not breathe or release particulate matter. The government itself filed an affidavit in the High Court stating there cannot be transmission via dead bodies. The packing of the bodies led to the reasonable speculation that there could be illegal organ transplant trafficking. Organ transplant trafficking is not new but the Covid situation was tailor-made for it.

With wearing and taking off a PPE kit taking considerable time and doctors forced to sweat it out for several hours at stretch, hospitals capitalised by billing every patient for the cost of the PPE kit rather than dividing its costs between the patients. As for medicines, the kin of the patients had to run from pillar to post to procure them. The medicines were not available with most chemists and attempts to reach out to the distributors met with a blank. There were cases when medicines were sold in black through middlemen.

Seven months into the lockdown, it is still difficult for patients suffering from other ailments to get consultation or treatment at a hospital. Doctors and small nursing homes are being shabbily treated and threatened by government officials. While beds are reserved for police and municipal workers – fair enough -- there is no such facility for doctors and nursing staff who work in stressful conditions. It was little surprise that many doctors stopped going to clinics and switched over to telephonic consultation. They charged higher fees since studying medical reports online is more tedious and time consuming.

A reality check will show that the death rate due to Covid is not as high as it is due to dengue and tuberculosis. The focus on Covid has led to doctors ignoring the rise in dengue and TB cases. Spreading fear and panic during a pandemic does not help. Good governance is what is required to restore normalcy. People who are ill will then voluntarily get themselves tested and opt for home quarantine, allowing economy to recover gradually.



Jehangir B. Gai is a consumer activist and has won the Govt. of India's National Youth Award for Consumer Protection. He can be reached at jehangir.gai.columnist@outlook.in.

WHO AM I?



Pathology labs need to be regulated

*The last decade has seen the mushrooming of diagnostic centres all over India. Many small and big pathology labs came under the scanner during the pandemic for indulging in malpractices. Considering the critical role they play in preventive healthcare, this segment needs to be regulated soon, writes **Jyothi Menon**.*



While all of India rooted for the COVID Warriors, the nation saluted frontline health workers i.e., the doctors and nurses treating and caring for the patients infected with the novel Coronavirus. Yet, there were those who risked their lives and continue to do so even now while remaining unnoticed: Like the pathology lab personnel for example, who have been on their toes since the beginning of the viral outbreak, running COVID tests tirelessly and in high risk environment.

Sadly, the laboratories for which they work have been facing a lot of flak for a range of malpractices, particularly during these times. There have been several instances of labs indulging in profiteering practices, taking undue advantage of the situation, furnishing fake reports or giving erroneous reports to patients.

All of this while their 'crucial' role in identifying COVID-positive patients, COVID hotspots and in treatment and management of the disease is expected to help civic health officials immensely in charting out the COVID strategies across India.

In India, pathology is a booming industry and a multi-billion dollar segment of the even bigger healthcare industry. Diagnostics play a very important role in health management in India. Clinical lab tests and profiles are used for early detection, prediction, diagnostic screening, monitoring and confirmation of diseases.

Medical practitioners rely heavily on diagnostic reports and according to some estimates 70 per cent of medical decisions today are based on these reports. Recent trends are witnessing big corporate entities, industrial groups and conglomerates entering the pathology/diagnostics segment - a fast growing sector with tremendous future potential.

Misdiagnosis needs to be 'checked'

Sadly, diagnosis which is the foremost step of treatment can often go wrong too. Misdiagnosis is a highly common occurrence in the diagnostics segment. There have been several instances where wrong reports have led to incorrect treatment causing serious health trouble and suffering to the patient. "My brother was misdiagnosed for chronic myelogenous leukaemia (CML) as acute lymphoid leukaemia... he could have lost his life if the doctors weren't alert and quick to observe his changing condition and change the line of treatment," says Delhi-based restaurateur Rakesh Sharma.

Fake lab reports have led to millions of erroneous medical cases in the country. According to a Harvard study, over '5.2 million medical error cases have been accounted for in India' annually – caused primarily due to 'lack of skills' and 'lack of proper training' of the lab personnel. They contribute significantly to the high number of misdiagnosis and improper treatment meted out to the unassuming patients in India.

"This situation must be addressed with urgency. For a helpless patient and his family, this is a life and death

situation. There should be more accountability and a penalising procedure in place,” feels Rakesh.

Fake path labs playing with people's lives

There have been numerous cases in the past where fake pathology labs were found operational in plain sight. In 2018, Delhi Police busted a fake pathology lab run by a 'courier boy' and his brother. They had managed to furnish 30,000 fake lab reports including tests for 'haematology, immunology, hepatitis profile, cytopathology, urine examination and thyroid hormone assay'.

In 2019, a pathology lab owner in Vadodara and his three accomplices were arrested for duping gullible patients with fake reports. The arrest exposed a 'nexus' of doctors and the lab where the fake lab reports would show the patients falsely positive for certain diseases.

Path labs exploiting the COVID-19 panic

In May 2020, the Gautam Budh Nagar district health department issued notices to six private pathology laboratories in the Delhi-NCR area for falsely declaring patients COVID-positive.

In June 2020, a civil surgeon in Amritsar sought action against private labs that were giving false COVID-positive reports. Many such patients were later found negative by tests conducted in government diagnostic labs.

In Kolkata, three pathologists were arrested in August 2020 for preparing fake COVID reports, duping patients. They charged premium from the patients for the tests. A pathologist was arrested by the East Jadavpur police for faking to be a hospital personnel authorised to conduct COVID tests at home.

With the onset of the pandemic, many such instances of path labs and doctors duping patients by charging excessive amounts for COVID tests came to light.

Understanding the industry segment

In India, the diagnostic sector is uneven and a heterogeneous mix comprising standalone diagnostic centres (45 - 50 per cent) and organised labs (about 35 per cent). The rest are primarily hospital-based diagnostic centres and pathology labs that mostly provide both anatomic (surgical pathology, cytopathology, autopsy) and clinical (laboratory medicine) pathology services. Most pathology labs now have automated equipment and advanced computer technology for accurate results, timely, high quality and affordable services.

The sector is 'highly fragmented' and unorganised. Traditionally, the diagnostic industry had been dominated by small, unorganised stakeholders. It's only recently that bigger groups have begun gaining a stronghold by acquiring local labs. Such acquisitions of smaller labs by bigger diagnostic chains are gradually morphing the market,

changing trends towards a more 'organised' segment and increasing the competition.

In December 2019, the biotech subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), Reliance Life Sciences (RLS) announced its plans to start pathology labs across India through partnerships with local entrepreneurs. Another big group, Carlyle-backed Metropolis Healthcare Ltd., announced the acquisition of four pathology laboratories in Surat for a consideration of ₹18 crore. The pathology segment is hugely lucrative in India and bigger groups are now eyeing local entities to enter this business.

According to a report by the world's largest market research store, Research and Markets, the meaty pathology and diagnostics segment of the healthcare industry is expected to get more organised and witness 'consolidation with several small and independent laboratory players becoming franchisees for the larger players'.

Industry growth a welcome trend

Diagnostics is a staggering nine billion dollar industry in India and growing at a fast pace. "India is the second most populous country in the world and also a hub for medical tourism. So, the growth of the diagnostics segment is only going to accelerate," says Mumbai-based pathology lab owner Jayesh Shah. Some of the important factors aiding growth of the industry include increased health awareness among the urban populace, rising attention towards preventive health and management, changing lifestyle trends and more health management options available to city residents.

"Not only that, medical insurance is also playing an important role in the growth of preventive healthcare segment. More people today are buying health insurance for their families and they and many big groups have ventured into health insurance providing a range of options to the end user," maintains Jayesh.

Accurate diagnostics a boon in healthcare

With the influx of larger players, the industry is experiencing some positive outcomes and a welcome change. More pathology laboratories are now ensuring high-quality and world-class disease management. Increased competition has helped in raising the standards and accuracy of the diagnostic tests and has improved customer experience greatly.

"Higher expectations and availability of many more options have led to the labs installing technologically-advanced equipment, ensuring quality standards and even increasing their spending on associated research. It's a different game altogether now and the medical fraternity is very happy with it," says Vadodara-based pathologist Dr Yogesh Patel. Doctors work very closely with clinicians who help them in making informed decisions about the diagnosis and treatment of diseases for their patients.

(continued on page 13...)

Alternative medicine systems come to the rescue

*With no vaccine available to treat the coronavirus at present, Indians are using traditional medicinal systems such as ayurveda and alternative systems like homeopathy to boost immunity and prevent infection, says **Vinita Pathak**.*



shortage of beds in medical facilities, an increasing number of cases of infection – these have led to a major shift in the public's approach towards medication and health management. They are now focussing on preventive healthcare measures such as immunity boosting.

Boosting immunity important to fight COVID-19

A quick comparison of the COVID-19 related data from across the world reveals how effectively India is managing the crisis. Indians are using traditional methods such as yoga and home remedies to fight the virus by adopting immunity-boosting measures. It's not surprising that

India has one of the highest recovery rates, and improving, in the world and simultaneously, the lowest fatality rates that is further decreasing by the day. Ayurveda and traditional methods have played a significant role in this.

In June 2020, Baba Ramdev's *Patanjali Ayurved* launched 'Coronil'.

Patanjali claimed that in Coronil, more than 100 ayurvedic compounds are used including ashwagandha, tulsi, giloy and other ayurvedic ingredients that 'help in boosting internal immunity and fight other symptoms such as cough and cold, fever, etc.'

Ayurveda not an 'alternative' treatment anymore

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought Ayurveda to the forefront in India by providing effective solutions to boost immunity and soothe mild COVID symptoms. Ayurveda is an ancient medicinal system, one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems, based on the delicate balance between the mind, body and spirit.

In traditional Indian households, most home remedies used for fever, cough and cold, sore throat, weakness, body pain, joint pain, diabetes, infection, menstrual pain, migraine, arthritis, etc. are based on Ayurveda. Ayurveda involves the use of herbs and spices in various forms for

The coronavirus scare has shaken the world and challenged human intelligence to the core. The highly-infectious nature of the disease, the fast-mutating virus and the constantly-changing prognosis of COVID-19 have been keeping the medical fraternity on tenterhooks since the onset of the outbreak.

To control the spread of the disease, people have been looking for every possible option, to help prevent the disease or cure it effectively, along with modern medical interventions. In India, traditional medicine system such as Ayurveda and alternative medicine system Homeopathy are helping people in the prevention and management of the coronavirus infection.

It's primarily the unpredictable nature of the infection and the rapidly-growing list of 'possible symptoms' in an infected person that has been causing fear psychosis among the people. The fact that a 'normal person' can suddenly start displaying symptoms that worsen into life-threatening conditions within a span of a few hours is also a big cause of worry and is posing challenges to the medical fraternity and civic health officials in the management of the disease.

Coronavirus affects the respiratory system to a great extent which is why urgent medical attention is needed in patients. There is no vaccine in sight in the near future,

treatment of ailments.

Medicinal properties of herbs and spices are also used for strengthening immunity. It's this immunity-boosting property of Ayurveda that has been helpful in managing the COVID-19 infection. Ayurveda uses natural herbs and spices with high medicinal values such as haldi (turmeric), tulsi, giloy, mulethi, cinnamon, ginger, etc.

"As soon as the coronavirus outbreak was announced, my grandmother instructed me to start taking the *kadha* (a decoction made with herbs and spices) twice a day. I made sure to follow her advice and till today, without fail, I prepare *kadha* for myself and my family," says Chicago-based psychiatrist Vasudha Sharma. Mother to five-year-old twin girls, Vasudha had migrated to the US ten years ago, after getting married to her cardiologist husband.

