

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined

India's Women Icons



Breaking barriers, making their mark

Women icons on country's desktop

Vying for India's political space

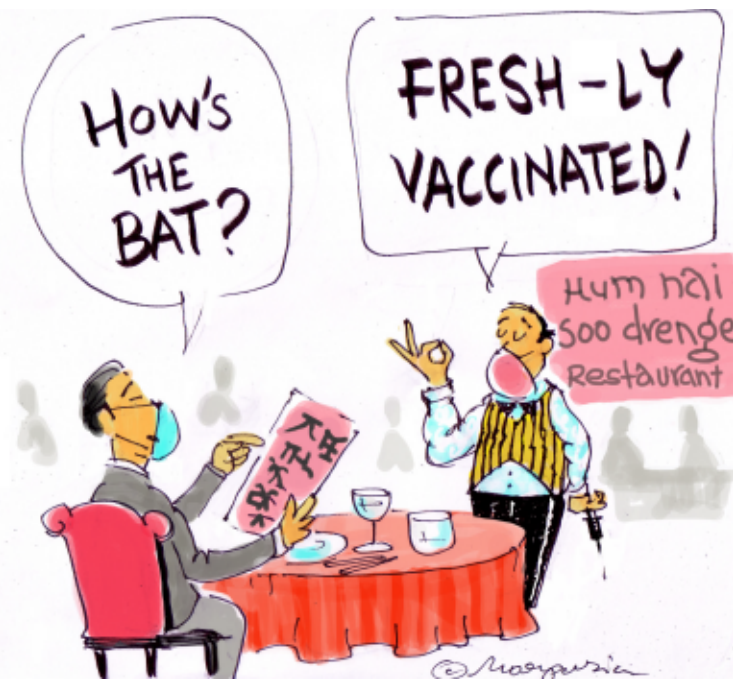
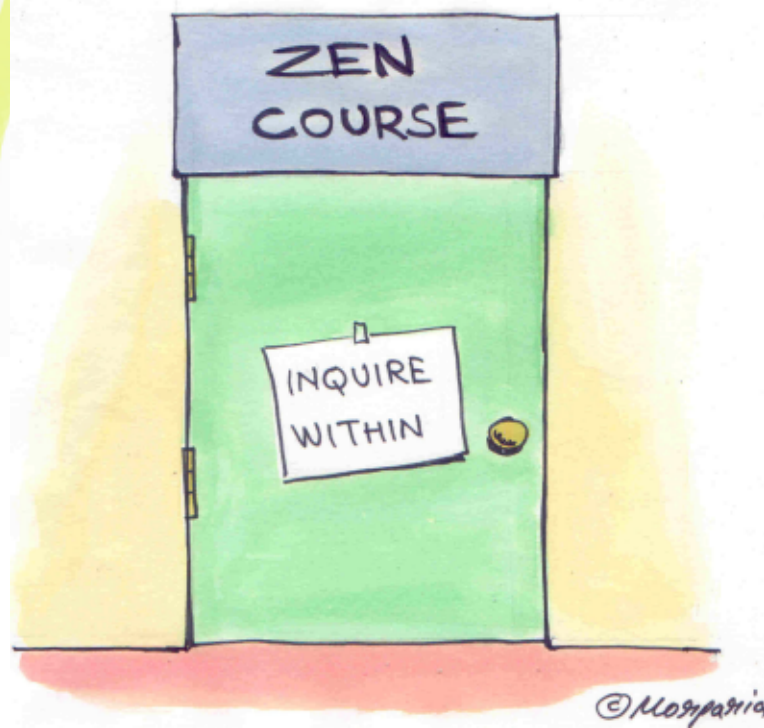
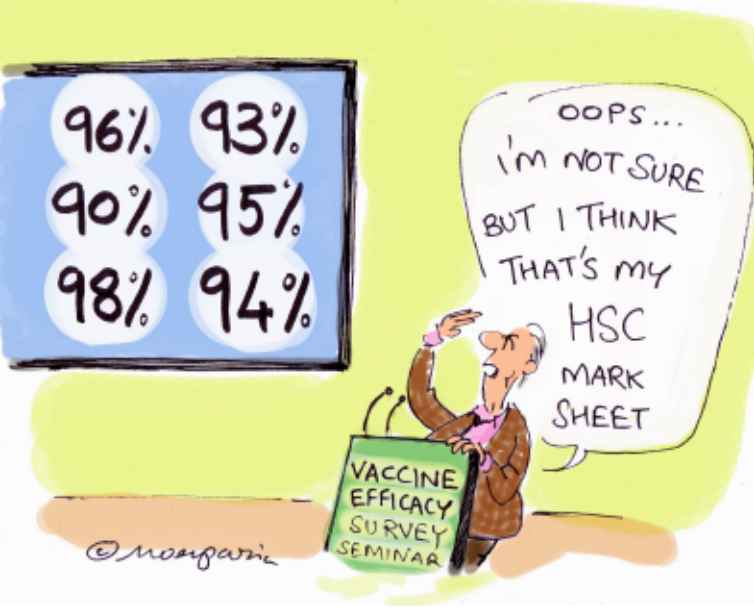
India's guardian green angels

Know India Better

Bengaluru *getaways*

Face to Face

Vaishali Kendale



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March 2021

VOL. 24/08



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Women icons on country's desktop

Women today, more than ever before, have gone against the grain of male-dominated societies and cultures. Year after year, confident, courageous, intelligent and determined women from all over the country make it big and roar 'successes in various fields. They make India proud with their sterling record of achievements. They are game-changers not willing to let others define them, their roles in society and what they can or cannot do. The spirit is best defined in their work despite the obstacles that obtain, affirms **Manu Shrivastava**.



The first women of television journalism

when Doordarshan was the primary news broadcasting service in the country, it was the many women news readers whose faces were etched in public memory as they presented the news to the country. The first of the lot had set a template for the next generation of news presenters. Apart from Nalini Singh, the ones known included Shobhana Jagdish, Avinash Kaur Sarin, Sarla Maheshwari, Neelam Sharma, Salma Sultan, Neethi Ravindran and Rini Simon Khanna.

While on the one hand India, the world's largest democracy developed a political landscape dynamic and diverse, providing women the best opportunities possible, on the other, there was a scenario where

Women have always played a pivotal role in history. That historians, like most elected representatives as skewedly brought to power, have been predominantly male and concurrently less impressed with the role and performance of women over the ages probably hold the key to their inequitable representation on paper. Indian women, on their part, have surged ahead of their male counterparts in myriad ways and on regular occasions despite their paltry depiction and erroneous attribution in history.

Journalists, for one, have played a crucial role in Modern India, right from the Independence movement when they created awareness among the masses, advocating for the rights of the citizens even after India procured her Independence by aiding the government in perpetrating mass campaigns and keeping a check on the other pillars of democracy. Their women counterparts have, following imperial times, started to make strong inroads over the years to taking charge and now even leading the industry.

Faces familiar on DD

Among the better-known faces of women journalists in India is Nalini Singh's who produced a five-minute fast-paced daily news segment 'Ankhon Dekhi'. At a time

women were subject to discrimination and abuse. Propaganda apart, fact remains India has a significant number of women politicians at the district, state and national level. And that is something not most in the global media or across political platforms will openly acknowledge.



Indira Gandhi, India's only lady PM; Late CMs Sheila Dixit; Vijayaraje Scindia; Sushma Swaraj; Jayalalithaa, who made their mark

Success also politically correct

With every election, more and more women have been stepping forward to take key responsibilities and move centre-stage in India's political field. In the 2019 general elections, for example, there were more than 700 female candidates who contested polls of which 78 women won and were elected to the Parliament as Member of Parliament (MP). Today, more and more independent women candidates without any political lineage or leanings stand for elections across the country.

Indian politics is replete with shining examples of women stalwarts who have served the nation starting from Late Indira Gandhi. Till date, there have been Maneka Gandhi, Sushma Swaraj, Jayalalithaa, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Sheila Dixit, Mayawati, Uma Bharti, Mamata Banerjee, Smriti Irani, and a host of others who worked through politics across India. Till date, 16 women have served as Chief Ministers of Indian states and Union Territories including Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh that have been headed by two women Chief Ministers each. The other states that have had women Chief Ministers include Odisha, Assam, Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Goa, and West Bengal.

Persisting, persevering in sports

Where sports are concerned, women have been achieving success in international sports tournaments and garnering accolades for India across several sports. Why, P V Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Mary Kom, Sakshi Malik, Dutee Chand, Manasi Joshi, P U Chitre, Mithila Raj, Deepa Malik, etc., have made waves in a manner that is par excellence.

They have persisted and persevered despite social, cultural and financial challenges -- even raced ahead -- to change the perception of Indian women across borders. Sports as a discipline has been dominated by men and traditionally monopolised by men. Yet, Indian women have changed the map of the country's sporting landscape.

Look at Aamir Khan's Dangal, for instance, that



Sports : P.V.Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Mansi Joshi, Mark Kom

brought to fore the efforts of women from Haryana in the field of wrestling. From the most traditional zones in India, the women have risen and how. They are winning, blazing ahead and garnering international recognition to the country in the prestigious and coveted championships like the Olympics, Paralympics, Asian Games, etc.

If there's one thing that places women on a pedestal that's beyond the reach of man, it's her innate sensitivity. And, it's this sensitivity with which, for centuries, women have been playing an important role in social transformation and community development. That an educated woman forms the basis of an educated family and an educated community is a known fact.

Like most nations, India too faces the scourge of man-made environmental degradation. Rising pollutions levels in the air, dipping water quality and soil contamination have drastically affected the quality of life in urban areas. These new challenges need innovative solutions and a grassroots approach.

Revering nature, environment

Women have contributed immensely in eradicating social evils and preserving the environment. In traditional communities, especially among tribals, it's nature and the elements that are revered. Women of the household have been the caretakers of the environment through such rituals and ceremonies.

Today, in modern India, women have been using 'modern' tools and skills to generate environmental awareness so necessary for development. Women not only employ legal and administrative processes to create change in law and policy, as scientists too they have been designing 'green' products and technology and developing 'sustainable' processes and enterprises for a greener planet.

India's film industry, another to be traditionally dominated by males, has over the last few years witnessed a steady rise in content that is more women centric. More and more content with strong and clearly etched-out women protagonists is emerging making the debate on the stereotypical portrayal of women now passé.

Entertaining, quashing stereotypes



Ekta Kapoor

The women, on their part, have diversified too. From being in front of the camera to contributing their bit from behind the camera, they've travelled. Today, Indian women have been making waves as actors, directors, art directors, cinematographers, music composers, etc. within the country and across the world.

Producer Ekta Kapoor sums it up perfectly when she says, "If you create content with women wearing saris, people call you regressive, if they wear swimsuits, they call it sexual. And I call them judgmental. I was telling someone the other day that I am probably the only person who has been criticised for being overtly progressive and at the same time, (for being) regressive and conservative."

Across traditional as well as new media that comprises OTT and social media, women have transcended boundaries set by the society and are making a mark for themselves.

Women, India has learned, are the most natural entrepreneurs. Right from the neighbourhood home-food vendor who thrived despite the COVID lockdown and her husband losing work are the richest in India who only grew stronger.

Making waves with business too



Savitri Jindal

Among the lot of the most affluent women in India is Savitri Jindal, Chairperson of the Jindal Group that has ventures in the steel, power, cement and infrastructure industries. Each of the divisions is run by her four sons and the revenue of the company has grown hugely since she took charge. In 2020, her wealth rose from \$5.8 billion to \$6.6 billion, which is almost \$0.8 billion or 13.8 per cent higher than it was in 2019. She has held the first place among all the richest women of India for quite sometime now.



