

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

India chants the tourism mantra



ADVENTURE TOURISM: SKY'S THE LIMIT

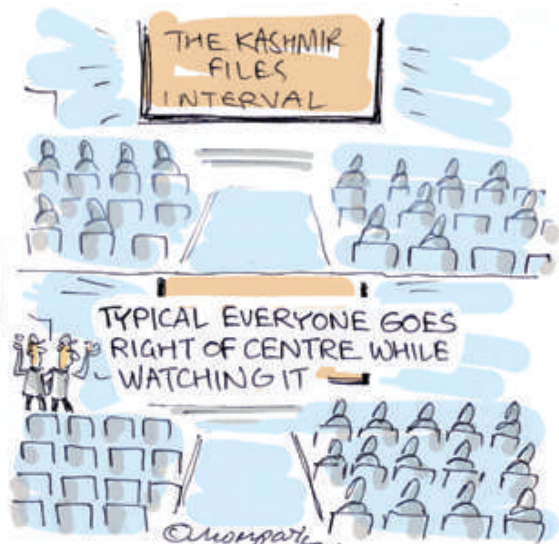
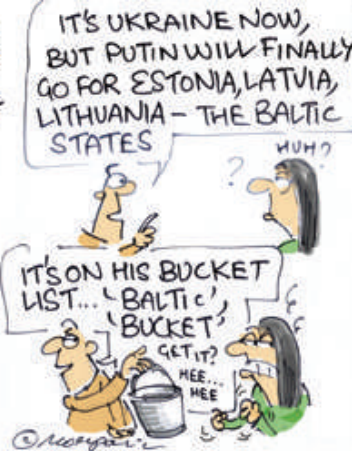
'ECO-FRIENDLY' INDIA LEADS BY EXAMPLE

Know India Better

GORGING ON MUMBAI'S
STREET FOOD

Face to Face

JOSHY JOSEPH



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India chants the tourism mantra

*With its rich history, culture and heritage India stakes its claim for being one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Ranking 34th on the world travel and tourism index driven by rich natural and cultural resources, the World Economic Forum has put India in the fifth spot on the Natural Heritage Index in the world. Tourism beckons in every form, writes **Kriti Kalra**.*



India, with its rich history, culture and heritage is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world

In February 2022, India's Ministry of Tourism, in order to promote tourism, recognised the immense potential of rural tourism in India. One of the niche areas of tourism emerging in India that includes eco-tourism, culture tourism, religious tourism, medical tourism, wellness tourism, film tourism, sports tourism, adventure tourism, etc. rural tourism is a promising sector and the ministry is working on its promotion and development.

New India's latest push for *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* has been instrumental in the realisation of this development where the ministry has formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Development of Rural Tourism in India. The strategy document focuses on key pillars:

Model policies and best practices for rural tourism;

Developing clusters for rural tourism; Marketing support for rural tourism; Capacity building of stakeholders; Governance and institutional framework.

India offers everything a tourist desires - geographical diversity, cultural richness, attractive beaches, 30 World Heritage SBPM and 25 biogeographic zones. In November 2018, India attained third position in the world tourism sector after China and US.

An important sector for Aatmanirbhar Bharat

The Tourism and Hospitality industry is one of the largest service industries in India. To support the 'Make in India'

programme and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, India's tourism sector has refurbished itself in a big way. It's playing the important role of an economic multiplier by creating jobs for India's fast-growing economy.

India, with its rich history, culture and heritage is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. It is one of the few nations that provide something for everyone. So, there are a string of options for 'rich' tourists looking for a comfortable stay or those looking for a royal, luxury experience and then there are myriad options for adventure seekers, those coming for experiencing new culture or to be close to nature and that too in a shoe-string budget – in all, India is self-sufficient and self-reliant in terms of providing diverse options to tourists of all kinds.

India ranked 34th on the world travel and tourism index driven by rich natural and cultural resources and the World Economic Forum ranked India as the fifth best destination on the Natural Heritage Index in the world.

Electronic tourist authorisations or e-Tourist Visa that was launched by the Government of India resulted in a significant increase in number of tourist visa issued in India. In 2019, a total of 29,28,303 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa and the facility was extended to citizens of 171 countries, as of March 2021.

Government entities further mission

The nodal agency in the country for the formulation of national policies and programmes and for the co-ordination of activities of various Central Government agencies, State Governments/UTs and the private sector for the development, promotion of tourism and marketing efforts and providing trained manpower resources is the Ministry of Tourism headed by the Union Minister and the Ministers of State.

Additionally, the ministry has a public sector undertaking known as India Tourism Development Corporation Limited (ITDC) that came into existence in 1966 as a primary entity for 'progressive development, promotion and expansion of tourism' in India. The objectives of ITDC include:

To construct, take over and manage existing hotels and market hotels, beach resorts, traveller's lodges / restaurants; To provide transport, entertainment, shopping and conventional services; To produce, distribute, tourist publicity material; To render consultancy-cum-managerial services in India and abroad; To carry on the business as Full-Fledged Money Changers (FFMC), restricted money changers, etc.; To provide innovating, dependable and value for money solutions to the needs of tourism development and engineering industry including providing consultancy and project implementation.