"My grandmother stays in Indore with my parents. She has immense faith in traditional medicines and swears by the *kadha*. Even before the outbreak, whenever my daughters or I had a cold or fever, she would tell us to take the *kadha*. And today, when modern medicines are failing to control the coronavirus infection, my faith in the *kadha* has only bolstered," maintains Vasudha.

Homeopathy useful in preventive management

During a presentation to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in August 2020, the Gujarat state health department stated that Gujarat "distributed the homeopathic drug Arsenicum Album 30 to more than three crore people."

According to the state government, the homeopathic drug was being distributed since March when the first case was detected in Gujarat. In the presentation, the state officials also claimed that 99.6 per cent of the quarantined patients in the state who were on prophylaxis through AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) drugs had tested negative for COVID-19.

Apart from Arsenicum Album, there were several other measures and strategies adopted by the state government to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These included distributing Ayurvedic medicines *Ukalo* (a herbal concoction), *Samshamani Vati* and Ayush-64.

AYUSH Ministry takes the lead

The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) is committed to 'developing education, research and propagation of indigenous alternative medicine systems in India.'

Vaccine trials are underway at break-neck speed in the most scientifically-advanced nations. Leading pharmaceutical companies are racing to find a COVID-19 vaccine. In India, two-third of the clinical trials are being done on traditional medicines under the AYUSH system – Ayurveda and Home-

opathy.

According to a study done by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jodhpur ---- till July 2020, a total of 203 trials were registered in the Clinical Trial Registry of India (CTRI) of which 125 trials (61.5 per cent) were related to the AYUSH interventions and 64 trials (30.7 per cent) were on allopathic drugs.

The analysis further revealed that just "12 trials related to the Chloroquine and Hydroxychloroquine as monotherapy or with other drugs were registered on CTRI."

Government advisories stress on Ayurvedic intervention

In its latest guidelines, The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare emphasised on ayurvedic intervention to manage post-COVID conditions. The guidelines stated that recovered patients should use *chyawanprash* and AYUSH medicines to alleviate post-COVID conditions. The advisory further stated, "In the clinical practice, *chyawanprash* is believed to be effective in the post-recovery period." The advisory also listed yoga, pranayama and daily walks among other suggestions.

Chairman of interdisciplinary AYUSH Research and Development Task Force Dr. Bhushan Patwardhan feels it's time to integrate measures from Ayurveda and Yoga in the standard of care to prevent and treat COVID-19. He maintains "immune-inflammation is known to be a key driver in COVID-19 progression" and recent studies "have identified genetic factors that may influence susceptibility to Covid-19. This may explain why SARS-CoV-2 virus may cause serious harm to certain individuals while others largely remain mild or asymptomatic."

The research on 'Ayurvedic *rasayana* (chemicals), *ahara* (food), yoga, meditation as well as the role of ayurvedic *dosha prakriti* (nature of the disease) types in pathophysiology and therapeutics of Covid-19' is producing exciting results.

To face newly-evolving pathogens, it's important to integrate the best practices from modern and traditional medicine systems. And, Ayurveda is surely being perceived as the way ahead.

Vinita Pathak is an intern with www.HealthAndTheLaw.com – A DraftCraft International Initiative to spread awareness among patients of legal rights and position in law, boost medico-legal awareness, initiate legislative change and enforce accountability among healthcare players.

Yoga, the ancient panacea, more relevant today

*Yoga is effective in treating several lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, anxiety, etc. Its increasing popularity among Indians of all ages is a welcome trend to keep India healthy and fit, writes **Aarti Asthana**.*



In the first week of September 2020, the Tirupati Municipal Corporation organised a first-of-its-kind free Yoga training programme to spread awareness and motivate locals to adopt healthy lifestyles. The programme, held in an open auditorium, had roped in professional yoga trainers to help the participants practice yoga to improve their health and boost immunity, a must especially during pandemics like the COVID-19 outbreak.

“The Coronavirus outbreak has instilled fear in people. People have realised that it’s not possible to completely eliminate the risk of infection, and boosting one’s immunity is the only way ahead. Practising yoga is the best way to do so,” says Mumbai-based first-time yoga practitioner and restaurateur Manish Shetty. “My family and I have been religiously following two things since the lockdown was implemented: practising yoga and drinking the *kadha* (a decoction made of herbs and spices) everyday,” he sums up.

India’s ancient connection with Yoga

India’s connection with yoga is since time immemorial. Yoga is believed to have existed since the beginning of the civilisation. Archaeological evidence from Indus Valley civilisation revealed figures performing yoga postures and yogic motives indicating the presence of yoga in ancient India.

Over centuries, yoga was relegated to specific communities and groups and more recently to a select few yoga teachers. “It’s sad how people forget their own roots. Yoga was something that retired, old individuals would do to pass time. It’s only now that Indians are realising the true potential of the science of yoga and that it’s a way of living for mental and physical well-being,” says Chennai-based Yoga teacher T Subramanian.

Yoga has a global appeal

“It won’t be wrong to say that for a better part of the last century, it was the interest from foreigners that kept the practice of yoga alive in India. Like me, there are thousands of individuals who came to India to learn Yoga and take the practice back to their countries,” says Russian Yoga practitioner Anna Ivanov who came to Kerala in 2008 to learn Yoga.

When India banned 118 mobile apps with Chinese links in September 2020, including PUBG, citing threat to national security owing to data privacy concerns, the Chinese retort was a first. China criticised India’s decision and cited its openness in accepting Yoga, Tagore and Indian movies.

The idea of International Day of Yoga was first proposed by PM Narendra Modi during his speech on 27 September 2014 at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). On 21 June 2015, the First International Day of Yoga was celebrated that witnessed people from 192 nations from across the world enthusiastically celebrating the day. Since then, every year, yoga enthusiasts around the world gather to spread awareness about yoga and its benefits.

Modern-living challenges here to stay

Modern-day living is fraught with stress, particularly in urban settings. Life in the city may be technologically advanced and fast but also stressful and challenging. New work cultures including work-from-home, flexible work hours and excessive travelling are posing a series of new physical and mental health challenges. The health challenges of the present generation are too many to be ignored. “When I started working for the first time in 2010, I had a fixed ten to

five routine. It would get mundane and boring sometimes but at least there was a routine and hence some sort of discipline in my life,” says 35-year-old Pune-based software engineer Nupur Kamat. “I switched a few jobs... the company that I work for now has flexible hours including a work-from-home arrangement. It was exciting in the beginning, but the absence of a ‘routine’ adversely affected my health.”

Staying indoors for long hours, following an uncertain routine and having to bear with a disrupted sleep cycle led to Nupur “developing unhealthy eating habits” because of increased stress and eventually multiple health complications such as insomnia, recurring back-pain, hormonal imbalance and anxiety.

“I don’t remember the first time I developed numbness in my right arm. I didn’t realise the severity of the situation nor could I pinpoint the cause,” says Lucknow-based UPSC aspirant Deepti Chowdhary. “But suddenly one day I lost all sensation in the arm and developed a pain in my right shoulder. The doctor said sitting long hours in an incorrect posture and very less physical activity aggravated the situation.” The numbness increased so much that Deepti had to take a break from her UPSC preparations and rethink her plans. She says, “I realised a healthy body is more important than anything else. How will I do anything in life, forget UPSC, if I am not physically fit?”

Yoga to the rescue

Both Nupur and Deepti got tired of taking painkillers and other pills that were just treating the symptoms and leading to side-effects like acidity, skin rash, etc. “I knew I had to stop this”, says Nupur who took to Yoga on the advice of a friend and “never looked back”.

“I started seeing a difference in my general health and mental state almost immediately. When you do Yoga, you are in sync with nature and your body automatically rejects things that are harmful to you. My eating habits went on to improve immensely and I developed a positive state of mind. I love the new me!” says an excited Nupur.

Deepti, on the other hand, started practising yoga

with her father. She says, “My father has been practising yoga since he was a child. He inspired me to start practising and I saw the results almost immediately. I was so happy that I began working on my life plans with a new vigour.”

Yoga’s true potential remains untapped

Yoga is an art and a science. Its benefits are mental, physical and spiritual. Yoga’s holistic approach means it brings harmony in all aspects of life. One of the most significant effects of yoga is that it helps in alleviating and managing stress. Yoga is effective in prevention as well as management of stress and stress-induced disorders.

Yoga is effective in treating lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, etc. India is known as the diabetes capital of the world. Yoga asanas help in controlling Diabetes Mellitus i.e Type II diabetes.

Yoga asanas, pranayam and meditation improve overall health. Pranayam helps in improving immunity and in treating sinus problems, nasal allergy, cough, sneezing, etc. Pranayam and meditation are extremely effective in reducing mental stress, anxiety, etc. Meditation also helps in improving pulmonary functions and other chronic conditions.

In November 2014, the Ministry of AYUSH mentored a scheme for yoga professionals ‘to get certified for their competence’ to be a Certified Yoga Professional for providing yoga lessons/ classes.

Yoga’s increasing popularity and growing acceptance among Indians of all ages is a welcome trend to keep India healthy and fit!

Aarti Asthana is a media researcher volunteering with www.HealthAndTheLaw.com – A DraftCraft International Initiative to spread awareness among patients of legal rights and position in law, boost medico-legal awareness, initiate legislative change and enforce accountability among healthcare players.

Pathology labs need to be regulated

(continued from page 09...)

“Accuracy is the key here... test results with higher accuracy are needed to provide the best possible line of treatment to a patient. Even a simple test like blood sugar or RBC/haemoglobin count, if inaccurate, can lead to incorrect diagnosis and change the entire course of treatment. We have to be even more careful with complicated tests such as genetic tests,” maintains Dr Patel.

Pathology labs or diagnostic centres play a critical role in preventive healthcare and healthcare management in general. With the world facing unprecedented situation like the

current pandemic, their role becomes even more important. It’s important to regulate the sector, ensure recruitment of trained and skilled personnel and guarantee accountability by legislative means to protect rights of the patients.

Jyothi Menon is a health law activist working with www.HealthAndTheLaw.com – A DraftCraft International Initiative to spread awareness among patients of legal rights and position in law, boost medico-legal awareness, initiate legislative change and enforce accountability among healthcare players.

Physiotherapy – an underrated profession?

*Physiotherapy is an allied field in healthcare management as it helps in vastly improving several serious health conditions and improves the quality of life. Not many are aware, but this underrated profession has been playing a significant role in the recovery and rehabilitation of patients with COVID-19, writes **Swati Singh**.*



When the COVID-19 pandemic hit India, no one imagined that physiotherapy would play a significant role in the management of symptoms, recovery and rehabilitation of patients with COVID-19.

Even as the world celebrated the World Physical Therapy Day on 8 September 2020 to 'generate awareness about the crucial contribution physiotherapists make to society, enabling people to be mobile, well, and independent', the role of physiotherapists remains largely undermined and unnoticed.

Physiotherapy or physical therapy is a treatment method focussing on the 'science of movement' to assist patients in 'restoring, maintaining and optimising the physical strength, function and motion'. It's an allied field that includes 'rehabilitation, injury prevention, fitness and health promotion.

Physiotherapy primarily treats acute/chronic pains, physical injuries and movement impairments. Basically, physiotherapy aims at an 'holistic approach' for the treatment of a patient suffering from musculoskeletal impairments originating from illness, injury or trauma.

COVID-19 after-effects too severe

The panic and fear surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak is not unfounded. Not only is the virus highly infectious, the effects on the body are severe and long standing. Several patients infected with COVID-19 complain of the remnant effects weeks after the infection and long after being discharged from the hospital.

When 35-year-old Delhi-based bank employee Sharad Singh (name changed) tested positive for COVID-19, he did not panic. He had managed to get himself admitted to a private COVID-care facility and also knew that age is on his side. He, however, never anticipated that the dreaded infection will leave his lungs severely damaged. "It's been over a month since I left the hospital. I can still feel how badly the virus has impaired me, particularly my lungs," says Sharad.