Kiran Mazumdar Shaw

And then, there's Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, the Founder and Executive Chairperson of Biocon who added \$2.22 billion to her wealth in 2020, taking her net worth from \$2.38 billion in 2019 to \$4.6 billion in 2020 marking a 93.28 per cent gain, the highest not just among all the women but among all of India's 100 richest persons in 2019.



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

Vying for India's political space

*Contrary to public perception, India boasts of a large number of women – and their number is growing – who are venturing into politics at all levels. Many of these have left a profound and strong impact on the country's political scenario, rubbing shoulders with their male counterparts. From holding august offices to being grassroots activists, they have given a strong account of themselves to influence political landscape in the country, discovers **Vedika Jain***



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

India, the world's largest democracy, has a political landscape that has always been dynamic and diverse. Despite popular notions of women subjected to discrimination and abuse, fact remains India has a significant number of women politicians at the district, state and national level.

With every election term, more women are stepping forward to take key responsibilities and move centre stage in the country's political field. In the 2019 general elections, there were more than 700 female candidates who had contested the elections of which 78 women won and were elected to the Parliament as Member of Parliament (MP). More and more independent women candidates with no political lineage are also standing for elections in the country.

A discussion on Indian politics is incomplete without the mention of Late Indira Gandhi, Maneka Gandhi, Sushma Swaraj, Jayalalithaa, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Sheila Dixit, Mayawati, Uma Bharti, Mamata Banerjee,

Smriti Irani, etc.

Women leading the states

Till date, 16 women have served as Chief Ministers of Indian states and Union Territories including Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh that have been headed by two women Chief Ministers each. The other states who have had women Chief Ministers include Odisha, Assam, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Goa and West Bengal.

Mamata Banerjee is currently in office in West Bengal that is scheduled to have the general elections this year. She started her political career in the 1970s as a young woman party worker with the Congress party. She quickly rose the ranks within the party and was also the general secretary of the Mahila Congress, West Bengal for a few years. In the 1984 general elections, Mamata Banerjee became one of country's youngest parliamentarians ever after she won the Jadavpur parliamentary constituency in



Chandranai Murmu, a tribal and youngest MP from Keonjhar, Odisha ; Mamata Bannerjee, currently the CM of West Bengal

West Bengal.

Due to political differences with Somendra Nath Mitra, in 1997 Mamata Banerjee left the Congress party to float her own All India Trinamool Congress along with other founding members. The party soon became a strong opposition party in the state. Mamata has also held key union ministries as part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). These include the Ministry of Railways and the Ministry of Coal and Mines.

Indian politician and former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje started her political career in 1984. She belongs to the prominent Scindia royal family and has been active in Rajasthan politics. She has been an MP as well and was elected as Rajasthan's Chief Minister on two occasions.

Women from marginalised communities pace ahead

In 2019, Chandrani Murmu created history by becoming the youngest MP after she won the Keonjhar (Odisha) seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. A tribal woman and an engineering graduate, Chandrani's father Sanjiv Murmu is a government employee and mother Urbashi Soren is a homemaker. She has been in the news ever since her election and has been actively working towards the development of her constituency. In January 2021, she appealed to the Railway Minister to restart Puri-Barbil Intercity Express that was stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic. "The Railway is earning 15 crore per day as revenue from Keonjhar district and still the train service has not been resumed," she said pointing out the need of the train to start to help thousands of people who

commute for personal and business purposes every day.

The second ever Dalit woman MP elected from Kerala, Ramya Haridas is also the only female parliamentarian to be elected from Kerala in the 2019 Lok Sabha selections from the Alathur constituency. Belonging to an economically lower class, she had raised funds for her election campaign through crowd-funding campaigns.

Physical education teacher Goddeti Madhavi is the youngest Member of Parliament from Andhra Pradesh. She was elected to the lower house of the Parliament of India from Araku in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. She is also one of the 'poorest' members of the house with declared assets of a little over Rs 2 lakh. Upon election, she urged the Chief Minister of the state to encourage the cultivation of strawberries in Vishakapatnam agency area to improve income resources of tribal farmers and to develop the zone as a tourist destination.

The 27-year-old MP says, "I have joined politics to serve people and address the pressing issues such as drinking water, health care, education and unemployment that have been plaguing the tribals in the Agency for decades. Many villages and hamlets have no transport facility. My priority is to give a push to the ongoing infrastructure development projects."

Indian women politicians hold prominent positions

One of the most renowned faces in Indian politics, Sushma Swaraj was a brand of her own. She had many firsts in her political career including being the youngest cabinet minister in the Haryana government, the first



Ramya Haridas, the only female parliamentarian to be elected from Kerala in the 2019 Lok Sabha selections from the Alathur constituency; Physical education teacher Goddeti Madhavi, youngest MP from Andhra Pradesh

woman Chief Minister of Delhi and the first woman spokesperson for a national political party in the country. Before venturing into politics full-time, she was a Supreme Court lawyer when she started her practice in 1973. Her political career began soon after and she was an active participant in the movement started by Jayaprakash Narayan. After the emergency, she joined the Bharatiya Janata Party and soon rose to the national stage.

At the time of her death, Sushma Swaraj was the Minister of External Affairs of India in the first Narendra Modi government (2014–2019). She was also the second woman to hold the office of the foreign ministry, as it was previously called, after Indira Gandhi.

During her stint as the Minister of External Affairs, she represented India at several international forums including the United Nations General Assembly, where she raised critical issues like terrorism, climate change, etc. She strongly represented India's interests across fora. She was extremely active on social media and personally intervened in reuniting families, ensuring stranded Indians are brought back home, etc., utilising India's digital strength to the full. Born into a Tamil family in Madurai, Nirmala Sitharaman has held several important positions and cabinet portfolios in her short political career. An economist by profession, she joined politics in 2006 and was included in PM Modi's cabinet in 2014 as a junior minister. Proving her mettle time and again, Nirmala Sitharaman was appointed as India's Defence Minister in 2017, being the second woman after Indira Gandhi to hold the position and the first full-time woman Defence Minister.

In 2019, in PM Modi's second term, she was given the Finance and the Corporate Affairs Ministry. She is India's first full-time female finance minister and presented her maiden budget in the Indian parliament on 5 July 2019.

A trailblazer, Smriti Irani has always broken stereotypes throughout her life when she started out as an actor, to producer and then a politician. Presently the Union Minister of Women and Child Development, she has held several important portfolios in the ruling government. She has been an extremely successful actor and popular among the masses.

Soon after joining politics full-time, she was given important roles and responsibilities that she has served with sincerity and dedication. She is the youngest woman to be nominated to the Rajya Sabha. She has also held the important Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and now the WCD Ministry. Smriti Irani is currently the youngest minister in the cabinet of PM Modi. She is also the first woman to hold office as the Union Minister for Human Resource Development and Union Minister of Textiles.

Vedika Jain is a legal researcher with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions

Veritable B-Schools!

*Businesses and Enterprises today are witnessing a revolution of sorts with women converting “problems” into success stories. Fuelled by an indomitable entrepreneurial spirit, these women have become economic engines, playing a decisive role in enriching and promoting business across multiple platforms, observes **Manu Shrivastava***



Rati Shetty, Founder and Chief Product Officer (CPO) of BankBazaar.com ; (right) Saiiree Chahal who founded Sheroes.in, a popular platform for women

How many of us would see the potential for a multi-million enterprise in a nondescript-seeming ‘domestic’ problem and turn it into one of India’s first fin-tech start-ups? Rati Shetty - Founder and Chief Product Officer (CPO) of BankBazaar.com – did just that and more. Her success story continues to inspire millions, particularly women, in the world of business and technology.

Born in Chennai to a family of entrepreneurs, Rati’s professional journey is nothing short of a B-School case study. After marriage, she and her husband were exploring options to buy a home in India but the search process for a loan turned out to be ‘frustrating and stressful’. They soon realised the need for a hassle-free, online experience in India.

She says, “India was not that digital then and banks not that liberal either. Unlike today, one couldn’t walk into a bank and meet someone unless referred to by a member of the bank. We knew the whole thing could be much simpler and without ‘actually meeting’ a person.” This gave birth to Bankbazaar.com, founded in 2008 on the premise that “people wanted things to be much simpler and transparent.”

Helping address financial needs

Headquartered in Chennai, Bankbazaar.com is the world’s first neutral online marketplace for instant customised rate quotes on loans and credit cards. It is Rati’s “schedule-oriented approach” that helps her balance her personal and professional commitments. “I have a list of things to do every day before I leave for work and it always includes a slot for my fitness regime, either yoga or the gym.”

She advises women to make their own list and stick to it and hopes to see a day when women with views are respected just as men with views.

MobiKwik co-founder Upasana Taku is playing a pivotal role in the country’s digital future. MobiKwik provides a mobile phone-based payment system and digital wallet where customers add money to an online wallet that can be used for payments. Upasana’s current responsibility is to ‘simplify payment acceptance for retailers in India’ and lead MobiKwik’s evolution into a financial distribution hub that caters to their financial needs. She is focussing on bringing a million retailers on the platform to provide them access to a host of financial services on the MobiKwik platform.



Vani Kola, Founder and MD of Kalaari Capital

Women furthering women causes

Social entrepreneur, author Aditi Gupta is the co-founder of the comic Menstrupedia. Being a woman Aditi had first-hand experienced and witnessed the myths and taboo surrounding menstruation and wanted to change that. In 2012, she founded the comic with her husband. Menstrupedia has been benefitting thousands of young girls across India. In 2014, Aditi was listed on the Forbes India 30 under 30 list for her work.

One of the most popular platforms for women, Sheroes.in is a community platform, an ecosystem for women, 'offering support, resources, opportunities and interactions via Sheroes.com and the SHEROES App'. Through her several enterprises and initiatives, Sairee is building up women at work and future-of-work conversations in India, changing the gender narrative and building a strong technology play to solve the problems of gender disparity in India.

SafeCity Founder and CEO Elsa Marie D'Silva was in the aviation industry for 20 years when she decided to make a career switch. She wanted to focus on empowering women and the youth by using technology to create awareness, education and interaction. SafeCity is a platform that crowdsources personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces. This data which maybe anonymous, gets aggregated as hot spots on a map indicating trends at a local level. The idea is to make this data useful for individuals, local communities and local administration to identify factors that cause behaviour that leads to violence and work

on strategies for solutions.

Revathi Kulkarni Roy is a serial entrepreneur who pioneered the first ever women's taxi service in Asia creating brands like FORSCHE – Asia's first all-women taxi service- and VIIRA – a taxi service in Mumbai by women for women. Her latest venture Hey Deedee is the first ever all women instant parcel delivery service. She has been working to empower urban poor women through her various initiatives. She has also won the NITI AAYOG's Women Transforming India Awards 2016.

Supporting other start-ups

Founder and Managing Director of Kalaari Capital, Vani Kola spent 22 years in Silicon Valley and founded two companies, Rightwrok and Certus software. She moved back to India and started her career as a Venture capitalist after partnering with New Enterprise Associates (NEA). After starting operations in 2012 with a 150-million-dollar fund, Vani has come a long way by investing in and supporting e-commerce sector ventures.