ITDC has constantly strived to reinvent itself to keep up with changing times and pace of the industry and to keep the Indian tourism sector competitive and lucrative. ITDC has, since inception, diversified into new service-oriented business activities like consultancy and execution of tourism and engineering projects, training / education in the tourism and hospitality sectors, event management and mounting of Sound and Light shows.

Marketing and innovation hold key

Other than ITDC, the Ministry of Tourism also has autonomous institutions that further its primary goals. These include Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) and National Institute of Water Sports (NIWS); National

Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) and the Institutes of Hotel Management.

Besides these, the Government of India initiated the Incredible India campaign – an international tourism campaign to promote tourism in India. The campaign has been more active since 2002 when the Ministry of Tourism made conscious and continuous efforts to rebrand the sector and bring in more professionalism to capitalise on the immense tourism potential of the country.

The PR strategy aimed to promote India as the preferred destination of choice for travellers and even roped in many celebrities as brand ambassadors including Amitabh Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra even PM Narendra Modi.

In 2016, it was decided that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the mascot of the 'Incredible India' campaign. 'No Bollywood actor will be engaged for the campaign aimed at attracting foreign travellers and video footages of Modi during the last two-and-a-half years where he has talked about tourism in India and abroad, will be used for the campaign' as per a Ministry of Tourism official.

PM Modi's new role was well supported because more tourists arrived in India from the nations that the PM visited. Also, India's perception has drastically changed since PM Modi came to lead the nation. According to a ministry official, 'tourist inflow from countries like the US, Germany, Fiji, Brazil, Australia, the UK, Canada and Myanmar, among others, has witnessed a significant jump after Modi's visit to these nations'.

Future trends positive

In India, the tourism sector is expected to grow 6.9 per cent annually to USD 460 billion by 2028, which is 9.9 per cent of the GDP. In 2020, the travel and tourism industry contributed USD 121.9 billion to India's GDP. Projections expect this figure to go up to USD 512 billion by 2028. By 2028, Indian tourism and hospitality is expected to earn USD 50.9 billion as visitor exports as compared to USD 28.9 billion in 2018. International tourist arrivals are expected to reach 30.5 million by 2028.

India's tourism sector accounted for 39 million jobs in the fiscal year 2020 that made for eight per cent of the total employment in the country. By 2029, the sector is expected to account for about 53 million jobs.

Tourism is a very important source of foreign exchange and in 2019, India earned foreign exchange of USD 29.96 billion recording a y-o-y growth of 4.80 per cent. Foreign exchange earnings (FEEs) from tourism in India witnessed growth at a CAGR of 8.96 per cent between 2007 and 2019.

The share of revenue from leisure travel to the tourism sector was 94.8% in 2019 and leisure travel spending reached USD 234.16 billion in 2019 which is expected to reach USD 432.3 billion by 2028 F. Similarly, business travel revenue was USD 12.84 billion in 2019 and that is expected to increase to USD 24.4 billion by 2028F.

With the pandemic behind us and supportive policies and measures initiated by the government to boost the industry, the tourism sector in India is looking at a promising future.

Kriti Kalra is an activist and field 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.

Adventure tourism: Sky's the limit

*With new vistas of traveling and exploring opening up, the popularity of adventure tourism promises to grow with time. **Anushka Singh** observes that an increasing number of professionals are seeking a work-life balance by opting for breaks in the form of adventure activity and that the internet and social media have only helped the cause of 'thrill seekers' in their pursuits.*



Bungee Jumping – a popular adventure sport

Exploration and invention are one of the primary instincts of human beings. In this regard, tourism and adventure tourism are as natural to humans today as was the nomadic lifestyle to them thousands of years ago. Adventure tourism can be defined as the movement of people from one place to another but in a characteristic manner that involves exploration or travel to zones and areas that are uncharted, possibly hostile or risk laden, remote, exotic and often deserted - basically doing activities outside one's comfort zone.

Adventure tourism is a much sought-after activity especially among the youth today and India with its geographical diversity offers an unimaginable range of adventure tourism activities. These activities are growing in popularity each day and social media has contributed in a big way in drawing more and more people to it. The potential of adventure tourism in India is immense - water sports such as parasailing or jet skiing in Goa, rock climbing in Aravalli Hills, rappelling and canyoning in the

Ganges, scuba diving in the waters of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, bungee jumping and rafting in Rishikesh or wildlife safaris in one of the many national parks - the list is endless.