In severe cases of the SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19 to the layman) infection, the lungs of the patient are badly damaged and cause acute respiratory distress syndrome. The after-effects of the viral infection can be seen in many patients where owing to damaged lungs, the patient experiences "dyspnea or air hunger," i.e shortness of breath.

"I was in a lot of distress due to shortness of breath and constant fatigue. Even a little walking or talking would be difficult for me for many weeks after I left the hospital," says Sharad.

Thankfully for him, a physiotherapist friend came to his assistance as cardiorespiratory physiotherapy works towards management of acute and chronic respiratory conditions. "My friend helped me through the physical recovery. Like me, most people are not aware of how beneficial physiotherapy can be in the physical rehabilitation and respiratory treatment of COVID-19 patients."

Post-COVID rehabilitation through physiotherapy

Through physiotherapy, Sharad began doing "pulmonary exercises to help increase the lung capacity and aid deep breathing" and saw positive results soon.

Very few facilities are focussing on a rehabilitation programme for severely-affected patients who continue to suffer for weeks after being discharged. Most suffer from lung fibrosis that leads to impaired lung function, oxygen imbalance followed by extreme exhaustion.

This is where the role of physiotherapists is critical who facilitate post-COVID treatment rehabilitation through thoracic expansion exercises, chest manipulation techniques, diaphragmatic and segmental breathing, inspiratory muscle

stimulation, positioning for proper lung ventilation, etc. Something as simple as sleeping on your stomach can alleviate difficulty in breathing.

It was not surprise that this year's theme of World Physical Therapy Day focussed on 'rehabilitation and Covid-19' and 'delivery of physiotherapy through telehealth'.

Physiotherapy helps in treating chronic pain

Today, most health issues arise out of bad lifestyle and unhealthy habits. The lack of physical activity and long hours seated at work create multiple health issues. Physiotherapy works towards rebuilding strength of the affected body part by reversing the damage, restoring the affected functionality that has been impaired or lost completely and by educating the patient on healthy behaviour and proper movements.

"For many years, I had developed a chronic pain in the lower back that had affected the quality of life adversely. I had to think twice before undertaking any physical activity. On some days, even sitting and lying down would not relieve me of the pain. Medicines would only mask the pain for a few hours," says 34-year-old Hyderabad-based software professional Kiran Reddy.

It was Kiran's lifestyle, particularly the demands of her job that required her to "sit in front of a computer for long hours, often uninterrupted" that led to the chronic condition. "In the beginning, I ignored the symptoms thinking they'll fade away. But the discomfort quickly progressed to excruciating pain limiting all kinds of movements for me. It was a horrible feeling to not be able to play with my children, drive my car, and plan holidays with the family... I was starting to get depressed," recalls Kiran. After suffering for nearly "four years", Kiran consulted a physiotherapist and was "shocked to realise how well her body responded". "I never took physiotherapy seriously earlier... I thought physiotherapists only helped sportspersons with their cramps and dislocations. Only after my condition improved did I realise how underrated physiotherapy is in modern-day healthcare management."

Physiotherapy is extremely helpful in treating chronic pain associated with shoulder pain, cervical and thoracic pain, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, etc.

Physiotherapy critical in several illnesses

Physiotherapy is considered to be an allied field in terms of healthcare management but it helps in improving several serious conditions of the human body. This is done primarily by 'maximising the quality of life and the movement potential'.

Conditions which require physiotherapy include: Respiratory problems such as asthma, pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; Neurological problems such as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, stroke, congenital defects, deficiency diseases like Vitamin B12, neoplasm;

Neuromusculoskeletal problems such as those received while playing sports (injuries related to bones, joints, tendons, ligaments and muscles), arthritis, accident injuries, back pain, whiplash-associated disorders; Cardiovascular issues such as chronic heart diseases and post heart attack rehabilitation.

Additionally, physiotherapy is important for patients of Type 2 diabetes, for which there is no cure. Treatment mainly includes managing lifestyle and incorporating lifestyle changes to maintain blood glucose levels.

A healthy lifestyle is critical in managing Type 2 diabetes as it minimises the risk of complications in such patients or if done at a prior stage, even prevent the onset of the disease in the first place. People with diabetes often have other health conditions such as high blood-pressure, stroke, obesity, heart disease, etc. These conditions are high risk factors and in such cases, exercise and lifestyle changes are needed for a healthy life.

Physiotherapists advice on exercises to prevent the onset of diabetes and incorporate changes to manage the other related conditions. The exercises aim to reduce body fat, improve how body processes glucose and maintain mobility and movement.

Therapeutic exercise programmes are a major part of diabetes management. Something as simple as proper foot care is an essential part of the physiotherapy programme for diabetic patients.

Geriatric physiotherapy important

Physiotherapy plays an important role in the rehabilitation of old patients, especially in individuals above 60 years of age when most suffer from several health issues including neurological problems, orthopaedics issues, etc. In such conditions, critical and specialised care is needed and physiotherapy provides that.

Most individuals at this age are unable to maintain balance that often leads to falls and other injuries in the process. Physiotherapy helps in muscle strengthening, balancing exercises, restoring full/maximum range of motion in limbs and joints, etc. Also, physiotherapists teach respiratory exercises to clear lungs and for cardiac rehabilitation in old patients.

The role of physiotherapy in health care and rehabilitation is highly understated. It is time the contribution of physiotherapy to global health is recognised and appreciated.

Swati Singh is a legal researcher volunteering with www.HealthAndTheLaw.com – A DraftCraft International Initiative to spread awareness among patients of legal rights and position in law, boost medico-legal awareness, initiate legislative change and enforce accountability among healthcare players.

Healthcare industry offers lucrative career options

*The fast-growing healthcare industry offers multitude of career opportunities and has become one of the most lucrative career options among the youth, writes **Kanika Tripathi**.*



A positive outcome of the global COVID-19 pandemic in India, and in most affected countries, is the 'resurgence of public health as a widely respected discipline'. During a webcast in Canada in April 2020, famous author Malcolm Gladwell said "public health was a major influence in advancing human health and well-being in the 20th century".

The onslaught of infectious diseases such as small-pox, poliomyelitis, HIV-AIDS, etc. – all public health crises – have led to technological advances in healthcare systems and management through history. And, today, with the COVID-19 outbreak, similar advancements in research and changes in policy are taking place, triggering an array of 'new' career options in the healthcare industry alongside.

In India, the number of job postings in the healthcare industry is showing a steady recovery as compared to other sectors which continue to stall in comparison. The healthcare sector is one of the few sectors that has remained relatively immune to the pandemic and the resulting economic fallout in the country. According to www.indeed.com, a real-time measure of labour market activity, the trends in job postings in India indicate a growth in demand for physicians, surgeons, nursing and pharmacy staff.

The healthcare sector in India

The healthcare sector in India is one of the largest,

in terms of revenue generation and the number of people employed in the sector, directly and indirectly. As per India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), the Indian healthcare sector is expected to reach INR 19.57 lakh crore (USD 280 billion) in 2020.

Healthcare comprises hospitals, clinical trials, medical tourism, medical equipment, telemedicine, health insurance, medical devices, allied fields such as physiotherapy, pharmacies, diagnostic and pathology labs, etc.

Some of the most important factors that have contributed to the growth of the healthcare sector include: Increased health awareness among the population; Rising income levels and disposable income and income sources; Increased prevalence of lifestyle diseases in the country such as atherosclerosis, heart disease, and stroke, obesity, type 2 diabetes and diseases associated with smoking, alcohol and drug abuse; and easier access to health insurance.

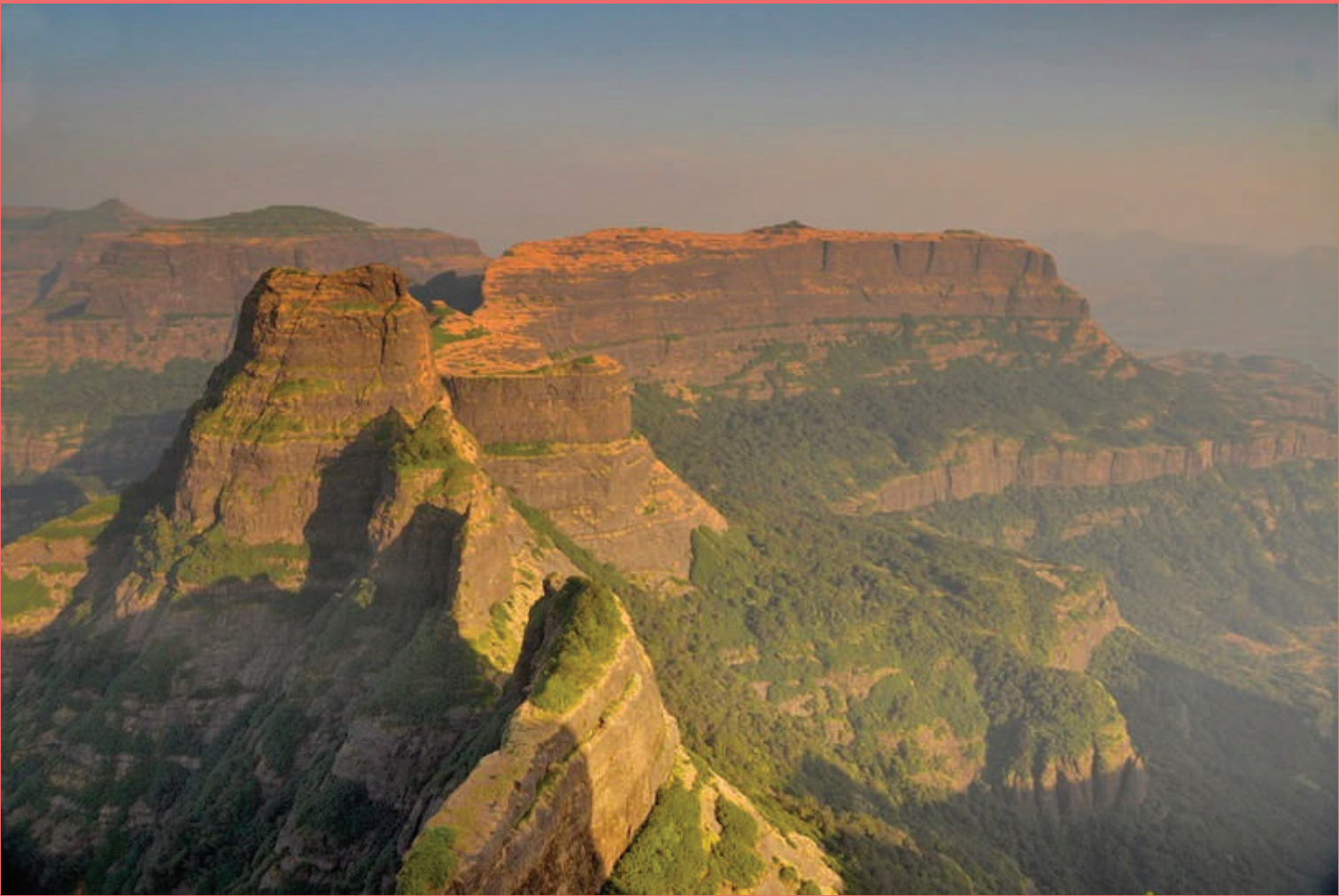
The fast-expanding healthcare industry offers multitude of career opportunities and has become one of the most lucrative career options among the youth.