Listed as one of the most powerful women in Indian Business by Fortune India, Vani has also won the NDTV Women of Worth award for entrepreneurship and TiE Delhi-NCR 5th Edition of women Entrepreneurship Summit Award. She had made early investments in Flipkart and Myntra.

Ankita Vashishta is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of 'India's (and Asia's) first venture capital fund



Divya Gokulnath, co-founder of BYJU's; (right) Venture capitalist Ankita Vashishtha

that invests in and promotes women entrepreneurship'. Through SAHA Fund Ankita has also invested in technology and innovation sectors in India, Asia, UK and the US.

Ankita had worked in the investment space in India, Singapore, the Philippines, UK and US for more than eight years before launching SAHA Fund. She says she founded SAHA Fund to 'promote and scale up successful businesses that have women leaders, or women employees or women consumers as the focus - across healthcare, brands, Artificial Intelligence (AI), financial services, analytics and cybersecurity'.

Ensuring smart and safe travelling experience

Through ExpressEarth Digital Services, founder Basudha Shrivastav has created a niche environment for smart travellers providing different options for travelling that truly suit you and not a travel company or agent. Founded in 2015 with Basudha's husband Himanshu Narula, ExpressEarth takes care of all travel needs including hotels, transport, insurance, etc. They have won several awards including the NASSCOM 10k programme.

Chitra Gurnani Daga co-founded Thrillophilia with husband Abhishek Daga that is now one of the most well-known travel companies in India. An alumnus of the Indian School of Business (ISB), Chitra was passionate about business and travelling and decided to pursue her dream to realise her passion. Thrillophilia curates local experiences for unique and offbeat travel stories. With 3.5 million monthly users, it is one of the largest online

platforms for travel experiences.

Furthering access to education

Divya Gokulnath co-founded educational platform BYJU's to help students learn better. After completing engineering degree programme and joined BYJU Raveendran's classes as his student. Eventually, she got married to him and they launched BYJU's together.

Today, BYJU's is the world's most valuable ed-tech start-up. It offers learning through an app and website for students of classes 1st till 12th and for competitive exams like JEE, CAT, NEET and IAS. The app has more than 42 million registered students and 3 million annual paid subscriptions. It makes learning fun through visual lessons.

Through their start-up Cogitus, Ruchi Jhawar and Anju Modi are offering creative education to children and that too beyond the four walls of a classroom. After starting in Ranchi in 2017, the duo has taken their start-up to other Indian cities like Bengaluru, Pune, Indore, Satna and Surat. They wanted to take education from traditional learning to higher thinking and Cogitus, meaning 'I think' in Latin, promotes that for children in the age group of 4 – 14 years.



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.

Queens and divas of celluloid

*Entertainment industry is becoming a centre-stage for women protagonists. The stereotypical image of a woman as the victim and sufferer is now overshadowed by a brigade which has established that the Indian Cinema today can boast of the Best of Best in all aspects of film-making – be it acting, direction, choreography and techniques. **Kriti Kalra** sketches the rise and rise of women in cinema industry.*



Saroj Khan, Bollywood's first chief choreographer; (right) Aruna Raje-Patil, first film technician who trained at FTII



Phalke used Durgabai Kamat who became the country's first female actor and her daughter Kamlabai Gokhale became India's first female child actress by acting in the same movie.

Known as Hindi cinema's first-ever comedienne, Tun Tun had run away from her home in Uttar Pradesh to become a playback singer. She made her debut as a solo playback singer in Nazir's Wamiq Azra (1946). She made her acting debut in 1950 with the film Babul. The first ladies of the film industry Devika Rani, Naseem Banu, Zubeida,

Shanta Apte, Mehtab, Shobhana Samarth, etc. paved way for Meena Kumari, Nutan, Nargis, Madhubala who with their acting prowess and powerful roles set things in motion for the next generation of female artists.

Today, actresses are at par with their male counterparts in terms of fan base, popularity, roles and financial status. The discrimination exists but several female actors and filmmakers have broken the glass ceiling. Moreover, many women, over the years, have gone behind the camera even as technicians in the industry.

Women film technicians help shape cinema

Dadasaheb Phalke's wife Saraswatibai Phalke was India's first female editor as she educated herself with technology and worked hard on her husband's films.

Asia's first women cinematographer B R Vijayalakshmi worked as an interior designer before taking to cinema. Keen on pursuing cinematography from a film school, she decided otherwise upon persuasion from cinematographer Ashok Kumar and made her feature film debut in 1985 with the Tamil film Chinna Veedu as a camera assistant. Vijayalakshmi made her directorial debut in 1995 with Paattu Padava where she also handled the

The Indian entertainment industry comprising films, television, online media and now OTT have come a long way. The film industry has traditionally been dominated by males but in the last few years there has been a gradual rise in and acceptance of content that is women centric. More content with strong women protagonists are now surfacing and the debate about the stereotypical portrayal of women is passé, so to speak.

Women in the film industry have also diversified from being in front of the camera to contributing from behind the camera. Today, Indian women are garnering respect as actors, directors, art directors, cinematographers, music composers, etc. within the country and beyond borders too.

Cinema finally coming of age

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world. Since Independence, the film industry comprising Hindi and regional films has undergone significant changes. Dadasaheb Phalke's Raja Harishchandra (1913) was made at a time when films were not considered a respectable profession for women. So, a male actor had played the role of the king's wife, Taramati.

In his second film Mohini Bhaskarasur (1913),



Ekta Kapoor



Vyjayanthimala



Madhubala



Nutan



Nargis

script as well as the cinematography for the film. The movie was screened at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in 1996 and earned critical acclaim.

India's first woman sound engineer Meena Narayanan was in school when her husband, A Narayanan, recruited her to be famous sound engineer Poddar's assistant in the 1930s from whom she learnt every aspect of sound engineering.

Trained theatre artist Fatma Begum was India's first female director when she decided to direct the film she also wrote the script of - *Bulbul-e-Paristan* (1926).

Women add 'art' to films

Daughter of courtesan Daleepabai and trained in classical music, Jaddan Bai became India's first female music director when she composed the music for *Talashe Haq* (1935) and *Madam Fashion* (1936). She's also the mother of famous Indian actress Nargis.

Starting her career as a background dancer, talented Saroj Khan soon rose to success and became Bollywood's first female chief choreographer. She made her mark as an independent choreographer with the 1974 film *Geeta Mera Naam* and played a crucial role in shaping the careers of popular actresses Madhuri Dixit and Sri Devi. Saroj gave the country some of the most memorable and popular numbers including *Dhak Dhak Karne Laga* (1992), *Hawa Hawai* (1987), *Kaate Nahin Kat Te* (1987), *Ek, do, teen*

(1988), *Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai* (1993), etc.

Art direction is an important aspect of filmmaking but most people outside the industry are not aware of it. Art Director Dundhu Renjeev, the first female art director of Kerala went against the wishes of her family to choose a career most don't even know about. Dundhu undertook an animation course in Thiruvananthapuram before joining a programme Invisual communications.

She eventually made her debut as an independent art director with *The 'Other' Love Story* in 2016. She says, "There are no budgetary constraints in big films, unlike in small-budget film where you have to make do with what you have and come up with ideas instantly." She maintains it's more challenging to work in small-budget films.

"Many women don't want to experiment or are afraid of treading an unbeaten path. That has to change. It may also be due to a lack of exposure. There are plenty of courses in acting and direction but how many do we hear about art direction?" she offers. Despite it being a physically-demanding field, women art directors are carving a niche for themselves in a traditionally male-dominated field.

Women breaking all barriers

Writer, Director, Editor and Producer and National Award Winner Arunaraje Patil is the first woman technician to be trained at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). She passed out of FTII with a gold medal in

1969 and went on to work in films like Masoom and Giddh. She is known to make thought-provoking feminist movies too.

She says, "It's been a long journey . . . 52 years for me and 60 years for FTII." Today, she's conducts workshops for cinema enthusiasts to teach the next generation of filmmakers. "It's not so much the content but the quality of teaching that makes the biggest difference!"

One of the most successful and the biggest names in the television industry, Joint Managing Director and Creative Director of Balaji Telefilms Ekta Kapoor revolutionised the television industry by introducing a new genre of soap operas portraying powerful women.

Speaking at a session on 'Women leaders impacting entertainment and cinema' at Film Bazaar organised by NFDC (National Film Development Corporation) Film Bazaar held annually in Goa parallel to the International Film Festival of India, she said, "When I started in television, first accidentally, and later deliberately, we started taking female-driven narratives.

Then TV became an anti-thesis of films on a much larger medium, where women were empowered, their fashion sense became a talking point. Men were there, but

they had to look good. It was no longer their narrative. The protagonist was a woman."

The discussion tackled how women have made inroads in the industry and broken the glass ceiling and the opportunities that exist for women today in the industry.

Ekta Kapoor further added, "If you create content with women wearing saris, people call you regressive, if they wear swimsuits, they call it sexual. And I call them judgmental. I was telling someone the other day that I am probably the only person who has been criticised for being overtly progressive and at the same time, (for being) regressive and conservative."

Women across the traditional and new media – films, television, OTT - have transcended boundaries set by the society and are making a mark for themselves.

Kriti Kalra is an activist and field researcher with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of Draft-Craft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions

WHO AM I?



India's guardian green angels

*Shrugging off the stereotypes, women have also donned the robes of nature's custodians to make a positive impact in safeguarding ecology and making it their mission with a single objective: To make a better world for the coming generations. **Sonal Aggarwal** profiles some champions in this league.*



Karnataka's 107-year-old environmentalist Saalumarada Thimmakka; (right) Poet and environmentalist, Kerala's Sugathakumari

For centuries, women have been playing a significant role in social transformation and community development. An educated woman forms the basis of an educated family and an educated community. Like most countries across the world, India too has been facing the scourge of man-made environmental degradation. Rising pollution levels in the air, dipping water quality and soil contamination are affecting quality of life in urban areas.

These new challenges need innovative solutions and a grassroots approach. Women have, over the years, contributed immensely in eradicating social evils and preserving the environment. In traditional communities, especially among tribals, nature and its elements are worshipped. Women of the household have been the caretakers of the environment through such rituals and ceremonies.

In modern society, women are using 'modern' tools and skills to create environmental awareness. So, women from all walks of life are not only advocating through legal and administrative processes to create change in law and policy, women scientists are designing 'green' products and technology and developing 'sustainable' processes and enterprises for a greener planet.

Unassuming green warriors

Karnataka's 107-year-old Saalumarada Thimmakka is an Indian environmentalist who never planned to be one. She became an environmentalist by chance and received a Padma Shri for her contribution. The environmentalist could not have children, so she and her husband started spending their evenings planting trees and taking care of the saplings.

'Saalumarada' means rows of trees in Kannada. She has planted more than 8,000 trees including 400 banyan trees that were easily available in her village and protecting them on a four km stretch between Hulikal and Kudur. Thimmakka, with her husband, began grafting saplings from these trees and started planting them along the roads. In November 2020, she was awarded a doctorate by the Central University of Karnataka (CUK).

Indian poet and environmentalist, Kerala's Sugathakumari has been leading the feminist and environmental movements in Kerala and was a prominent figure in the Silent Valley protest – one of the first environmental movements in Kerala in the 1970s.

(continued on page 28...)



Bengaluru *getaways*

Steeped in history, Karnataka's capital of Bangalore or Bengaluru has in and around it scenic and idyllic locales that make for a wonderful weekend getaways. Nestled among rocky outcrops and hill ranges, it also boasts of beautiful temples. Its topography dotted by tanks, forts and watch towers are natural tourist hotspots, offering great hiking opportunities and picnic spots. The wonderfully amiable climate all through the year is the fringe benefit.

Text and photographs : Usha Hariprasad



Shringa teertha dedicated to Shringeshwara at Nandigram. The pond is said to be the birth place of south Pinakini river

Bangalore, the garden city as it popularly known is quite ancient. A 9th century Begur inscription has the record of Bengaluru. The hero stone found in the premises of the Begur Nageshwara temple mentions the death of a son and servant of Begur chieftain Nagattara in the 890 AD battle of Bengaluru. After that the city finds mention as the headquarters of Yelhanka rulers or rather Yelhanka Nadaprabhus. They were chiefs who were subordinate to the Vijayanagara Empire. Kempe Gowda, one of the rulers built a town and erected a fort in 1537. This today is the Pete or Avenue Road area in Bangalore which is home to a multitude of traders and their wares. Kempe Gowda further went on to beautify the city, built temples and water bodies.

The story does not end here. The city then saw a series of conquests and transfer of powers who left their own imprint on the city.

In 1637 the city was captured by Bijapur army and became the *jagir* of Shahaji Raje, father of the great

Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji. In 1687 it went into the hands of the Mughal army and from there it was leased to the ruler of Mysore – Chikkadevaraya Wodeyar. He developed the city, built another fort besides the old fort of Kempegowda.

After Chikkadevaraya Wodeyar, Bangalore then went into the hands of Hyder Ali, who was the commander of Mysore army and from him to his son Tipu Sultan. The British defeated Tipu Sultan in 1799 in the fourth Anglo Mysore war. Though they gave back Mysore to the Wodeyars, they set up their cantonment in Bangalore. There were two cities within the 19th century Bangalore – one was the old Pete area of Bangalore and the other was the newer cantonment.

In 1831 the British took over the reins of Mysore administration from Wodeyars. The reason given was maladministration of Mysore region by the then Mysore ruler Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. However, they handed the control back to Mysore Wodeyars in 1881.

After India's independence, both the old Bangalore city and Bangalore cantonment merged to form Bangalore City Corporation. From 1956, Bangalore became the capital of Karnataka.

Weekend destinations from Bangalore

Situated at 3000 feet above sea level, Bangalore has a pleasant climate throughout the year. It is surrounded by rocky outcrops and hill ranges. Many of the hills have been fortified and beautiful temples have been built. Various dynasties like Gangas, Hoysala, Vijayanagara dynasties have added tanks, forts and watch towers. The hills have thus become hot tourist destinations some offering great hiking opportunities and some serving as picnic spots. Here are seven such destinations from Bangalore that serve as good weekend getaways.

Channarayanaadurga – A historical fort, ruins and a lake

Channarayanaadurga is around 98 kilometers from Bangalore. It is en-route Madhugiri. It is a lovely getaway from Bangalore with a ruined fort, temple and a lake. The hill rises around 3734 feet and is fortified. The fortress is said to have been built around middle of 17th century by a chief Channapa Gauda from Madhugiri. It was with his

family for several years before it was captured by the Marathas. Later it went into the hands of a Mysore general Komaraiya and later to Hyder Ali. It was again recaptured by the Marathas under Madhava Rao and later by Tipu Sultan.

It is a great spot for trekking. The trek up the hill takes a good 1-1.5 hours. The best thing about this trek is reaching the fort. It has multiple entrances to confuse you. And as there are no markings or steps it takes time to figure the right entrance to the fort.

The beginning of the trek is through a village. Initially there is a bit of climb, but no rope or railings to guide you. After the initial 30 minute climb the trek is gradual. Look out for a lake and a ruined temple. Behind the ruined temple is your trek path to take you atop the hill fortress. Follow the path until you reach a spot from where two paths diverge. Take the one on the right. Though the left feels easier it is a fake pathway as there is no entrance to the fort from here. Trekking upwards the right path you will find the entrance of the fort tucked in a corner. This will take you to the top. The view from the top is glorious as it gives a panoramic view of the surroundings.

The descent takes a mere 45 minutes. Carry a water bottle and snacks with you as there are no shops nearby. Except for the initial steep climb, the trek is easy.



Chandrapatna Fort



Devarayanadurga Fort

Chandragiri – Jain monuments

Chandragiri is around 144 km from Bangalore and is a popular pilgrimage site for Jains. There are around 14 Jain basadis (place of worship) here.

Chandragiri Hill is around 3049 feet high and some of the famous basadis here are Chandragupta Basadi, Kattale Basadi and Saavati Gandhavarana Basadi. The basadis are dedicated to the 24 Jain Tirthankaras. There is a basadi dedicated to Bahubali or Gomateshwar and then there is Chandragupta Basadi that is dedicated to Parshvanatha, the 23rd tirthankara. It is one of the oldest basadis here. There are frescoes inside the basadi that details the life and times of Mauryan King Chandragupta. There is also a Chavundaraya Basadi dedicated to Neminatha – the 22nd Tirthankara and that was built by a Ganga minister Chavundaraya. There is also a cave dedicated to saint Bhadrabahu who was the guru of Chandragupta.

The hill abounds in inscriptions – some engraved on rock, some in pillars protected by mandapa like structures. Most of these are located from south-west to north-east of Chandragupta basadi. Some are hero stones, while some talk about Jain monks and their self-starvation or sallekhana vows to achieve nirvana and some are about Hoysala queen Shantala. Near Chandragiri hill is the Indragiri hill that has the famous statue of Gomateshwar. The

58-foot tall statue of Gomateshwar was installed by Chavundaraya in 982 AD. The anointment of Gomateshwar statue takes place every 12 years and draws a huge number of devotees.

Devarayanadurga – trek and temples

The place is around 73 km from Bangalore and boasts of Narasimha temples. Devarayanadurga is known by various names like Anebididasari, Jadakana Durga after a chief and also Karigiri – Elephant Hill. The hill was captured by the Mysore King Chikkadevaraya sometime in 1696 and hence the name Devarayanadurga.

Situated at an altitude of 3940 feet it is famous for its temples. At the base of the village is the Dravidian style Lakshmi Narasimha temple. It was built by the early Wodeyar ruler Kantirava Narasaraja. The tower however was repaired in 1858 by Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. Atop the hill is Yoga Narasimha temple. It is a temple consisting of inner sanctum, a sukanasi, a navaranga and a front facing mukha mantapa. Adjacent to the temple are three water bodies – Narasimha teertha, Parashara teertha and Pada teertha. A cave nearby has the water source of Pada teertha. Higher up the hill there is a small temple dedicated to Garuda, the bird from Hindu mythology Ramayan. The hill also boasts of a cave temple of Rama near a spring Dhanush teertha. There is also a British style traveler's bungalow and a bungalow



Magadi was once the capital of Kempe Gowda, the founder of Bangalore city

meant for missionaries on the hill.

At a little distance from Devarayanadurga hill is a small spring Namada Chilume. A deer park and a 20 acre garden of medicinal plants are other attractions nearby.

Magadi – bastion of Kempe Gowda

Magadi is a small place near Bangalore – some 53 kilometers from the city. Once the capital of Kempe Gowda, it is now a nondescript village.

Kempe Gowda is said to be the founder of Bangalore. He had the vision to build Bangalore as a fortified city in the year 1537. He and his son Kempe Gowda II ruled the city for more than 100 years. However in 1638, with the attack by Bijapur army, Kempe Gowda -II was forced to give up Bangalore and move to Magadi and made it his capital. He built a fort, dug a moat around it and during his reign and his successors, two Magadi temples were built inside the fort complex. He not only fortified Magadi but also took precautions to fortify nearby hills like Savandurga and he captured other regions like Hulikal, Hulliyurdurga, Kunigal, Uttaridurga etc.

You can see traces of these in Magadi. You can see a small section of Magadi Fort. It has no watch towers, entrances or gateways. Nearby is the Magadi Rameshwara temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. Another famous temple is Someshwara temple constructed by the last of Kempe Gowda – Kempaveera Gowda in 1712. Kempaveera Gowda was taken prisoner in 1728 by Mysore King Dodda Krishnaraja's Dalavayi, Devaraja. He died in the prison of Srirangapatna. The temple is a fine Dravidian structure. It has the idols of Someshwara or Shiva, a three feet high idol of Parvati and another image of Satyanarayana.

Another famous temple in Magadi is the 12th century Magadi Ranganathaswamy temple. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The temple is a huge structure and it was expanded in stages by the later rulers like Hoysalas, Vijayanagaras and Wodeyars. The magnificent gopura of the temple was added only in 1959 by Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar.

Nijagal – Ruins of temple and a fort

The place is also known as Rasasiddhara betta or hill. It is located near Tumkur and is around 54 km from Bangalore.



Nijagal Betta. Nijagal was witness to the famous battle between the Marathas and Hyder Ali vassal, Sardar Khan

Nijagal was witness to the famous battle between the Marathas and Hyder Ali vassal, Sardar Khan. The story goes something like this. Marathas were under the lordship of Madhava Rao Peshwa and they set out to defeat Hyder Ali. The idea was to conquer Mysore and en-route they stopped at Nijagal. The fort of Nijagal was not easy to surmount. It was high up, defended by steep boulders from all sides. It was secured by moats, watch towers and vigilant guards. The fort did not lack water as it had plenty of springs – Rasa Siddhara done, Kanchina done and Akka-Tangiyara done. Thus the Marathas could not easily capture the fort and the siege lasted nearly two months. It was then that the chieftain of Chitradurga – Madakari Nayaka aided the Marathas and the fort succumbed to the Marathas finally.

There are no charred remains of the battle though. The trek up the hill is pleasant and easy. It starts with a mud route initially. The trail is approximately four km. There are rocks and boulders en-route. Scattered cave shrines, numerous ponds, ruined temples greet you as you trudge up. It takes a good one hour to reach the top. The surrounding hillocks are visible from the top and there are ruins of fortifications as well. The place is suitable for a night trek as well.

Nijagal is popular with locals as there are temples dedicated to Narasimha and Veerabhadra. There is a spring

here called Siddhara-done that houses a dargah, sacred to both Hindus and Muslims.

The landmark to locate this route on Bangalore-Tumkur highway is the Kamat Hotel and Café Coffee Day (CCD) on your left. Take the left after CCD and you will find a railway under bridge. Cross the track and you can find Nijagal betta.

Nandigrama: Temple of Bhoga Nandeeshwara

Nandigrama is near to the popular weekend getaway-Nandi Hills and is just 54 kilometers from Bangalore. A small section of British army was stationed from 1799-1809 in this village. But that's not why this place is popular today. It houses the ancient Bhoga Nandeeshwara temple built in 9th century. The village Nandigrama has become famous because of this temple. The temple is a Dravidian style temple of 806 AD and built by Rathnavali queen of a Bana ruler. It is 320 meters in length and 250 meters in width. From outside it looks like a single temple. But it is actually three temples built at various intervals. The temple of Bhoga Nandeeshwara has been expanded by several later rulers – Chola, Hoysala and Vijayanagara rulers.

At one end is the temple of Arunachaleshwara.

This temple of Shiva has an inner sanctum with the Linga, then ardhmantapa and then navaranga. It has a square shikara. In front of the temple is a Nandi mantapa. The Nandi is made of granite. This mantapa and the square shikara was constructed by son of Arunachaleshwara, an officer during the rule of Nolambas. There is a two feet idol of Simha Ganesh inside the shrine.