Diverse career options available

The healthcare industry has been growing at a fast pace due to the influx of public and private entities in the sector with high spending powers, strengthening coverage and increased demand of medical and healthcare products and services. The industry is always in need of talented and dedicated medical staff, nursing assistants, pharmacy workers, technicians, therapists, researchers, home caretakers, paramedics, etc. In India, several colleges, universities and technical institutes provide degrees and diplomas in the various fields of healthcare management.

India's education system churns out thousands of talented scientists, researchers, educationists and engineers every year. There has been a huge demand for specialists in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors, particularly in the area of research and development and innovation.

(continued on page 29...)



Uphill and down dale in ***IGATPURI***

Nestled in the Sahyadri mountain ranges, Igatpuri is choc-a-bloc with natural wonders. From trekking treacherous mountain peaks to exploring ancient forts, and from soaking in wondrous waterfalls to seeking spirituality, there is much to idulge in the enchanting hills.

*Text : Katie
Photographs : Internet*



Alang, Madan and Kulang Forts

The hills are alive with the sound of music". The drum beat of the rain, sharp whistling of the wind; rustle of leaves as they sway and bend when lashed by the rain; the angry squawk of a soaked bird and the flap of wings, roaring waterfalls all blend into a symphony. Listen! The grass is growing as the water soaks into the hot thirsty earth. Weathering all seasons in the sun, the hills respond joyously to the monsoon with relief. By the end of a scorching summer the hills are burnt to a gray-brown. Only the most hardy shrubs survive. But, as the clouds burst and rejuvenating water penetrates the earth, almost overnight rocks are clothed in the many hues of green and yellow. It is definitely the most favourite season of the Mumbaikar and Bollywood too! Romance and rain are firmly entwined... *Rimjim ke tarane leke aaiyi barsat...Dum dum digadiga, mausam bhigabhiga...* provoke us to dance in the down-pour. A number of locations have been established in the Western Ghats; short rides from the city of Mumbai. Enchantment unfolds in the mountains and valleys when the rain scatters its magic and the urbanite is magnetically pulled into the hills of the Sahyadris bursting with new life. Slumbering seeds shoot up, flowers blossom, dormant

creatures awaken, birds and insects are all nudged into activity.

Bio-diversity hotspot

The Western Ghats, also known as the Sahyadri, are the Benevolent Mountains. They rise on the west coast of India in Gujarat and run parallel to the entire west coast, covering 140,000 square kilometers right down to the Indian peninsula, going through seven states, of which Maharashtra is one. 'As old as the hills' goes the adage and so it comes as no surprise to know that this World Heritage Site, the Western Ghats are much older than the Himalayas and foster an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism. Endemic – plants and animals that are found nowhere else in the world. They are one of the world's ten "hottest biodiversity hotspots" containing over seven thousand, four hundred and two species of flowering plants, one thousand, eight hundred and fourteen species of non-flowering plants, one hundred and thirty-nine mammal species, five hundred and eight bird species, one hundred and seventy-nine amphibian species, six thousand insects

species and two hundred and ninety freshwater fish species. At least three hundred and twenty-five globally threatened species occur in the Western Ghats. Scientists feel that there may still be many undiscovered species that thrive in these hills.

Tribal people have inhabited these hills and lived with Mother Nature through the ages. It is only with the coming of the British to India, that corridors were cut through the mountains to gain connectivity from east to west for commercial purposes.

The legend of Kalsubai

The Kasara Ghat is also called the Thal Ghat. A treacherous mountain pass, located at a height of 1919 feet. It was carved out of the unyielding rock to provide road and rail connectivity from the Eastern part to the Western part of the country. Igatpuri, close to the Thal Ghat, is the gateway from the Deccan Plateau to the west coast.

By road, Igatpuri lies 120 kilometers from Mumbai and is a fairly straight drive along National Highway 160. It

is a small hamlet of fifteen square kilometers, nestling in a valley at a height of approximately 2000 feet above level sea level, surrounded by the highest peaks of the Sahyadri. Average height of the peaks in the Sahyadri range is 2500 feet to 5000 feet and the highest peak, Kalsubai, stands at 5400 feet; the highest in Maharashtra. It is situated in the Kalsubai range which is an offshoot of the main Sahyadri range. The name of this mountain range is derived from the name of the peak, which has received its name from a legend.

In India, most of the high mountain peaks are linked to a legend protecting the chastity of harassed maidens taking refuge within the mountain to protect themselves, like Nanda Devi in the Himalayas. Nanda was a princess. When her father's kingdom fell to the Rohillas, she fled to the mountain to avoid molestation and it is said the mountain peak opened its portal and welcomed her within its fold. Thus, she is now revered as Devi and the peak, bearing her name is sacred.

The legend of Kalsubai is somewhat similar. Kalsubai was a housemaid living in Indorey village. It is said



Kalsubai Peak



Tringalwadi Rock

that one day, while trying to escape the predations of her employer, she fled into the mountains and simply disappeared. A temple has been built in her memory bearing her name on her peak. A traditional prayer service is held twice a week, to this day, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. During the Navratras, thousands of people flock to this temple to offer prayers and be a part of the nine-day festival celebration dedicated to the Goddesses. The government and local villagers have made the route easy and safe for pilgrims by erecting ladders and cutting steps wherever necessary. The Kalsubai trek is not a difficult one in terms of a climb, but requires fitness and stamina.

That in times of yore, Igatpuri was a strategically important location, is borne out by the ruins of forts surrounding it. Starting from west to east this range contains Kulang, Madangad and Alangad forts, built during an epoch when the only means of locomotion was walking, so, forts were deliberately built upon the highest peaks available. They gave the defenders a complete view of the approaching enemy and plenty of time to be in readiness to rebuff him, if at all, given the dangerous conditions of the climb. So, today, this entire range is stunning from the trekkers' point of view. Though small in length, it has some of the tallest peaks and the strongest forts; the Kalsubai peak affords a stunning view of all these forts.

Kulang Fort is located at an elevation of about

4825 feet above sea level and is one of the oldest forts in the region. Its history dates back to the Satavahana dynasty. This fort was constructed by the later Satavahana kings. With the fall of the dynasty the fort was captured by other rulers. It fell to the Mughals, the Marathas and finally, was taken over by the British who found no use for it and allowed it to deteriorate.

Although in ruins, the climb to the fort is tough and exciting for mountaineers, besides which it is sufficiently mysterious for the history buffs to poke around in.

Madangad and Alangad are the other two hill forts forming a magnificent trio along with Kulang on the Kalsubai stretch of the Western Ghats.

Situated at a height of 4500 feet above sea level, Alangad fort is one of the most difficult to get to. Alang has been built into the steep incline and carved from the mountain itself. Most of the old hill forts are nearly gigantic hill carvings, designed utilising the existing natural formations like caves, cliffs, gradients, ridges and even forests to fulfill the historical need of the time; to post lookouts on the highest and most difficult to attain geographical point overlooking the area. History does not tell us much about this fort, but the stone carvings in the fort indicate that it was built by the local tribes who resided in nearby villages. Several caves have been discovered within the fort, which



Dhammagiri or Vipassana Centre during the day

were probably living quarters for the locals. Inscriptions in Sanskrit and Pali are visible on the walls. The fort stands on pillars that were built using single stones. The main wall of the fort is built on the ridges and looks like it is a part of the mountain rocks. This would also serve as a camouflage to conceal its identity. It also has a raised rampart, thirty meters thick built in a curved shape alongside the hill top. Steep slopes on the sides of the fort and a vertical slope of around a hundred meters makes it extremely difficult to scale over. However, it is connected with a number of hillocks that surround the two adjacent forts. The arrangement indicates that the fort was built for civilians to take refuge in during the wars that frequently erupted. Access to this fort was quite impossible and the easiest way in and out of it was a tunnel, known only to the local people of the time. Although made of local stone, the heavy monsoon and years of neglect have left it dilapidated. The area is covered with thick, lush vegetation as it receives the heaviest rainfall in the Western Ghats.

Madangad, standing at 4825 feet above sea level is the third member of the trio. The area of the fort is quite small as compared to Alang and Kulang, its adjoining forts. There are merely two water tanks on top of the fort in which water is available only till February and there is a cave that can accommodate around fifteen to twenty people. There is some confusion about its



Dhammagiri or Vipassana Centre at night



(Left) Ghatan devi temple; (right) Amruteshwar temple

history. Belonging to the Satavahana era, some historians claim that the local tribes built it as their hide out, but according to the British records, Madangad was occupied by the Mughals first and later was captured by the Marathas. Its height served as an ideal watch tower during the medieval period. This trio of Alang, Kulang and Madan forts constitutes the most perilous climb in the Sahyadris. It needs a high degree of fitness, experience, climbing and rappelling skills, but is nevertheless the most thrilling trek and climb across jagged mountains and dense forests for the diehard adventurer.

The area visible from the top of the fort is scenic. One can see Alang, Kulang, Chota Kulang, Ratangad, Ajyagad, Katrabai, Dangya Pinnacle, Harihar and Tryambakeshwar.

Tringalwadi Fort, temples and a spiritual centre

Tringalwadi Fort is yet another popular destination. The easiest way to get to the fort is through the Tringalwadi village which is closest from Igatpuri. A small mud path leads from the village through rice fields and runs alongside small streams, northward till the Jain caves are reached at the foothill of the fort. The climb to the fort begins from here.

Situated at 3000 feet above sea level, its stuns

the onlooker with a panoramic view of the surrounding mountainside, especially of Kulang and Kalsubai mountain ranges. The fort, which is considered an architectural marvel nestled in the Sahyadri range, attracts hikers and trekkers like magnets, particularly during the monsoon when the hills are lush green, the weather cool and the slopes easy to tread, but also treacherous when wet. The top of the fort resembles a turban and dilapidated though it be; is still a thrilling monument to explore. A temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman stands in close proximity.

In a region bearing deep scars of ancient history, it would be surprising to find no temples. Temples are the stamp of each ruling dynasty just as much as a fort is.

Amruteshwar Temple is an ancient Shiva temple situated on the banks of holy river Pravara at Ratanwadi village of Igatpuri. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is said to be over 1200 years old, built by the rulers of Shilahara dynasty in ninth century, constructed in Hemadpanthi architectural style with beautiful rock carvings on the exterior of the main shrine. It is one of the twelve Shiva temples built by King Jhanj. The temple stands at the base of the climb to Ratanwadi Fort.

Of major significance to the area is the Ghatandevi Mandir, a temple dedicated to Ghatan Devi - protector of the

hills (ghats). Its location in a serene valley with the peaks of Harihar, Durvar Utvad and Trimbak surrounding it, forms a befitting backdrop for their patron Goddess.

Although not a temple, the Vipassana centre – Dhamma Giri has had the strongest association with Igatpuri since its inception. It is one of the world's largest meditation centers and the main centre of a rapidly growing global Vipassana organisation. It is a religious centre that offers Vipassana courses; an insightful meditation technique that was taught by Lord Buddha about 2500 years ago in our country. A sprawling structure with a tall Golden Pagoda, it can be seen from a great distance, appearing as a landmark. Set in peaceful surroundings it is one of the most calming places to spend time in.

History has now been added to by a contemporary event with a fairy tale touch. The late actor Irrfan Khan of Bollywood fame happened to visit Tringalwadi once. He loved the place so much that he bought some land and built a house for himself and his family. Not just that, he adopted the village as his extended family and made every effort to change the lives of the villagers. "He was a guardian angel to so many families. He never said 'no' whenever asked for help. Whenever we needed him, he stood by us",

say the people of Igatpuri. His demise has left the tribal folk of Igatpuri with a wound in their hearts, a gap they are unable to fill. Though they are still mourning the loss of their guardian angel, his memory remains etched in their hearts. Igatpuri will bear his stamp, for the villagers have renamed the locality in which Irrfan's weekend home is situated as 'Hero-chi-wadi'. A new landmark today, in time to come it will be history.