In the North you have the ancient temple of Bhoga Nandeeshwara built prior to 9th century. This temple too houses an inner sanctum, ardhmantapa and a navaranga. The pillars of navaranga are of Ganga style. In front of the temple there is another Nandi mantapa. The Nandi here is of black stone.

Wedged between the temples of Bhoga Nandeeshwara and Arunachaleshwara is a temple of Uma-Maheshwara. Shiva and Parvati are worshipped here. The temple houses a beautiful kalyana mantapa with minute sculpturing of parrots on the pillars. There are some 500 such figures on the pillars.

The temple courtyard boasts of smaller shrines for various goddesses – Kuchamba, Girijamba, Apeetha etc.

There is also a Vasantha mantapa for spring festivities built during Vijayanagara period. Also a small pond named Shringa teertha exists here with a temple dedicated to Shringeshwara. The pond is said to be the birth place of

south Pinakini river.

Sivagange: cave temples and springs

Sivagange is 53 km from Bangalore and is a major trekking and pilgrimage center near Tumkur.

The hill is around 1368m high and is home to plenty of temples and springs. The ancient name of the hill was Kakudgiri. It is a conical shaped hill and has the famous temple of Gangadhareshwara. It is said that ghee turns to butter when applied to Gangadhareshwara in the temple. The temple has the idol of Kempe Gowda and is said to have been patronised by the same. This is the first temple you will encounter while you climb the hill.

When you trek higher up the hill, watch out for Kempegowda Hazara – a structure with pillars built in Vijayanagara style. As you climb further up you are treated to many springs – Antara Gange, Patala Gange and so on. There is also an underground water spring Olakala teertha.

At the very top of the peak there is a Nandi statue. It is a monolith and has a small circular path for circumambulation. Atop is a placed known as Shantala drop. It is said to be the place where Queen Shantala, wife of Hoysala King Vishnuvardhan committed suicide. Some say that the queen killed herself as she was unable to produce an heir to the throne. However some refute this and say she undertook



Bhoga nandeeshwara temple, Nandigram



Sivagange is a major trekking and pilgrimage center near Tumkur

Sallekhana- self starvation to attain nirvana.

The trek up the hill takes 2-3 hours and is a 4.5 km trail. Steps, railings help you navigate the stretch easily. But beware of monkeys. They snatch away snacks, water bottle and sometimes caps. Best to pack it all in your backpack while trekking up the hill.

At the base of the hill there are some Mutts. One is the Sankara Mutt of Sringeri and then there is the Lingayat

Mutt as well. No wonder the place is brimming with devotees during weekends. So if you wish for some peace and solitude visit this place during weekdays.



Usha Hariprasad is a freelancer who is fond of travelling, discovering new places and writing about travel related destinations around Bangalore at Citizen Matters. Currently, she works in a trekking organisation.

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“Of course, awards mean a lot. It is a proof that you have done something meaningful, appreciable and worthwhile.”

A Marathi actress, producer, director and writer, **Vaishali Vasant Kendale** is also a double M.A. in Communication Studies and History, a B.Ed. in English and has cleared SET (State Eligibility Test) for Lectureship. She believes that film is an effective medium to express our thoughts and convey a social message to the masses. Vaishali has featured in Marathi films like ‘Khwada’, ‘Masuta’, etc., and a Hindi feature film ‘Kastoori’.

In a free-wheeling chat with **A. Radhakrishnan**, she talks about her creative journey.

What does acting mean to you? Is acting inborn or taught?

For me acting is an interpretation of a given or assigned character. Some inborn qualities enhance acting, and there are some skills which you have to learn after getting into this field.

Do you prefer a particular genre of films? Is there something called Dalit films?

Not specifically. As I have worked in both fiction and non-fiction genres, I enjoy both. The narrative fictions, which presents sociocultural and psychological issues impress me more.

This term ‘Dalit films’ is used by us on the basis of content from Dalit issues like victimisation by caste discrimination and often ignored by mainstream. I think we create such divisions for our convenience, because a film, being strong and effective means of communication, can be a voice for any community.

A few words on your films as an actress?

I liked playing my characters in Marathi short fiction films. ‘Pistulya’, was my first experience of filmmaking as a student, and how a good film can be made. Then there is ‘Postmortem’, ‘Sahal’ and ‘Akrant’ and also Marathi feature films like ‘Khwada’, ‘Masuta’, and a Hindi feature film ‘Kastoori’.



I actually lived the life of my characters, spending a lot of time with real characters at real locations as part of my research, which helped me interpret various roles.

How would you assess your getting into different roles as an actress, director, producer and writer?

My previous work brings me new opportunities whether it is acting, direction or writing. I think it's my commitment and multi-tasking approach which people like most and opportunities emerge.

I was Chief Assistant Director for Khwada, Writer and Director of Skill Development, Animation Film for Dept. of Social Justice and Special Assistance, Govt. of Maharashtra; and Asst. Director for Not For Sale, Marathi Short Fiction and RIP (Rest In Pollution), a short fiction.

I was an independent writer and director for short documentaries Chasing Dreams, Roots of Elan, Across the Soil, Prashnachinha (Question mark), and Investing Life.

Do awards mean anything to you? What awards have you received thus far?

Of course, awards mean a lot. It is a proof that you have done something meaningful, appreciable and worthwhile. It is a green signal telling you are on the right track and egging you on to go ahead.

I won the Best Actress Award for Masuta, at the Dada

Saheb Phalke Film and Television Camera Awards, 2019. My debut short documentary Chasing Dreams won Best documentary Award at the Pratibimb National Film festival; Jury's Special Mention Award at the Women's International film festival, Goa, and Festival Special Mention at the Dada Saheb Phalke International film festival, Delhi.

My micro documentary Prashnachinha /Question Mark won 'Yes, I am the Change Award' in 2018. My debut documentary 'Investing Life' has been officially selected for the Indian Panorama, at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) GOA, 2021. It also won the Silver Award in 'Unforgettable films' category, at the 2020 Spotlight Documentary Awards, Atlanta, Georgia, United States.

Do you have your own production company? What are your future plans?

Yes, I have my own production company called XED Start Productions.

I just want to be busy with whatever gives me eternal joy and satisfaction. For the present, I would like to keep under wraps my future projects.

As an independent film maker, how do you source funds?

I prefer a very simple method for sourcing fund for my films. I pitch my subject and explain the treatment that I wish to give to the film. That's all. If the producers like it, they approve it.

Tell us about your debut non-fiction film 'Chasing Dreams' as story writer and director. What inspired it? What were your expectations?

'Chasing Dreams' was an assignment of BARTI (Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute), Pune. I was supposed to make a report and documentation of it. It tells the extraordinary stories of three strong Indian girls, from the downtrodden class from different regions in Maharashtra who are international players. It focuses on their extreme struggle to survive in adversity and the crucial role of BARTI in their journey.

Their interesting success stories of championship in different fields of sport and how they become the real ambassadors of women empowerment in Indian mainstream society influenced me to visualise in it a good documentary.

When we watched the final cut of the film, it seemed really inspiring. So I decided to send it to film festivals and let the audience watch it. I had no expectations from it. But the feedback was very good, especially the appreciation from parents. It won many awards too. It was all unexpected for me.

Briefly tell me also about your short documentary film 'Question Mark'.

It is about a school named 'Question Mark', run by Matin Bhosale, from the Phase Pardhi community. He gathered the children of his community from all over India, who had no shelter and some of them were criminals or beggars. Matin, I thought was a change maker for it is really hard to

teach such children.

What was 'Investing Life' all about?

Social issues in rural and urban areas always make me ponder. I discovered that that one can use film as an effective medium to express our thoughts and convey a social message to the masses.

This documentary was about three unique people living their life in a local way but working in a universal manner, far away from publicity and so called fame, silently working for social causes, investing their life without expecting any returns, leading to betterment of mankind and ecosystem. The satisfaction derived gave them the happiest feelings. They believed everyone could do it.

A personal visit unfolded to me many unseen and unsaid, extraordinary stories and incidences in their life. This debut non-feature long documentary is about survival of species including humans in unfavourable situations i.e. social boycott, road accidents and man-animal conflict. It discusses about habitat destruction and species extinction due to human interference. The film questions our way of living.

What is your documentary style?

I do not bind myself to any particular style. I like free and innovative ways of storytelling. I like to use impressionism in my films because we live in a world with different species, characters, environment, habitat, colours, light, etc. I explore the process of representation and significance in narrative film discourse. I want the audience to feel and experience them through my film. When it comes to narration, I prefer first person narration.

Is a message essential for a documentary?

A film itself is a message as it communicates with the viewer. It is an expression of thoughts and ideas. So while making fiction or non-fiction, as a film maker you cannot every time stick to a particular message. But yes, I believe there should be some thought behind making a film.

Do you think nonfiction conveys a message better than fiction ?

I think it is the treatment of how you present content that is important. It depends on what message you want to convey. Sometime it heals the mind and at times it takes you into deep sorrowful thought.

Does the world of films work like the real world?

If you are talking in context of profit and loss, the film industry is the same as any other industry. But its functioning is different from others. It demands more sacrifices from a person wanting to survive in this field. It seems glamorous for the audience outside, but it is hard work. It's very hard to survive depending only on films. Other earning options are a must.

What kind of research do you do, and how much time do



you spend researching a subject before beginning a film?

It depends on the topics I conduct research for. When I made my debut non-feature Investing Life, I worked on it for almost four years collecting data.

Though an unending process, I had to stop somewhere and shoot. Research develops the informative, visual content and references in film, which we can use for treatment of the film.

Do you think film festivals boost films?

Obviously it does. It increases the reach and audience. You get to meet so many interesting people too.

Does writing and directing energize or exhaust you?

Direction energises me. Sometimes writing exhausts me.

What was an early experience where you learned that language and film had power?

I still remember that in 2002 I was watching the news about the Academy Awards. Halle Berry was the first black to win the best actress award. A thought generated in my mind that 'nothing is impossible'. Then onwards, when I face anything which seems difficult, I say to myself, "Yes, you can do." I learned that language and cinema have power.

Do you read reviews? How do you deal with bad reviews?

Yes, I do read reviews sometimes. But frankly speaking I don't let it bother me because reviews are personal opinions

of a person. If it is good, I am happy. If it is bad, should I be afraid of criticism?. One has to respect different opinions. Keeping that in mind I continue my work.

What is the most difficult part of your artistic process?

Speed. I cannot work too fast or in a hurry. I take my own sweet time. Sometimes this is too long for others.

What is your view on morality? What does goodness mean?

It is very difficult to define morality. If I say something is good for me, it may be bad for others. I just want to say that we should not exploit others. One should not use someone and hurt or harm them in the process. We should accept the right to existence of every living being. And try to help others in need.

If you weren't in films and documentaries what would you do for work?

I would be a full-time Professor as I love teaching. It is such a learning process.



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



Wellknown scholar and environmentalist Vandana Shiva; (right) Environmentalist and political activist Sunita Narain

(continued from page 16...)

It was a crusade to protect the Silent Valley forest in Palakkad district of Kerala from a proposed dam over Kunthipuzha, a tributary of the Bharathapuzha.

She was the founder secretary of the Prakrithi Samrakshana Samithi, an organisation for the protection of nature. She was also very close to the tribals and worked closely with them to take their issues with the government. Highlighting the importance of keeping the biodiversity intact for human survival, Sugathakumari would regularly talk to children to teach them about environmental biodiversity, rivers, ponds, groves, forests, etc.

Tackling the menace of waste

In Assam, in the villages surrounding the Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO world heritage site, plastic waste was a big problem. A native of the area, Rupjyoti Saikia Gogoi, devised a creative solution to the plastic waste problem by weaving it in traditional handlooms and creating daily use and home products such as table mats, handbags, door mats, etc. Through her enterprising venture, Rupjyoti also trained women of nearby villages in the plastic weaving technique. Rupjyoti's initiative has not only helped tackle the plastic waste problem but has also helped thousands of women earn a livelihood.

Disturbed by the sight of waste lying around in her village, she thought of doing something. Trained in handloom weaving, a skill known to Assamese women since childhood, Rupjyoti uses the same technique used in weaving bamboo and integrates plastic with cotton threads to weave on a traditional handloom.

Annuradha Bhatt is an active member of Project Waste Management in Goa's Assagao. An initiative by a local NGO, the project aims to tackle the problem of waste management. Owing to it being a tourist destination, solid waste management is a big problem in Goa due to lack of awareness and waste collection and disposal facilities. Through this initiative, Annuradha generates awareness

among the locals about waste segregation and proper and environmental-friendly waste disposal. She has been actively working to make the locals understand the importance of waste management.

Preserving biological biodiversity

A leading conservation scientist and environmentalist, Dr Krithi Karanth's focus areas include researching on ways in which humans and wildlife can peacefully coexist. She has been working for more than 20 years in the area of wildlife conservation and studying the impact of human activity on the environment.

Dr Purnima Devi Barman from Assam is one of the most prominent environmentalists in India. Popularly known as Hargila baido, she has been awarded the Nari Shakti Purashkar by the President of India which is the highest civilian award for Indian women for her work as a conservation biologist.

Leading from the front

Director General of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in New Delhi and publisher of Down To Earth magazine, Sunita Narain is an Indian environmentalist and political activist. She's also a major proponent of the Green concept of sustainable development. Starting her career in the 1980s, Sunita has been awarded the Padma Shri for her work. She has chaired the Tiger Task Force for conservation in 2005 and is a member of the Prime Minister's Council for Climate Change and National Ganga River Basin Authority (which employ practices to clean the river). In 2005, 2008 and 2009 she was featured on the world's 100 public intellectuals list generated by US journal Foreign Policy. Her focus areas include climate change, water conservation and resource management.

Eco feminist and Delhi-based environmentalist Vandana Shiva is known the world over for her efforts to protect forests. A Gandhian, she has organised women networks to conserve local biodiversity. The TIME Magazine identified her as an environmental hero in 2003. She is the



Champion for animal rights Maneka Gandhi; Grassroots activists (right) Gaura Devi; (below) Dr Krithi Karanth; (right) Rupjyoti Saikia Gogoi

director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy in Dehradun. She created Navdanya, a national movement to protect the diversity of living resources in 1991 through which more than 2000 varieties of rice have been conserved and 34 seed banks have been established in 13 states nationwide.

Maneka Gandhi is one of the most prominent and popular environmentalist in India. A politician and Indira Gandhi's daughter-in-law, Maneka has been a champion for animal rights. In 1994, she founded People for Animals, the largest organisation for animal welfare in India. She was appointed chairwoman of the Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPC-SEA) in 1995. She has filed Public Interest Litigations (PILs) in the area of animal rights. Her PILs have achieved the replacement of the municipal killing of homeless dogs with a sterilisation programme (Animal Birth Control programmes, commonly abbreviated as ABCs), the unregulated sale of airguns and a ban on mobile or travelling zoos. For her revolutionary work, she has received several prestigious awards globally.

Grassroots activist trigger change

A native of Chamoli in Uttarakhand, Gaura Devi came to prominence in 1974 when she organised the women to hug trees to prevent their cutting. She and 27 other women confronted the local loggers who were cutting the trees. The men of the village were hoodwinked and sent out of the village.

Gaura Devi was the head of the Mahila Mangal Dal at the Reni village. She and her women guarded the trees all night until the loggers surrendered and left. News of the movement soon spread to neighbouring villages and people joined in. Women are leading from the front to fight the menace of pollution, preserve biodiversity and generate sustainable living alternatives.

Sonal Aggarwal is a dedicated volunteer and rural activist with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.

Breaking barriers, making a mark

*Thanks to their grit, endurance and application, Indian sportswomen have carved out a spectacular niche to merit recognition in the wide spectrum of Sport, a discipline hitherto a male bastion. The climb to success was fraught with a number of challenges but women broke glass ceilings and showed they were no less inferior to their male counterparts. The laurels they have won in the last two decades is proof, if it was needed, that gender is no handicap in performance, asserts **Trisha Sharma**.*



Para-athlete Deepa Mehta (Credit - Deepa Mehta Twitter); Para-shuttler Manasi Joshi (Credit - Manasi Joshi Twitter); weightlifter Karnam Malleshwari

Today, Indian sportswomen are achieving success in international sports tournaments and garnering accolades for the nation in several areas of sports.

Names like P V Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Mary Kom, Sakshi Malik, Dutee Chand, Manasi Joshi, P U Chitre, Mithila Raj, Deepa Malik, etc., need no introduction. Women in India have proved their mettle time and again and have finally received the recognition that was long due.

Indian sportswomen have endured social, cultural and financial challenges, raced ahead and ensured the perception of Indian women is changed internationally. In a country where sports have been dominated by men and a field that has traditionally been monopolised by men, Indian women have changed the map of the country's sporting landscape. They are winning, blazing ahead and garnering international recognition to the country in the most prestigious and coveted championships like the Olympics, Paralympics, Asian Games, etc.

Indian sportswomen at the Olympics

Weightlifter Karnam Malleshwari was the first Indian woman to win an Olympic medal after she won a bronze medal at Sydney in 2000. It was a historic moment for the

country and the beginning of many more splendid achievements by Indian sportswomen. Her feat at Olympics came 48 years after the 1952 Helsinki Olympics where the first Indian woman participated in Olympics: Mary D'Souza participated in the 100m and 200m races.

Karnam's medal has inspired the next generation of Indian women athletes who have since won several medals in the Olympics. Shuttler Saina Nehwal was the first India woman to win an Olympic medal in badminton when she won a bronze medal at the 2012 Beijing Olympics. She became the World No 1 badminton player in 2015. Indian freestyle wrestler, Rohtak's Sakshi Malik became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic medal for wrestling at the 2016 Rio Olympics in the 58 kg freestyle category. Badminton player P V Sindhu became the first Indian female athlete to win a silver medal at the Olympics at the 2016 Beijing Olympics in Badminton.

Indian boxer Chungneijang Mary Kom Hmangte, popularly known as Mary Kom, became the first Indian boxer to win an Olympic medal in boxing at the 2012 Beijing Olympics in the 51 kg fly weight category. A native of Manipur, she has also won 13 gold medals in other international competitions.

The Women in Blue

Even though India is known for cricket the world over, the national women cricket team called 'Women in Blue' made the Test debut in 1976 and the One Day International debut in 1978 at the Cricket World Cup. Although women played cricket in India in the early 70's, it was not in an organised manner. It was only at the initiative and due to the efforts of Mahendra Sharma that women cricket started taking concrete form in the country. Women's cricket officially started in India when Mr Sharma registered the Women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI) under the Societies Act at Lucknow in 1973. Later, Chandra Tripathi and Pramila-bai Chavan also played an important role in the development of the sports for women in India.

The WCAI received the International Women's Cricket Council (IWCC) membership in 1973 and the recognition of the government in 1978. Today, several names from the Women in Blue are recognised the world over. Some famous names include Mithali Raj, Jhulan Goswami, Smriti Mandhana, Veda Krishnamurthy, Harmanpreet Kaur, Priya Punia, Tanya Bhatia, etc.

One of the best cricketers of all times and One Day International (ODI) Captain of women's national cricket team, Mithali Raj is an opening batswoman and holds several records to her name. She is the highest run-scorer in women's international cricket and the only female cricketer to surpass 6,000 runs in women's ODI matches. She is also the first player to score seven consecutive 50s in one day international matches. Mithali Raj also holds the record for the highest number of half centuries in women's ODI matches. During the 2018 Women's Twenty20 Asia Cup she became the first player from India (either male or female) to score 2,000 runs in T20Is and also became the first woman cricketer to reach 2,002 WT20I runs. She is the recipient of the Arjuna Award in 2003 and the Padma Shri in 2015.

All-rounder Jhulan Goswami is an international cricketer, former captain of the Indian national cricket team. Now retired, Jhulan is considered one of the greatest women fast bowlers of all time, one of the fastest bowlers in the history of women's cricket and the fastest contemporary bowler following the retirement of Australian cricketer Cathryn Fitzpatrick. She is also the highest wicket taker in Women's One Day International cricket and recipient of the ICC Women's Player of the Year award in 2007 and the M A Chidambaram trophy for Best Women's Cricketer in 2011.

Women para-athletes shun norms

A discussion about women para-athletes is incomplete without Deepa Malik, the first Indian woman to win a medal in Paralympic Games, who won a Silver medal at the 2016 Summer Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro. Interestingly, she started her sports career at age 30. In August 2019, she became the first Indian woman para-athlete and the oldest to be conferred the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award. She had become the second para-athlete to be honoured



Cricketers Mithali Raj, Poonam Yadav and Jhulan Goswami

with the prestigious award after javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia in 2017. Para-shuttler or para-badminton player Manasi Joshi has achieved a lot in a short span of time. After beginning her professional sports career in 2015, she soon gained success and became a world champion. It was in 2011 when she met with a road accident while riding her motorbike to work and lost her leg. Presently, she is ranked world no. 2 in women's singles category. Manasi has been featured in the TIMES Magazine cover page as the next generation leader and was nominated for the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2019 alongside icons Mary Kom, Dutee Chand and PV Sindhu.

Para-athletes Rakshitha and Radha from Karnataka became the first girls from the country to win medals at the Asian Para Games 2018. They brought home a gold and a silver, respectively. Radha is a resident of Chitradurga and is partially visually-impaired while Rakshitha from Chikmagalur has complete impairment. Another para-athlete Mysuru-based Ramya Shanmugham represented India at the 2018 Jakarta Asian Para Games and won silver medal in the Women's Javelin-Throw F46 event.

Other women sportssuper-achievers

Indian women have left no sports untouched. Koneru Humpy was the youngest women in the history of Chess to be awarded the title of Grand Master after she defeated Monika Socko of Poland in the tie-breaker semi-final match to lead India to the final of the 2020 Fide Online Chess Olympiad. Footballer Bala Devi from Manipur became the first Indian woman to sign for a European club in January 2020 when she signed a contract with the Scottish team, Rangers Women's FC. She also became the first Indian woman to score a goal in a European league.

Mumbai-based table tennis prodigy, 16-year-old Diya Chitale has participated in national and international tournaments and won accolades for the country. She has been training in Germany and Japan to prepare for international tournaments.

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

Women watchdogs making waves

*More and more women are leaving their imprint on the media, both print and electronic. Articulate and incisive, they have brought in a refreshing change in the manner in which information is consumed through advocacy journalism and mass campaigns. The charge of the brigade is evident in English, Hindi as well as vernacular media and they have proved their mettle time and again, says **Nivedita Pal**.*



Executive Editor at WION Palki Sharma Upadhyay; (right) Navika Kumar of Times Now

In India's history, journalists have played an important role in starting the independence movement, creating awareness among the masses, advocating for the rights of the citizens and then post-independence in aiding the government in carrying out mass campaigns and keeping a check on the other pillars of democracy. Women journalists, over the years, have not only made strong inroads gradually, they've taken charge and are leading the industry.