Tringalwadi dam and lake are also distinct landmarks of the area. Star gazing on a cool winter's night by the lake "With a book of verse and a jug of wine" is a taste of heaven.

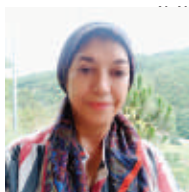
The Bhatsa River Valley lies at the end of the Thal Ghat just before one actually enters Igatpuri. The Bhatsa being a fairly large river, swells during the monsoon creating wondrous waterfalls. Camel Valley, a short distance from Bhatsa is also breathtakingly beautiful. Its main attraction being, a waterfall that hurtles down from a height of a thousand feet. The spreading spray creates a mist around that is beautiful. A leisurely stroll, with a keen eye and a camera makes it a photographer's haven. For the energetic it can be river rafting or boating. Or, be contemplative and enjoy your own company and soak up the silence.





Bhavali dam

Igatpuri is choc-a-bloc with natural wonders. Whatever your passion is, you can find a way to indulge it. Recently, several activities have been added to the list. A number of good resorts have sprung up and adapted to the need of the hour with stringent measures of sanitisation and social distancing in place. No reason why one should not be out enjoying the beauty and bounty of the mountains and the bliss of the season. Just remember that we are our



Katie is Travel Advisor with Exotica Traveller. She is also a freelance writer and voice over artist.

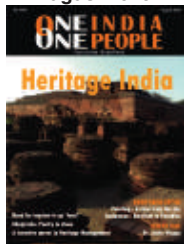
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“Cricket brings the drama through its narrators' soothing tones, trenchant observations, eloquence and opinions.”

An avid sports buff since his formative days, **Krishna Kumar Subramaniam**, popularly known as KK is a well-known radio cricket commentator, sports anchor and Anchor & Host for Conferences and Award Shows.

He is on the panel of All India Radio Cricket Commentators and invited regularly on FM channels across radio networks. With vast experience in cricket commentary, he has covered many interesting tournaments including the 2011 World Cup.

He is also Vice President (Business Development, India, Middle East and Africa) at Glenmark Pharmaceuticals.

In free-wheeling chat with **A.Radhakrishnan**, KK speaks about the pleasures of cricket commentating.

Can you briefly describe yourself?

I am a passionate human being who believes in walking the path of excellence. Passionate not only about the happiness of my family, but also as a professional, about sports, my predominant hobby; and about my radio cricket commentary, sports anchoring, seminars and award shows.

Define a radio cricket commentator?

A radio cricket commentator is the life of the game. Painting the entire picture of what's happening on the field, he creates the requisite excitement for the listener to visualise and cement his focus on the commentary and be glued in antici-



pated excitement.

What are the attributes required by a radio cricket commentator?

Specialisation and an innate knowledge of the game are mandatory. To be a successful and respected radio cricket commentator, apart from being a great fan and follower of the game, one needs to have an excellent grip of every nuance of the game.

What happens out there in live commentary is completely different from what you might have in mind. Some thoughts you have, some episodes / phrases you have preprepared, etc. ...none may be relevant when the live game begins.

Often a different run of play happens and that's where the relevant impressive alacrity comes to the fore to describe the scene with competence and class.

Good energy levels, good eloquence, a mellifluous voice, good diction, good English and good vocabulary are winning attributes that can distinguish a particular radio cricket commentator as 'Very Special', but one cannot flounder on the game per se.

When did radio commentary make its debut in India? And what has been the role of All India Radio?

To the best of my knowledge, radio cricket commentary made

its debut in India more than 75 years back through All India Radio. AIR, with its huge and widespread nationwide network, has taken cricket to every household in the far nook and corner.

Today in addition to its conventional channels, AIR relays cricket commentary through its popular FM Channels as well e.g., FM Rainbow. People listening to live cricket commentary in cars and over their cell phones is the order of the day and one needs to profusely thank AIR for the same.

How has radio commentary evolved world over? Has TV commentating taken the lead?

Radio still remains a very popular medium for live cricket commentary. Cricket is a way of life in India and the logical sequel to that is listening to radio cricket commentary.

Radio commentary has also evolved over time. Earlier we used to have one commentator per session doing a 15 to 20 minute's stint. That's now changed to dialogue commentary with two commentators together and many a time with an expert added in.

There are also many live interviews with former cricketers, administrators etc., which help make the whole broadcast very interesting. Lots of perspectives come in, newer thoughts emerge and all this adds significantly to listener involvement and interest.

Though television is a mega popular medium and digital channels are increasingly in vogue, in the modern fast paced world, the constraint people face is viewing TV or digital media continuously due their own professional, scholastic and occupational commitments.

As avid and crazy followers of the game, they wish to be tuned in all the time and radio is the answer. AIR is at the forefront for cricket commentary and we are also seeing the emergence of digital audio channels.

In an arena dominated by ex-cricketers, does the next common man who loves cricket, trained in media journalism have a chance?

Of course there is scope for a common man who loves the game to become a good radio cricket commentator, provided he develops the mandatory essentials and produces a good energetic and enthusiastic interesting flow in describing the game, to create listener interest.

One way of becoming a world class radio cricket commentator is to relentlessly keep asking yourself the dispassionate question Will the listener be tempted to keep glued in to my commentary or will he shut off? If at any time you get the answer Shut Off, that's a development goal for you!! Irrespective of your name and fame, keep asking yourself this question!!

That's the path to excellence and towards becoming an All Time Great. I keep asking myself this question even now after every game.

Why have you preferred radio commentary?

As far as I am concerned , I started with All India Radio with a small, but interesting 10 minute weekly sports round up programme titled *Sports Here and There*, which led to the

opportunity of doing a half hourly programme *Sports Magazine*.

Fortunate to receive high quality listeners' feedback, I was then asked to record commentary for a Ranji Trophy match. Positive response to this paved the way for my first live commentary match between Mumbai and Gujarat.

In a few years I was doing ODIs, Test Matches and after its advent, T20s as well. I will always be grateful to AIR for the opportunities and trust reposed in me.

It was also a pleasure to do commentary over Cricket Radio, a Dubai-based channel for the 2011 World Cup.

A commentator must always bear in mind the fact that the listener is the CORE of his commentary and the listener is the ultimate BOSS!

Live commentary is the pinnacle and it is as exciting and satisfying as it is challenging. It's indeed gratifying when listeners and fans offer an excellent feedback! I am eternally grateful to them for inspiring and motivating me.

Five greatest cricket radio commentators of all time, whose distinctive style is ripe for impersonation but also impossible to replicate?

I adore Tony Cozier, Christopher Martin Jenkins, Brian Johnson, and our own Harsha Bhogle, Ananth Setalvad and Suresh Saraiya. All of them are giants in their own way with their own special, unique and arresting style.

How do you prepare for matches? Is it spontaneous?

Preparation always helps! As I said earlier, live commentary is spontaneous but that alacrity and spontaneity comes through in a more effortless manner and with better impact with better preparation.

It gives you the necessary grip, all possible information on both the teams, past, present, future ; similarly players on both sides; CTF of the players, high points and conversely lean trots; the context of the game, its importance, its impact.

Does the hectic schedule take a toll on you? Has your style changed over years? Or do you go home every day and play the recording and see and say "Oh, I should have said this there, and that over there"?

I have always believed that one should brace oneself to hectic schedules and learn to enjoy them, rather than crib. Regards replays, these days you always have a television monitor and a fruit feed in the ComBox.

A lot of issues and attributes of players like killer instinct will to win, concentration, psychological issues, patience, perseverance, tolerance, cool and composed or aggression, intimidating approach, sledging, etc., are discussions that happen as a part of routine commentary. In a sense they are the embellishments of commentary.

Which language is best suited for radio commentary? English, Hindi or Tamil?

My personal opinion is there is a place and good audience for every language in cricket commentary so long as the quality is really very good. We need to cater to them.



On cricketer retirements?

Retirements of cricketers is a moment of reflection for all, more so for us commentators. If it happens to be an all-time great then the first thought is wherein one feels the game is going to be bereft without that player. A lot of thoughts flood one's mind of the great and happy moments that the player gave fans across the world. From the time I started commentary, I have seen many retirements and many of them greats of the game.

Retirements to me are moments to celebrate greatness, moments to applaud determination, dedication and effort. And tell oneself silently "I was fortunate to see them". And in my case, I was fortunate to describe many a great moment, many a great effort.

What kind of rapport did you share with fellow commentators?

I have had a very good chemistry with all my commentator colleagues. Among the legendary celebrity experts I enjoyed sharing the mike with, to just mention a few, are Ravi Shastri, Clive Lloyd and Kapil Dev, and I wish to place on record that every session with them made me much richer.

My rapport and learning from my relationship with the legendary Sunil Gavaskar is something that I cherish and feel privileged about.

My interactions with several other leading cricketers like Milind Rege, Lalchand Rajput and others have continuously made me much wiser and I have always looked forward to meeting all these personalities.

Any favourite memories to share?

There are many. Difficult to pen down just a few. But there is one abiding memory which was a lifetime lesson.

This was during that famous tied India - England encounter at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru during 2011 World Cup. Just before the match started, a couple of us went down to the ground level from the commentators' box to pick up something.

On the way back as we approached the elevator we saw the legendary Rahul Dravid also coming from the opposite side. We greeted each other warmly. Rahul is so sweet and gentlemanly that he always greets you with a winning smile and a few gracious and kind words. We waited for him to enter the elevator first, since we believed we needed to accord him that respect.

But guess what happened. Rahul held the elevator door for us saying "No, no you first. You are in Bengaluru and I am the host here. You are my welcome guests, please enter first." If this is not the ultimate lesson in humility, what else is?

You learn a lot in your profession and in my case I have through cricket commentary. Professional success is great to achieve but combining it with humility raises the bar manifold! It remains etched in mind for posterity.



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

Healthcare industry offers lucrative career options

(continued from page 16...)

The increased competition in the sector provides for huge potential for career options and career growth.

Career options in the healthcare sector broadly include health, leisure, social care and education, as follows: Registered nurses, nurse midwives, practitioners and anaesthetists; physiotherapists and sports physiotherapists; radiation therapists and technicians; medical sonographers and technologists; pharmacy technicians, pharmacovigilance and regulatory audits workers; clinical laboratory technician, clinical scientists; emergency medical assistants; health information technicians; radiologic technicians and diagnostic labs technicians and assistants; medical writers; medical counsellors; etc.

These opportunities are available in the following broad areas: Ayurveda, Dentistry, Electropathy, Homeopathy, Medical Laboratories, Radiography, Pathology, Nursing, Naturopathy and Yoga, Microbiology, Pharmacognosy, Pharmacovigilance, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Sports Medicine, Psychiatry, Optometry, Orthopaedics, Medical Insurance, Research and Development, Medico-Legal, Patent issues, etc.

Allied fields gaining recognition

The world over, India is known to produce highly-educated doctors and engineers. Medicine is a highly-coveted field. Every year, thousands of students leave their homes and make a beeline to towns/cities where 'coaching centres' prepare them for the medical entrance exams. It is a colossal money-spinning industry in itself and one which is all set to grow even further.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) NEET, formerly the All India Pre-Medical Test, is an entrance examination in India for students who wish to study undergraduate medical courses (MBBS) and dental courses (BDS) in government or private medical and dental colleges in India. In 2019, NEET registered 15,19,375 candidates who wrote the entrance exam. In 2020, despite the COVID-19 crisis, 15,97,452 candidates registered for the entrance exam.