It was in 1959 when the first television broadcast started in India from Delhi as part of the All India Radio's (AIR) services and on an experimental basis with a financial grant from UNESCO. In 1965, a daily one-hour programme with a news bulletin started. Till the 1990's, autonomous public service broadcaster founded by the Government of India and owned by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Doordarshan was monopolising the newscast on television and was the primary source of news information for the country.

In 1988, New Delhi Television (NDTV) produced show 'The World This Week' started telecasting every Friday night. Eventually, several news channels entered the race. NDTV became the first private producer of the national news 'News Tonight' in 1995. TV Today Network, in 1995 only, occupied a 20- minute slot in DD Metro channel and aired

current affairs programme 'Aaj Tak', Business Aaj Tak and Newstrack. One of the most known faces of women journalists in India, Nalini Singh produced a five-minute fast-paced daily news segment 'Ankhon Dekhi'.

The first women of television journalism

When Doordarshan was the primary news broadcasting service in the country, many women news readers presented the news to the country. They were the first and set a template for the next generation of news presenters. Some of the names include Shobhana Jagdish, Avinash Kaur Sarin, Sarla Maheshwari, Neelam Sharma, Salma Sultan, Neethi Ravindran and Rini Simon Khanna who epitomised grace and simplicity.

Born into a Sikh family, broadcast journalist Avinash Sarin initially joined Doordarshan as a presenter but went on to become the main newscaster. She was one of the most popular news anchors of the 80s and 90s. Later, she became a documentary director and television personality. She is known for her documentaries on Asian culture.

Neethi Ravindran with her short hair was different from her counterparts who donned long locks. She had presented several historic moments in the country including

the news of the death of Mother Teresa in 1997. Born in Kerala to an Indian Air Force officer, Rini Simon Khanna was a popular news anchor of the time during her 16-year stint with Doordarshan.

Remembered for her signature style, a red rose locked into her hair below her ear, Salma Sultan worked as a news anchor in Doordarshan from 1967 till 1997. She also had a unique way of draping the saree that stayed with the viewers. Born to scholar and secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Mohammed Asghar Ansari and a homemaker mother, after her stint with Doordarshan Salma went on to direct television shows such as Panchantra Se that was telecast soon after Mahabharata in 1989. Her serial Jalte Sawal telecast in 2004 on DD News on Sundays focussed on women issues.

Women making a difference

One of the most known faces of among broadcast journalists; Nalini Singh has been the anchor of several news-based and current affairs programmes on Doordarshan. She is remembered for her programme on investigative journalism Aankhon Dekhi. Daughter of consumer rights activist H D Shourie and sister of Indian journalists Arun Shourie and Deepak Shourie, Nalini Singh produced and anchored a social documenting series Hello Zindagi for Doordarshan in 1995.

A journalist for more than three decades and the face of Times Now news channel, Navika Kumar has covered and reported on some very important issues in the country particularly on developments in Indian politics and business. She has 'broken' many high-profile stories and scams including the Commonwealth Games (CWG) Scam in 2010-11, the Aircel-Maxis deal in 2006, etc. News presenter and journalist Shweta Singh has been presenting hard-hitting news segments for years. Executive Editor of Special Programming at the Hindi language news channel Aaj Tak, Shweta started her career in 1996 and has several prestigious awards to her credit.

Television journalist and news anchor Marya Shakil started her journalistic career in 2005 after completing Masters in mass communication. Marya has won the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards as Best Political Journalist (Broadcast) in 2012 for her show on 2012 UP elections and then again in 2014 for the 2014 general elections coverage.

Taking journalism up a notch

Executive Editor at WION Palki Sharma Upadhyay reports extensively on foreign affairs. A native of Rajasthan, she hosts India's only international news and views prime time show called 'Gravitas' on WION. After completing her Master's degree in communication and journalism, she started her career in 2002 by joining Doordarshan. She has interviewed several world leaders including India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, Pakistani politician Pervez Musharraf, Sri Lankan Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, Colombian



Journalist Nalini Singh was one of the most popular faces on Doordarshan

President Juan Manuel Santos and more. More recently, Palki also reported on Israeli politics especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and PM Benjamin Netanyahu's trial in the face of corruption charges, Queen Elizabeth lobbying the British government to conceal her private wealth from the public, the US-China face-off in the high seas where China warned off a US warship in South China Sea and the US deployed one of the world's largest warships to the Indo-Pacific.

News Agency Asian News International (ANI) offers syndicated news feed to several media entities in the country and is one of the biggest television news agencies in India. ANI Editor Smita Prakash joined the agency in 1986 as an intern and was later recruited as a full-time employee. In December 2020, during her interaction with Governance Now MD Kailash Adhikari as part of a talk series, Smita said, "Media is a service. Why are industrialists interested in media if not to wield power and furthering their business interests?" In a sphere, where debates about political meddling in media are ripe, it's challenging to stay untouched. "Viewers are smart to figure out that the media house is agenda-driven and it doesn't work and last long. If it is only a tool, it is a temporary phenomenon."

Any discussion on women journalists in India is incomplete without Barkha Dutt. Born in New Delhi to S P Dutt, an Air India official and well-known journalist Prabha Dutt, Barkha credits her journalistic skills to her mother. Her younger sister Bahar Dutt is also a television journalist. Television journalist and author Barkha was part of NDTV for 21 years who gained recognition after her reportage of the Kargil War in 1999. Recipient of several awards such as Journalist of the Year, Best TV News Anchor for her programme 'We the people', Barkha Dutt was also awarded the Padma Shri in 2008. The percentage of women in Indian journalism has been on the rise in print media, television and new media and in English, Hindi as well as vernacular media and they have proved their mettle time and again.

Nivedita Pal is a Kolkata-based law associate working on a Women Rights Project with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.

Healing thyself with Covid Kavach

*As Covid-19 began spreading its tentacles, the nation also pulled up its socks and responded by developing its own vaccine in astonishingly quick time. While the vaccination has taken off in right earnest, India has also been magnanimous in providing a healing touch to its neighbouring countries proving that “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” wasn’t just a rhetorical slogan, says **Gajanan Khergamker**.*



Covid Vaccination

India rose to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call for self-reliance and became Aatmanirbhar by creating its own vaccine and pulling off what was nothing short of a miracle. When, in India, all looked lost towards the third quarter of last year, with regard to the Covid pandemic, the nation swiftly seemed to have got its act together even before the year ended. Coronavirus figures began to dip and how. And now, till February third week, India vaccinated 1,01,88,007 healthcare workers and frontline workers so far.

For a nation whose vaccination drive had begun only on 16 January 2021, the showing wasn’t modest by any stretch of imagination. The Union Health Ministry maintained India’s vaccination coverage ranked third in the world, after the USA (55.2 million doses) and the UK (16.12 million doses).

Vaccination at record speed

India, incidentally, began inoculating its people to fight the Covid pandemic from January 16th this year and administered its first 10 million vaccine doses in a period that was the second quickest drive in world. The nation had to battle lingering hesitancy among some people and technical glitches losing the pace race to United States which reached its first 10 million figure in 31 days - three days before India made her mark. United Kingdom, on its part, took 56 days to surpass the figure.

In the overwhelming effort, twelve states and union territories vaccinated over 75 per cent of all the healthcare workers who had been registered on the government’s Co-WIN portal. Among the states topping the list was Bihar with 84.7 per cent coverage, followed by Tripura

with 82.9 per cent and Odisha with 81.8 per cent. Sadly, Delhi lies in the list of the seven states and union territories with less than 50 per cent vaccine coverage. So far, only 46.5 per cent of the registered healthcare workers in Delhi have received their first shots. The lowest coverage was reported in Puducherry where only 30.2 per cent have been immunised. Puducherry was followed by Chandigarh where 34.3 per cent received the shot and Punjab where 38.4 per cent received it. The vaccination drive aims to immunise 10 million healthcare workers, 20 million frontline workers, 260 million people above the age of 50, and 10 million people with severe co-morbidities.

World pharmacy at work

For India, plugged as the ‘pharmacy of the world,’ that produced 60 per cent of the vaccines for global

use even before the pandemic struck, supply was never a problem. India already had the world's largest immunisation programme, delivering 390 million doses annually to protect against diseases like tuberculosis and measles. There was an existing infrastructure that would make Covid-19 vaccine distribution easier. Also, in order to brace for the vaccination, the government had organised dry runs across the nation. The Covid precaution phone tones were replaced with a message urging people to get vaccinated.

In early January, India announced a goal to inoculate 300 million people by August. However, only 8.4 million received a vaccine in the first month, far from the government's goal. Vaccinations were made available primarily for frontline health workers and, in some places, police officers and soldiers. It's a matter of time before the numbers start to pick up and India manages to notch the prerequisite numbers to bide over the pandemic.

Record exports to boot

From the time India started her vaccination drive till mid-February, the government had exported more than 1.6 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines to 20 countries to help save lives. The nations ranged from those in India's immediate neighbourhood, like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Myanmar to 6.2 lakh doses cumulatively to Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Bahrain, Oman, Barbados and Dominica.

India, on her part, has also approved the shipment of Covid-19 vaccine to Cambodia following a request from the Cambodian PM Hun Sen and plans to supply Mongolia and Pacific Island states even as supplies from India continue to reach Afghanistan too. India's strength, as the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines for myriad diseases, is aimed to improve regional ties and counter China's political and economic dominance.

'Priority' as much as US

population

The 'priority' population to be vaccinated in India is close to the entire population of the US. In comparison, the UK would be vaccinating just a tenth of the volume (3 crore, around 50 per cent of its population) in the first phase. The Serum Institute of India has, so far, committed 100 million doses of Covishield at a discounted price of around Rs 200 a piece to the government and could supply additional doses of the vaccine if the government orders more. According to official versions, the biotech and pharma company has the capacity to produce 100 million doses of the vaccine every month.

Bharat Biotech MD Krishna Ella, in reports, maintained the availability of Covaxin would be limited to around 150 million doses till July this year. And, besides these two, there are other vaccine candidates, too. Zydus Cadila's ZyCoV-D and Russian vaccine Sputnik-V, produced domestically by Dr Reddy's Laboratories, are presently undergoing clinical trials. These will, conditional to their efficacy being proven, be available by around March 2021. Incidentally, as supply in the country is regulated by the government, citizens cannot seek vaccination, even if they are willing to pay for it, unless the government allows them to do so.

Medical staffers are the first in line to receive the vaccine. About one crore doctors and ward staff who work in public and private healthcare facilities across the country are the first to receive the vaccine. Next in line are two crore frontline Corona warriors — people in essential services in addition to armed forces, paramilitary and police personnel.

The essential service providers range from sanitation workers at COVID-19 facilities, cleaners and waste collectors in cities to those who man public transport. Also, municipal staff such as engineers, revenue officials and staff at crematoriums are to be considered front-line warriors. Vaccination for these three crore people is expected to be free.

The government plans to launch a mobile app to enable self-registration once the process opens up for the non-priority groups. For this, any valid ID recognised by the government such as Driving Licence, Voter Card, PAN, Aadhaar, Passport, Passbooks issued by banks and post offices and MNREGA job cards can be used for registration.