Kota-based medical entrance exam coach Suresh Jain feels, "There's no doubt, most students from science background attempt the NEET exam at least once as NEET happens to be both their and their parents' first preference. However, lately I am seeing more and more students opting for allied fields in the medical industry. Not only there's more awareness but also openness among parents who are allowing their children to make a career in the allied fields."

"It's a matter of the past when the only option after school was to pursue a medical degree. I am a doctor myself

but never pressurised my daughter. She is a microbiologist as she loves to do research and works in the R&D department of a renowned pharmaceutical company," says Pune-based gynaecologist Amruta Pawar.

Daughter Janhavi has had her priorities well sorted right from the onset. "I love research and have found myself really enjoying my career with microbiology. A lot of my friends too have opted for a range of allied fields. Now, no longer is medicine the only choice," she says.

New demands and emerging fields

There are several fields in the healthcare sector that have witnessed a surge in the demand for professionals. For example, in the pharma sector, there is an increased demand of regulatory professionals, in particular of those who have experience in foreign markets. "Pharma industry is one of the biggest drivers in the healthcare industry. There is a huge demand in the areas of quality control, manufacturing, etc.," says Mumbai-based pharmacy student Jay Mehta.

Simultaneously, diagnostics also have seen a surge in career opportunities. "There is a whole range of options available in that area as well, especially for technicians," maintains Jay.

The Indian healthcare industry is also witnessing an increase in demand for highly skilled research and development professionals. Industry experts feel the demand is only going to increase in the times to come to keep up with the expanding healthcare sector.

India is one of the biggest providers of high-end diagnostic services. Market studies suggest India's pharmaceutical market is estimated to 'grow at a CAGR around 12 per cent over the next three years.'

Among the newer options available are Clinical Scientists, Medical Writers, Patent Attorney, Pharmacogenomics Scientists, Epigenetic counsellors, Health data Scientists and Insurance Underwriter to name a few.

Now, with the COVID situation upon us, the state and private sectors are looking to take stock of the healthcare infrastructure and manpower situation. India, besides managing the impending COVID crisis with wise maturity, will look to lead.

Kanika Tripathi is a legal researcher volunteering with www.HealthAndTheLaw.com – A DraftCraft International Initiative to spread awareness among patients of legal rights and position in law, boost medico-legal awareness, initiate legislative change and enforce accountability among healthcare players

Moringa : The miracle tree

*Drumstick or moringa that has been used in Indian cooking for centuries is now being recognised the world over as superfood. Each part of the *Moringa oleifera* tree is useful and it can easily claim to be the nutrition storehouse in the plant world, writes **Hiren Kumar Bose**.*



A Solapur farmer at his moringa plantation

If there was something called 'nutrition storehouse' in the plant world it would be *Moringa oleifera* or the drum stick tree, as it is commonly known. Each part of this 'wonder tree' is useful—the roots, stems, leaves, seedpods, resin and flowers.

Its generic name is derived from the Tamil word 'murungai' meaning 'twisted pod'; and 'oleifera' is Latin, meaning 'oil-bearing', due to the high oil content of the seeds. Grown from seeds or propagated by a branch cutting, it hardly needs any irrigation. That is the reason it has been grown in large acreages in the drought-prone regions of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal and Odisha.

This tree has been around for ages, but ever since the world at large claimed moringa as a superfood, thanks to its nutritional qualities, its acreage in the country's arid and semi-arid zones have been rising as

farmers recognise it as a crop that never fails despite climate change. This humble plant has been making strides in less-developed societies for thousands of years, and significant nutritional research has been conducted since the 1970s.

Moringa craze is sweeping the USA and countries in Europe, where health and wellness shops are stocked with biscuits, tea, cookies, chocolates, and muffins incorporating this plant. Indian food companies too have begun incorporating moringa into their products.

Though moringa has been part of the traditional Indian diet, the world at large discovered it when Time magazine touted it as "the next quinoa" in 2015 and the New Yorker in 2016 mentioned it as "a nutritional Swiss Army knife". Other leading international publications too wrote gloriously about it, spreading awareness of the health benefits of moringa. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations named it as the

'crop of the month'.

Notably, a study published in the journal of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology in 2017 found that its bioavailability (the amount that enters the body's circulation) to be "very low", but noted that it had exceptional anti-inflammatory extracts. Until recently, the much ignored moringa has acquired respectability among nutrition columnists in Indian media too. But sadly, it has yet to be a part of the mid-day meals food offered in schools. It may be noted that moringa contains arginine and histidine two amino acids especially important for infants, who are unable to make enough protein for their growth requirements.

In China, as a complement to medicinal plant resources, *Moringa oleifera* was introduced from India in the 1960s and had been cultivated on a large scale in Guangdong Province, Yunnan Province, and other areas since then. Additionally, moringa

leaf was approved as a new food resource by the Chinese government in 2012.

Moringa provides a rich and rare combination of nutrients, amino acids, antioxidants, anti-ageing and anti-inflammatory properties used for nutrition and healing. Moringa leaves have seven times the Vitamin C of oranges, four times the calcium of milk, four times the vitamin A of carrots, three times the potassium of bananas, and double the protein of yoghurt. With over 92 nutrients and 46 natural antioxidants, as well as anti-inflammatory compounds it has been dubbed the 'miracle tree'. Additionally, moringa oil harvested from the pods is much sought after in the formulation of skin care products.

A 2016 study by Malaysian researchers on animals found that the aqueous fraction of moringa contains Vicenin-2 active compound, which may accelerate wound healing in hyperglycemic condition. Diabetic foot ulcer is a serious complication of diabetes, which affects a significant percentage (15%) of diabetics and up to 15%–24% of those affected may require amputation.

"Moringa needs minimum care, and if grown in large areas it can fetch a good price from markets like Mumbai, Hyderabad or Chennai," says software engineer Thangaraj Nadar, whose firm Indian Agro has tied up with a Malaysian company to sell moringa seeds and leaf powder. He planted the moringa's PKM 1, PKM 2 and ODC varieties on his 20-acre ancestral plot in Karungulam village in Tamil Nadu's Nagercoil district; they have since been harvesting 20-25 tonnes of drumstick pods per acre every year.

It's a rare horticulture crop which begins fruiting within six months of planting and continues to do so for eight or nine years. Its lengthy pod is rich in calcium and other minerals, a must-add ingredient to sambar. It is also used as a vegetable.

Names like PKM 2, Bhagya KDM 1, Rohit 1, Siddhi Vinayaka....

may not ring a bell among urban readers, but those engaged in subsistence farming will recognise these as the high-yielding varieties of *Moringa oleifera*.

The drought-prone Saurashtra region in Gujarat, too, is enthusiastically embracing the moringa — farmers in Bhavnagar, Junagadh, Morvi and Rajkot now favour this tree known for its gnarly trunk and thick foliage.

Moringa leaves have seven times the Vitamin C of oranges, four times the calcium of milk, four times the vitamin A of carrots, three times the potassium of bananas, and double the protein of yoghurt.

Agripreneur Neetu Patel of Atkot village in Rajkot has motivated over 1,200 farmers to cultivate moringa in their combined holding of 1,200 acres. Her firm, Satyam Enterprises, provides saplings, holds farmer workshops, trains them in making organic fertilisers and, above all, has a buy-back agreement with them for the produce — namely leaves, seeds, greenwood and so on. Among her customers are names like Patanjali Ayurved, Himalaya Drug Company and Zandu Pharmaceuticals.

Meet the moringa growers from Sangli, Solapur, Nashik, Pune, and Yavatmal, who thanks to video streaming platforms and messaging groups, have enhanced their

livelihoods by catering to growing urban demands. As per the Journal of Pharmacognosy and Phytochemistry 2018 report it was found that moringa farms incurred an expense of ₹1 to accrue the benefit of ₹2.99. Hence, with low cost of investment and returns in the same year of cultivation, the drumstick is an economically viable crop.

Moringa is presently traded in several vegetable markets across Maharashtra, in Pune, Vashi, Solapur, and Aurangabad. This season, the rate for the drumsticks is between ₹3,500 - ₹4,000 per quintal.

Farmer Appa Karmakar is a successful moringa grower. His three-acre farm at Angar village in Solapur, which has a sparse vegetative landscape has become a go-to destination for arid zone farmers arriving from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Among the early adaptors of moringa, Karmakar, who holds a postgraduate degree, started cultivating moringa in 2012. He grows it with an intercrop of chillies, papaya, pomegranate and guava, besides marigold, which has been traditionally used to control pests. His farm produces 50 tonnes of drumsticks every year, selling for ₹30 to ₹80 per kg in the wholesale market and fetching approximately ₹6 lakh a year. His climate-smart horticulture improvisations with minimum inputs getting good returns attract farmers, journalists, agricultural graduates and agriculture experts to his farm.

According to Adinath Chavan, editor of *Agrowon*, a popular Marathi farm daily, farmers of Solapur like other inhabitants of State's driest zone are likely to continue growing moringa as long as it offers good returns.



Hiren Kumar Bose is an independent media professional who writes on development issues.

PROTECT , and thou shalt prosper

Trafficking of young girls across India-Nepal border is a significant problem. PROTECT (Prevention, Tracking, Education and Transformation), an initiative of Plan India and Plan Nepal is set to bring about sweeping reforms to better the lives of girls from poor and marginalised families, despite the challenges it faces.

G. Venkatesh, gives us a low-down on how PROTECT plans to address the human trafficking issue across the border.



Six Nepali girls were rescued from New Delhi earlier this month; Src: The Kathmandu Post

Any nation, or society for that matter, thrives if it knows how to respect its womenfolk. Truism? Platitude? Cliché? Yes, friends, it may well be, but has it sunk in as yet? Oftentimes, it is something which is 'gone with the wind', as soon as it is uttered and heard.

Respect for women begins at home, quite like charity. Someone once told me that the best gift a father can give to his son is to teach him how to respect women and also practise the precept so that the son can observe and emulate a 'walking-the-talk' dad. It is tough indeed, but one of the challenges a man ought to take up when he decides to wed and start a family. Not many tick all the boxes sadly. I may be washing dirty linen in the public, so to say, but yours sincerely had to self-teach himself while observing the contrary

all the while. Perhaps that is what shaped my character and took me to Scandinavia which is known for its gender parity.

How Plan India and Plan Nepal plan to tackle the trafficking menace

India and Nepal have several things in common, apart from the dominant religion (Hinduism). The countries share a 1751 kilometre (porous/open) border, delimited by the Sugauli Treaty over 200 years ago between Nepal and the British colonialists. While open borders do facilitate trade and thereby economic growth on the one hand, it also has its drawbacks.

One of the ills is the trafficking of young girls across the border, by prostitution rackets in either country.

Often, impoverished parents accept this as their fate, especially when girl children are considered to be a bane and not a boon – a decadent thought that has yet to be completely rooted out from the developing world. There have been social reformers all along who have laboured hard and long, with limited success.

Plan's PROTECT initiative – a cleverly coined acronym for Prevention, Tracking, Education and Transformation – is well-poised to bring about sweeping reform – gradually but surely and steadily, with the required grit and perseverance (Refer Table 1).

The aforesaid nexus which exist among entities – sometimes even the law-enforcers -- is a veritable Gordian knot. But yes, if the tribe of the good keeps growing, and stands united and committed, anything desirable can be achieved.

	India	Nepal
Target beneficiaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Girls aged 10-18 2. Students/teachers 3. Caregivers 4. Border guards 5. Survivors 6. Parents 7. Youth groups 8. Frontline government health workers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Girls aged 10-18 2. Survivors 3. Caregivers 4. Teachers 5. Duty-bearers 6. Trucking industry
Annual target numbers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 150 Gram Panchayats, b. 120 trained change agents c. 1,200 trained gender-champion children d. 2500 families with survivors/vulnerable children offered consultation e. 50 survivors counselled, f. 1 anti-trafficking day campaign organised g. 600 duty bearers trained h. 150 girls from vulnerable families and survivors received training for livelihood 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Operate 3 information centres b. 18 survivors to start businesses, c. 15,000 persons reached through social media d. 6000 people reached through radio messages e. 25000 SMS messages sent f. 69 teachers trained g. 1,600 students imparted personal protection training
Key challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child / early forced marriages 2. Trafficking exacerbated by economic instability and Covid-19 3. Lack of awareness of rights and entitlements 4. Stigma against survivors 5. Lack of education 6. Social and gender norms 7. Lack of livelihood opportunities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child/early forced marriages 2. Trafficking, which is exacerbated by economic instability due to Covid-19 3. Lack of awareness of rights 4. Stigma against survivors 5. Migrants returned due to C-19 lack daily income

Plan Nepal has its head office at Lalitpur to the east of the capital Kathmandu, while Plan India's activities are coordinated from New Delhi. In Nepal, PROTECT works in Banke, Sunsari and Makwanpur, while Plan Nepal, in addition to the said three locations, is active in Jumla, Kalikot, Dolpa, Bardia and Sindhuli. Plan Nepal's country director Liz Satow, tells the author that traffickers prey on the desire of girls and young women from poor and marginalised families in Nepal to seek a better future and on their willingness to travel overseas to earn their livelihoods. (The author has set up Varshita Venkatesh Girls' Education Fund with Plan USA in memory of his late wife) Satow fears that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will only aggravate the bane of deep-rooted societal and economic hardships, exacerbating the inequalities in the process, but assures that Plan Nepal is well-equipped with the means and the motivation to educate, protect and generate awareness among the girls in the country.

Talking of awareness, a

female student of grade-8 in the Sunsari district of Nepal voiced her decision to openly object to anyone's inappropriate behaviour. She credited PROTECT's Sticks & Stones awareness building session for having developed in her the confidence to make up her mind on not being shy and silent as she used to be earlier. It is heartening that PROTECT's endeavour has received wholehearted support from young girls of Nepal, as Shanti Rawal, the Women and Children Section Officer from Banke informs. She is confident of receiving support from them to map out the trafficking risks in Banke.

In India, the initiative is active in six Indo-Nepal and Bangladesh bordering districts --- in Uttar Pradesh (Maharajganj and Siddharthnagar), in Bihar (Sitamadhi and West Champaran) and in West Bengal (Nadia & Murshidabad). Among the challenges to be faced is the unwillingness of parents to send their daughters to school. Sample this grievance from Priya (name changed) from Siddharthnagar district of Uttar Pradesh – "I have four elder sisters

and one brother. I am the youngest girl in my family. My brother used to go to a private school, but as it was quite expensive, he now studies in a public school. Neither my sisters nor I have ever been to school. Our parents are just interested in giving us away in marriage and thereby stress on making sure that we learn how to do all the household chores." Parents of course admit that early marriage will shatter the dreams of their daughters, but they have their backs to the wall, and better alternatives are extremely difficult to find and implement, especially when crises like Covid-19 hit like bolts from the blue. However, it must be reiterated that educating both parents and girls is of paramount importance – a necessary but not sufficient condition to combat trafficking.

Plan International has a longstanding record in educating young girls in the developing world, and transforming the lives of many in the process. Knowledge is power and education is an investment.

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‘Choked’ – an offbeat film

CHOKED – PAISA BOLTA HAI, a feature film by Anurag Kashyap which shows the impact of demonetisation on the middle class has been streaming online since June 2020. Shoma A. Chatterji reviews it.



I wonder why a talented filmmaker like Anurag Kashyap should waste his time getting entangled in “Me too” and other controversies instead of concentrating on what he is good at - making films. After Black Friday and Dev D, Kashyap has been consistently inconsistent. His films appear like sparks, at times striking and at times, fall with a dull thud. So, this critic approached his latest OTT feature film Choked – Paisa Bolta Hai with some trepidation.

The time span is around a week overlapping the demonetisation announced by our PM Narendra Modi in November 2016, by a few days on either side and the place is a dominantly Maharashtrian neighbourhood in Mumbai zeroing in on a middle-class family with a husband Sushant (Roshan Mathew), his wife Sarita (Saiyami Kher) who works in a bank and their eight-year-old son. The film was shot in 2016 but released on NETFLIX only in June 2020.

Says the director Kashyap who is as loud-mouthed as he is uncompromising about this film, “Choked is a very uncompromised

film. We created the interior set of the house and shot on green screen to create the right atmosphere, and that shows in the film.

The film is based on a unique premise. Sarita suddenly discovers rolls of currency notes wrapped in cellophane when she tries to clean the choked drain under her kitchen sink. Her husband is a wastrel and works as and when but does not hold a regular job so this leads to some rough edges in their married life, the son caught in the constant squabbling between his parents. But they still love each other. Sarita keeps the secret to herself and though she is shocked when demonetisation is declared because she has old currency notes, she very cautiously takes them to her bank branch and changes them clandestinely. She is thrilled on the one hand and terrified on the other because she really does not know what to do or what will happen.

Her neighbours chip in with their sad stories of money problems on the heels of demonetisation, but Kashyap skirts around any politics around the issue and steers clearly

away from mentioning names lest the film run into censor problems. He chooses to focus on the impact of the discovery by Sarita and what happens when demonetisation threatens her sudden good fortune.

The film steps into the narrow confines of the neighbourhood where the neighbours are struggling with their own problems and most of them share a warm relationship with Sarita. There is a touching scene showing her next-door neighbour not letting go of Sarita’s wrist unless she listens to her immediate problems. The scene which shows Sushant offering their living room to sleep to the wedding guests of the neighbour for a few nights is also good.

The sub-plot actually could have been explored in detail to make a very different film. Sarita’s back story is rooted in her participation in a reality music show where she failed because she had a sudden panic attack and lost her voice completely when the lights came on and she could see her audience. She is haunted by it the rest of her life so when she realises that her suddenly discovered stash of notes means nothing, she accepts she will always remain a failure. This is perhaps for the first time for a Hindi film to have tackled the concept of panic attack during a performance and though it comes across in bits and pieces, it has been smoothly woven into the main story.

Saiyami Kher carries the film very confidently and firmly on her slender shoulders. She is backed by a solid supporting cast where each character, big and small, contributes to her evolution within the film. The cinematography by Sylvester Fonseca, sticks to the non-glamorous mounting of the film and keeps it as natural and as spontaneous as possible. The repeated scenes of the doorbell being

pressed, the lights switched off at night and the door latch opened and closed are used like a metaphor to suggest the utter boredom of their everyday lives. The sound track and the music track are well-placed while the art direction by Vilas Kolap, set decoration by Seema Kashyap not only fit neatly into the ambience but also enhance its factuality. The editing may seem a bit jerky at places but that may be explained away to the sudden switching of scenes from the interiors of Sarita's home to the staircase leading to her flat to the bank, the lined up crowds outside the bank the narrow alleys the film moves through and so on.

The prefix 'Choked' used with the title can be read differently. One is the direct reference to the choking of the kitchen drain but thrown against a larger horizon, it also suggests the "choked" life of an ordinary housewife who finds out

those extraordinary dreams of winning at a reality show or suddenly getting rich will never be her destiny. 'Choked' also refers to the sudden shock that demonetisation had on different families and people whose lives took a complete tumble immediately following demonetisation.

The phrase 'Paisa Bolta Hai' offers a different perspective on money. Money jingles and the sounds carry different meanings for different people. Money "talks" in a metaphorical sense – through the change in the financial status among families and people which works both ways if demonetisation is brought in – some people may chance upon sudden affluence while the rest will be left with tremendous worry. A family's social status is also determined by the money that jingles in its bank balance.

What pulls the film down is its melodramatic climax which simply

fails to go with the rest of the film or even with its basic premise. The twist in the tale introduced in a hurry to whitewash the husband so that harmony is restored in the pair is extremely compromising, but for what and for who? The film has been premiered on an online streaming site like Amazon Prime so who is Kashyap trying to please and why?



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

PROTECT, and thou shalt prosper

(continued on page 33...)

Rehabilitating survivors – trafficked girls rescued and brought back home or to care shelters – is also very critical. Providing them with a means of livelihood and a sense of independence is a necessary follow-up activity. There are a few girls who often go on to spearhead campaigns, educate and empower other women in their neighbourhood.

COVID-19 has thrown many a spanner in the works, compounding the challenges faced while rescuing, educating and rehabilitating girls and bringing about systemic changes to totally eradicate trafficking in the future. Health and nourishment, psychological support and encouragement are all equally important. Plan India and Plan Nepal have well-equipped and highly-trained, devoted employees/volunteers who make sure that all corners are covered.

Signs of success

The ultimate signs of success

emanating from Plan's efforts through its PROTECT initiative would ideally look something like this.

Children, families, communities and societies in India and Nepal have strengthened community-based prevention mechanisms against child trafficking, improved repatriation processes and are supported to reintegrate survivors safely.

Children and families can identify risks, conditions and consequences of child trafficking, actively take steps to protect themselves and report cases of trafficked children to the authorities.

Community social safety nets and structures are duly strengthened to prevent child trafficking, facilitate access to services, and support reintegration through child-friendly and participatory methods.

Both state and non-state actors have increased capacity to respond to child trafficking, to safely repatriate survivors and facilitate their

reintegration.

How you can support

Readers keen on supporting this initiative financially or otherwise, may contact donorrelations@planusa.org or visit Plan International's website at www.plan-international.org for more information.



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RIFLEMAN GABAR SINGH NEGI (VC)

Chamba's gallant soldier (1895-1915)

Gabar Singh was born on 21 April 1895 in village Manjood near Chamba, Tehri Garhwal district in the hill state of Uttarakhand.

Singh enlisted in the 2/39 Garhwal Rifles in October 1913. The unit proceeded to France as part of the Indian Expeditionary Force in World War I. It was part of the 7th Meerut Division and was in the front lines during the first battle of Ypres and later in the Pas-de-Calais sector. It remained there till the end of the year. It was selected to force a gap in the lines at Neuve Chapelle which was held strongly by the German Forces and repeated attempts to push the Germans back had failed.

The 7th Division was tasked to force a gap for the Cavalry to exploit and rush to Aubers Ridge and possibly Lille. The French planned to attack the Vimy Ridge on the Artois plateau from the south to threaten their communications. The French attack failed and their role was reduced to provide fire support only. If the French attack had succeeded, a further advance of fifteen kilometres would have given them control of the communication centre used by the German Army to supply their troops in the Noyon region. The Royal Flying Corps carried out reconnaissance up to a depth of 1400 metres inspite of bad weather and 1500 copies of the maps were distributed to the troops. The British Army had launched the attack with great preparation to gain initial success. Unexpected delays and communication failure led to setback. The Germans were able to restore the situation by a counter-attack with twenty battalions.

The 7th Division was tasked to resume the advance and it launched the attack on 10 March 1915. Indian soldiers made half of the attacking force and it was the first action in which the Indian soldiers fought as a whole. This was also the first set piece battle and showed the form which positional warfare took during the rest of the war. The attack was preceded by an artillery barrage. The barrage was not effective in dislodging the Germans. The trenches had to be cleared by parties armed with bombs and bayonets. Despite

heavy casualties they managed to take a key position. The commander of Gabar Singh's party was killed and Singh led the bayonet party. With disregard to risk to his life, he entered their main trench and drove the enemy back forcing them to surrender. Singh was killed during this battle. He was posthumously awarded Victoria Cross (VC), the highest and most prestigious award for most conspicuous gallantry in the face of the enemy in the British army.