Self-registration in time

That apart, the government also plans to facilitate self-registration through the Common Service Centres, set up by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to offer e-services in rural and remote areas. Those above 50 years of age and those suffering from serious co-morbidities making them vulnerable to Covid-19 infection are said to be around 27 crore in the country. Although their lists are still in the making, considering their high-risk status, their vaccine shots are expected to be fast-tracked.

According to operational guidelines for a Covid-19 vaccination strategy released by the Health Ministry recently, the names of those above the age of 50 will be taken from the electoral rolls prepared for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

In this priority group, too, there will be age-wise sub-categories, with senior citizens getting shots earlier than those between 50 and 60 years of age.

India's tryst with Coronavirus has been legendary and, true to her nature, she has - once again - led the rest of the world towards recovery and health with vaccines cheap, durable and within the reach of the common man.



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SUBEDAR NETRA BAHADUR THAPA VC

Invincible in death (1916 –1944)

Netra Bahadur Thapa was born on 8 January 1916 and joined the Indian army in 1932. He was recruited in the Fifth Gorkha Rifles (5 GR) and served on the North West Frontier. He was promoted to the rank of Subedar and was transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the regiment (2/5 GR).

In World War II, the unit was deployed in Chin Hills in Burma with the 17th Indian Division. In March 1944 the division was ordered to withdraw to Imphal to halt the Japanese assault and movement towards Assam-Bengal. As the Japanese 15th army became determined to push through the Tiddim-Imphal road and take Imphal at all costs, it resulted in large number of casualties.

2/5 Gorkha Rifles was stationed in the Bishenpur area, and on 25 June, Netra Bahadur (then an acting Subedar), was in command of a garrison of 41 soldiers at an isolated hillside piquet called 'Mortar Bluff'. This position was isolated, 400 yards from the nearest other piquet, and devoid of cover. It was also overlooked by a position named 'Water Piquet' to the south, a short distance away on high ground to the South, which had been over-run by strong enemy forces on the previous night and was still in enemy hands. Owing to its commanding position the retention of Mortar Bluff was vital to the safety of other positions further down the ridge and to Bishenpur itself. A relief force was sent to bolster the piquet's forces at 6:30PM.

The relief had been harassed by enemy snipers at close range but was completed without casualties. A little more than an hour around 7.30 pm, the enemy began to attack.

Netra Bahadur Thapa and his men defended themselves fiercely, with Thapa exhorting his men to hold fast, and finally succeeded in driving the Japanese back. He displayed tireless energy, moving between his men's positions, encouraging his young soldiers and tending the wounded. He rallied his men calling for artillery fire on his

own post. A short lull followed during which Thapa gave a clear and concise report on the telephone to his Commanding Officer (CO) and asked for more artillery defensive fire. Having done this he made preparations to meet the next onslaught which was not long in coming.

The Japanese soon launched another attack under cover of jungle, darkness and heavy rain. The attack was conducted ferociously but the Gorkha troops held out until one section's Light Machine Gun and Heavy Machine Gun jammed. With their fire-power reduced, the section was unable to maintain its position and the enemy overran their section of the defences, killing 12 out of 16 of its defenders. With no reserve to call on, Thapa himself charged forward from his position and stemmed any further advance with a hail of grenades.

At this point, Thapa would have been justified to withdraw. However, his next report to his CO stated that he intended to hold, and simply requested for ammunition and reinforcements. Despite several more attempts, no more ground was gained by the attackers due to Thapa's efficient plans for defence. Eventually, at 4 a.m. the next morning, a section of eight men with grenades and ammunition in support arrived. This drew the attention of the attackers, who gunned down all eight.

Undaunted, Netra Bahadur Thapa retrieved the ammunition and supplies himself, and led a renewed offensive at the head of his platoon HQ, with grenade and kukuri. It was in this assault on 26 June 1944 that he was shot in the mouth, and shortly afterwards struck by a grenade blast, which finally killed him. His body was found the next day, still clutching his Kukri, lying next to a dead enemy soldier bearing fatal Kukri wounds. He was posthumously awarded Victoria Cross (VC) for gallantry in the face of the enemy on 10 October 1944.

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



DIWAKAR KARKARE

Bollywood's vintage poster artist (1930-2021)

Those were the days when before a movie hit the theatres, big posters, banners and hoardings announced its arrival. Bollywood's yesteryear publicity designers were responsible for giving them a larger-than-life appeal. There was no 24 by 7 media then and the poster of the film in itself was one of the most potent mediums of promotion. One saw the heroes, the villains, the heroines all in full glory in the handmade film posters created with much love, creativity and labour. Yet in today's film world, there is hardly any mention of these great poster artists who have actually helped make many a career.

Among those who created those iconic figures of actors, including booklets for films for over two decades, between 1960s to 1980s was Diwakar Karkare, one of the most prolific and respected artists. In his heyday, he could be ready with publicity material for up to five films every week. With more than a thousand films to his credit, his creative imagination and skilled hands created posters for films like the iconic *Waqt*, *Don*, *Sholay*, *Silsila*, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, *Suhaag*, *Naseeb*, *Kabhie Kabhie*, *The Burning Train*, *Deewaar*, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Don*, *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*, *Kaala Patthar*, *Bena-zir*, *Mard*, *Eeshwar*, *Swami*, *Johnny Mera Naam*, *Bandini*, *Chandani*, etc. The first film that Karkare loaned his artistry to was *Bandini* (1963) directed by Bimal Roy and his last was designing K Vishwanath's *Eeshwar* (1989).

Considered nothing short of a genius in his field, this JJ School of Art, Mumbai, alumnus, Diwakar was trained in both commercial and fine arts, but when it came to film poster designs, he was a purist. Though he worked mostly with oil paints and water colours, he was versatile with a variety of techniques and materials.

His oil paint poster designs seemed like photographic stills. He often produced many of his posters in gouache. He sometimes employed a distinctive signature technique, called 'over-painting' for which he used palette knives to paint over photographic images, creating a dramatic and vivid effect, which turned them into quasi-painted

posters, and became a hit. At times he used charcoal to underline the film titles. Notably, he was responsible for bringing Amitabh Bachchan's 'angry young man' avatar alive on posters that he knife-painted to create the rugged look.

Remember those beautiful strokes in *Silsila* evoking the romance, the passion, the unfulfilled love stories, with all characters merging into one another? And that of *Kaala Patthar* conveying the angst and the dark world of its characters or the thrill, the energy, the chase of its character coolly conveyed in the *Don* poster. And of course the iconic *Sholay*, considered Hindi cinema's milestone film? He would often pitch to distributors and producers on how to convey entire storylines in one poster. His posters were popular abroad too.

He established Studio Diwakar in the 1960s and became the highest-paid designer in the industry. But eventually, in the 1990s, most of the art switched to photos and photoshop. With the digital takeover, Karkare's art was relegated to history. The trade, to him, had no creativity left and had become mechanical. He chose to retire, shutting his studio, in the late 1980s, and settled in Pune, but continued making portraits for individuals and institutions.

He was hugely respected in Bollywood, especially by Bimal Roy and Raj Kapoor. However fickle Bollywood played up. Despite a long association with filmmaker Yash Chopra, he wasn't invited for the 25th anniversary of Yash Raj Films. He had opined, "I don't regret losing touch. I have made peace by cutting ties with Bollywood." He was forgotten. Vintage poster man Diwakar died in Mumbai on 5 January 2021, due to age-related complications at the age of 90. He may have long disassociated with Bollywood but his art is historic and the nostalgic sentiments will stay on forever.

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



PUSHPA BHAVE

The quintessential social activist (1939-2020)

Pushpa Bhave, who died in October 2020 at the age of 81 defined the spirit of the quintessential Mumbai activist. Politically and socially aware and culturally rooted in the progressive local and international thought. She was a college lecturer and erudite of course who gave her students—as they testify so admiringly—more than a deep knowledge and love of Marathi literature. Starting from the Samyukta Maharashtra movement (She was a teenager then) this writer, theatre personality and Socialist contributed to every enlightened struggle and cause in the city and state.

In the book "Gandhi in Bombay towards Swaraj" by Usha Thakkar and Sandhya Mehta, Lord Bhiku Parekh writes: Gandhi called Bombay the 'first city of India' by which he meant among other things that it had a highly developed, public spirited civic culture not found in other Indian cities". One thinks of Pushpa Bhave on reading this. She was "tai" and teacher to people at large and what they mostly admired—or hated depending on which side of the cause they stood—was her fearlessness. There was nothing flamboyant and attention grabbing in her appearance. Even her speeches were backed by deep thought and sound reasoning rather than dramatic rhetoric. Whether it was the Ramesh Kini murder case that rocked Maharashtra or the struggle to rename Marathwada University as Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar University, Pushpatai was articulate and in the vanguard.

Nor was she unversed in the joys of cultivating friendships, relishing a taste for good cooking, discussing cuisine and with her knowledge of literature and theatre being a wonderful conversationalist. Many of her friends have emphatically mentioned her warmth and affectionate nature. All this went hand in hand with a quiet determination to take up for the victims of communal and irrational persecution. Her voice thus was raised in support of the late (assassinated) rationalist and anti-superstition campaign leader Narendra Dabholkar and to fight against the censorship of Vijay Tendulkar's plays like *Sakharam Binder* and *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Any movement or campaign to do away with prejudice and bias had her support

like participating as a delegate in a citizens' group visiting Pakistan. Her work during the Emergency also won her many admirers. Her enemies she faced with courage and her sense of humour must have helped her in estimating them for what they were.

Her husband Ananta Bhave was a familiar (and popular) face and voice for Doordarshan news viewers and he was also an accomplished writer of children's stories. Pushpa Bhave was closely connected with the Socialists who dominated the political sphere in the State then:

Pramila and Madhu Dandavate, Sadanand ...

Mrinal Gore and many others. Among the Communists were Ahilya Rangnekar, Tara Reddy, G L Reddy and myriad others. Together this large group of activists ensured that no act of injustice or worthy cause in Mumbai and Maharashtra went unnoticed. Mumbai then was a city that was industrial and had a vibrant protest culture thanks to the working class and men and women who dared to take sides.

Pushpatai, as her students and admirers point out always travelled by public transport and her fellow commuters saw a serene sari-clad woman reading a book. She always gave the impression of poise and quiet confidence. Perhaps her last public appearance was in January 2019 when she spoke—from a wheelchair—at the Shivaji Mandir in Dadar. The event was organised to honour writer Nayantara Sehgal whose invitation was cancelled by a prestigious literary body after she made some statements against the restrictions on freedom of speech. Pushpatai and the other organisers wanted to "apologise" to the acclaimed writer for this cowardly act. Ill she may have been but there was no doubt about her courage and spirit that evening. Mumbai, now a city of services, has turned into another version from the one it was during Pushpatai's time. Fortunately for us we have the legacy that she has left behind.

- Lina Mathias is a senior Mumbai-based journalist and former executive editor, *Economic and Political Weekly*.





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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?

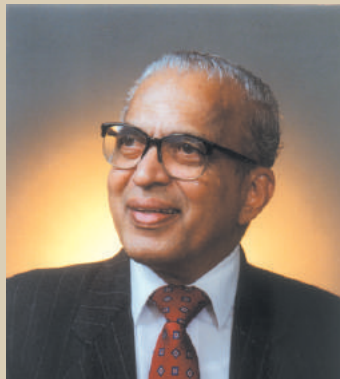
Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
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