Singh's body could not be traced and has no known grave. His name is recorded on the memorial at Neuve Chancelle and on the Memorial Gates in London opened in 2002. On the outskirts of Neuve Chapelle, there is another Indian War memorial in honour of the Army of India which fought in France and Belgium between 1914-1918, and in perpetual remembrance of those who laid down their life. Negi's name is mentioned there. More than 4700 Indian soldiers and labourers lost their lives in the War.

The India Office sent the medal and a letter of condolence from the Queen to Negi's wife, Sattori Devi. She wore it with great pride on her sari till her death in 1981. The medal was acquired by his regiment and a replica sent to the family.

Since 1925, every year in April, the descendents of Gabar Singh organise a fair in his honour at Chamba. Stalls, bands and a recruitment rally by the Garhwal Regiment are a regular feature at this unique fair. Many youth aspiring to join the army attend the fair and participate in the recruitment rally. Many tents are put up in the area during the festival for those attending the fair from neighbouring districts. The Garhwal Regiment has adopted it for participation since 1971 to give it a much needed support and has built a memorial to Rifleman Gabar Singh Negi in Chamba. With the inclusion of army traditions in the ceremonies, the fair has started attracting villagers from far and near who honour this brave soldier.

- Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



PRANAB MUKHERJEE

A true patriot and a fine statesman (1935-2020)

The former President of India Pranab Mukherjee who passed away in Delhi on the August 2020 was one of India's most admired politicians whose political career spanned over five decades during which time he held several vital portfolios in the Union Cabinet. The quintessential Bengali, Mukherjee was born on 11 December 1935 in a freedom fighter's family. His keen interest in academics led to his acquiring a post graduate degree in Political Science and a Degree in Law (LLB) as well from the University of Calcutta. Before plunging headlong into politics, he worked as a clerk in a government office and then as a lecturer in a Kolkata college (then Calcutta) and also briefly as a journalist in a Bengali daily. His baptism into politics was at the instance of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who sent him to the Rajya Sabha in 1969. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha a record six times and served as the leader of the House from 1980-86. He won his first Lok Sabha election in 2004.

Pranab Mukherjee holds the distinction of being the only President to have handled the vital portfolios of Finance, Defence, External Affairs and Commerce at varying points of time in his long and illustrious career. His stints as Finance Minister from 1982-1984 and 2009-2012, Defence (2004-2006), External Affairs (2006-2009) were all highly successful and his ascent from a junior minister in Indira Gandhi's cabinet in the 1970s was meteoric. The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 signaled a decline in the political fortunes of Pranab Mukherjee as Rajiv Gandhi who succeeded his mother as the PM never forged a good equation with the Congress veteran. Pranab da as he was fondly addressed was even expelled from the Congress in 1986 for six years and went on to form his own outfit, the Rashtriya Samajwadi Congress which however fared poorly at the hustings and eventually went into oblivion.

Pranab Mukherjee was a frontrunner for the PM's post after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 but as in 1984, the honour proved elusive and it was the dark horse P V Narasimha Rao who emerged as the Congress party's choice for the post. Ex- Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao

however was instrumental in resurrecting Pranab da's political career and he was appointed as the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission in 1991 and later as External Affairs minister in 1995. He had the satisfaction of heading a maximum number of government committees and at one point was the Chairman of as many as 56 committees of Groups of Ministers (GOM) and in his stewardship of these committees he brought to bear his vast knowledge of parliamentary procedures and expertise acquired over the years thanks to his having a ringside view of the functioning of various governments.



Pranab da was the Presidential candidate of the UPA in 2012 and he became the country's 13th President. His five year tenure as President was largely inconsequential and his relationship with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which won the elections in 2014 with a massive mandate was cordial. The former President was blessed with a phenomenal memory and as a cabinet minister he would reel off facts and figures off the cuff at meetings stunning attendees and his own official colleagues alike. He was also hailed for his razor sharp mind, quick decision making and for his innate ability to build consensus and ensure effective crisis management.

The various distinctions that came his way included the recognition as the Best Finance Minister in the World conferred on him by Euromoney. He was also the recipient of the Padma Vibhushan (2008) awarded by the Government of India but the crowning honour was the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour that was bestowed on him by the NDA government in 2019. He was also a prolific writer and authored several books that were all bestsellers. A true patriot and a mentor to many aspiring politicians, Mukherjee cultivated friendships across political lines and his passing was mourned by one and all.

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SANGEET MARTAND PANDIT JASRAJ

Doyen of Hindustani classical music (1930 - 2020)

Pandit Jasraj was a legendary classical vocalist, belonging to the Mewati *gharana*. His legacy of 75 years includes memorable performances of Hindustani classical and semi-classical vocal music, classical and devotional music, albums and film soundtracks, innovations in various genres.

Born in a musical middle class Brahmin family in Haryana, he was the youngest of three sons. His father, Pandit Motiram who initiated him into music died when Jasraj was only three. His elder brother, Pandit Pratap Narayan taught him to play the tabla and, when barely seven, he was known as an able accompanist in the classical circuit. At 14 however, he renounced the tabla, and began training as a classical vocalist, doing *riyaz* close to 14 hours daily, initially with Pandit Maniram, his eldest brother, and later with Jaiwant Singh Waghela, a vocalist and *beenkar*, and Gulam Qadir Khan of Mewati *gharana*, as also under Swami Vallabhdas Damulji of the Agra *gharana*, but he considered vocalist Begum Akhtar as his inspiration.

The family then shifted in 1946 to Calcutta, a hub of immense artistic activity where Jasraj, beginning as a classical music artiste on radio for several years, later became a stage performer. In 1952, the 22-year-old performed his first stage concert as a vocalist in the court of King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah of Nepal in Kathmandu and was stunned when the King rewarded him 5,000 mohurs!

In 1962, Pt. Jasraj married Madhura, the daughter of film director V. Shantaram and later settled in Mumbai in 1963, and continued on for the next 50-plus years to a prolific international performing, recording and teaching career. Pt. Jasraj was known for his unconventional mixing of *khayal* with elements of *bhakti rasa*, employing *harkats* and *murkis* that were traditionally used in light classical music, adding elements of lighter styles, including the *thumri*.

He popularised semi-classical musical styles like *Haveli Sangeet*, a form of temple devotional music dedicated

to the Lord Krishna. He also created a unique form of *jugalbandi* called *Jasrangi*, in which a male and a female singer sing different ragas in their respective scales to merge their individual displays into one unified performance. His concerts were like seeing a force of nature in action, awe inspiring and mesmerizing. He had a unique voice that was sweet and pleasant to the ears.

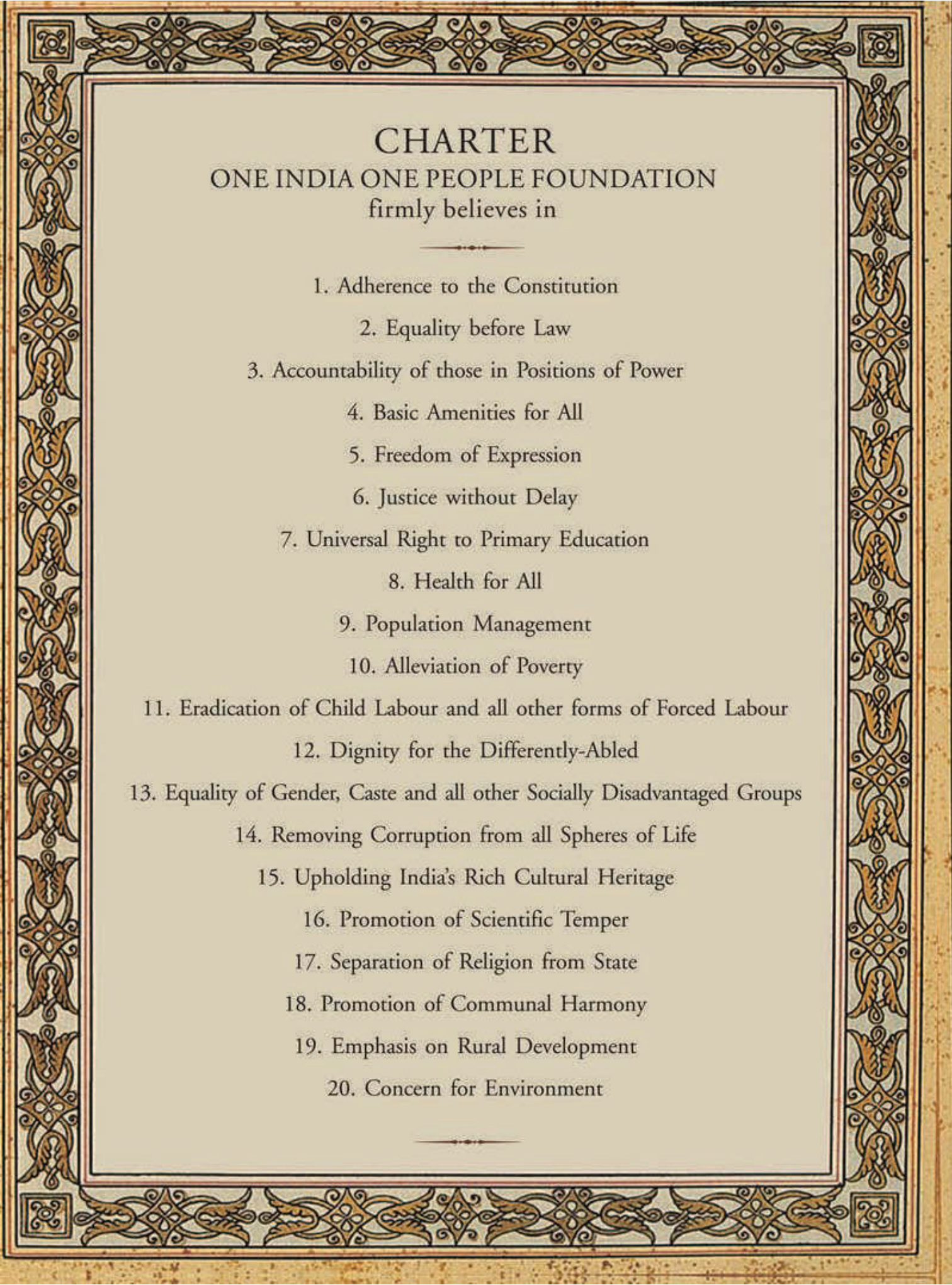
He went on to sing classical and semi-classical compositions for film soundtracks, such as the song, *Vandana Karo*, composed in raag *Ahir Bhairav* by composer Vasant Desai, for the film *Ladki Sahyadri Ki* (1966); a duet with vocalist Bhimsen Joshi for the soundtrack of the film *Birbal My Brother* (1975), and a ballad, *Vaada Tumse Hai Vaada* for a horror film titled *1920* (2008) directed by Vikram Bhatt. His rendition of raag *Ahir Bhairav* was used in Ang Lee's global hit of 2012, *Life Of Pi*.

Pt. Jasraj established schools for Indian classical music in Mumbai, Kerala and also in the US and Canada. He would spend six months of each year abroad at either his home in New Jersey, teaching or touring. At age 90, he was perhaps the sole vocalist of his generation who continued to teach his students with a remarkably robust, age-defying voice over Skype and Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. He was the recipient of the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, the Padma Vibhushan, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar and Marwar Sangeet Ratna, along with several lifetime achievement awards. A minor planet has been named after him by the International Astronomical Union (IAU).

He passed away in New Jersey on 7 August 2020, following a cardiac arrest. His body repatriated to Mumbai, was cremated with state honors, including a 21-gun salute. He is survived by his wife Madhura, his son, Shaarang Dev Pandit, daughter Durga Jasraj, both musicians. Panditji has moved on to the next dimension, but his music will live on.

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





CHARTER

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-

WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
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