The rush of adventure tourism

Travelers and explorers seek new and different experiences all the time which is why the popularity of adventure tourism will only increase with time. It could include any nature-based activity, physical activity, cultural exchange, etc. offering thrill-based pleasure. Contrary to popular belief, adventure tourism is very diverse in itself and does not include only 'extreme' physical activities such as bungee jumping or scuba diving. There is much more to the term than just 'high- risk' physical activities.

For the unversed, any activity that involves connecting with a new culture or exploring a new landscape and, at the same time, being physically active comprises adventure tourism.



Scuba Diving

So, adventure tourism is not just about being taking risks or testing the limits, it is also about knowing those limits and respecting them. Today, with the fast-growing middle class and upper middle class that are seeking new horizons and beating the conventional idea of a family vacation, more and more options and locations of adventure tourism are opening up every day.

Also, more and more professionals are now working towards striking a work-life balance and make it a point to take occasional breaks from work to push off to a 'new' location for a few days or try a new adventure activity. Access to the internet and social media has only helped further these 'thrill seekers' in finding their ultimate adventure activity for that adrenaline rush.

Additionally, with the Covid-19 pandemic normalising the work-from-home culture, there is an increased flexibility being offered to the working population who are making the most of it. Be it spending time with your loved one, with your children or with friends, people are taking every opportunity available to get away and do something new and thrilling.

The diversity of adventure activities

In India, like in most other nations, there are three main categories of adventure activities available - Land based, Air based and Water based adventurous activities. Some of the activities included in these three kinds of adventure tourism include:



Jeep Safari on Sam Desert



Mountaineering

Land based Adventure Tourism offers several options to adrenaline junkies that includes but is not limited to All Terrain Vehicle Tours, Personal Light Electric Vehicle Tours, Camel Safaris, Horse Safaris, Jeep Safaris, Wildlife Safaris, Bungee Jumping, Trekking, Mountaineering, Rock Climbing and Artificial Wall Climbing, Cycling Tours, Motorcycle Tours, Nature Walks and Bird Watching, Skiing and Snow Boarding, Zip Wires, etc.

Water based Adventure Tourism comprises, Kayaking, Sea Kayaking, Jet Skiing, Rafting, River Cruising, Scuba Diving, Snorkelling, etc. And, Air based Adventure Tourism includes many activities such as Air Safaris, Ski Diving, Hot Air Ballooning, Paragliding, Hand Gliding, Para Motoring, Parasailing, Kite Boarding, etc.

All government-approved adventure tourism activities have to follow specific protocols and guidelines. These are based on providing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), instructions for Risk Mitigation, Emergencies, etc. These also include safety briefing, emergency rescues, medical precautions and concerns, etc. It's important that these activities are conducted by trained personnel with the necessary permissions, risk management strategy, audits, etc.

Attractive locations for adventures

For those who are bored of the monotonous daily grind of life, adventure tourism offers the best break. India, unknown to many, is home to many locations and zones that offer the perfect reason to travel and explore. The length and breadth of the country, with the great geographical diversity, offers several exotic and wild adventure tourism spots.

Those engaged in the industry or dependent on it economically have been hoping that with the opening of the sector and with the pandemic behind, there will be a big boom in the sector. It's one of the best ways to break the lockdown blues.

Many states rich in adventure destinations in India such as Goa, Uttarakhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, etc., are making sure they leave no stone unturned to attract tourists, especially after the lockdown.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as far as they may be from mainland India, are extremely popular for offering some of the best water sports and water-based sports and adventure activities in India. A trip to the islands would be incomplete without 'indulging' in snorkelling, scuba diving or parasailing. The beautiful and exotic islands are a paradise for those seeking water based adventure activities.



Camel safari

The Spiti Valley - a cold desert mountain valley located in the Himalayas in the north-eastern part of Himachal Pradesh – is a haven for adventure seekers. The valley offers one of the most difficult treks in India. The harsh terrain makes it a challenging activity and also a popular one for those looking to go the extra mile and for a memorable experience. The Spiti Valley trekking span is 55 km (approximately) starting from Langza and ending at Dhankar and takes about five days.

Nature lovers don't miss an opportunity to visit Kaziranga National Park in Assam. The experience of coming face to face with the endangered Indian Rhinoceros cannot be explained in words. The park has more than 2,000 rhinos where one can take a jeep safari or an elephant-back ride to spot them. The park also has elephants, water buffalos, etc.

A hub for adventure activities

Goa happens to be one of the most sought-after destination in India for a vacation. The very sound of Goa means vacation. Interestingly, Goa is popular for tourism of all kinds, including adventure tourism. The beaches, lagoons, national parks, etc. offer a wide range of adventure activities.

Dudhsagar Falls, located on Mandovi River approximately 70 km from Panjim, is perhaps the most visited trekking spot in the state and also the most beautiful. One of the highest waterfalls in India, they are an ideal location for a challenging trek culminating into a breathtaking view.

Goa also offers a stream of options for scuba diving, parasailing, rafting, kayaking, trekking, sailing, hot air ballooning, jet skiing, windsurfing, dinghy sailing, etc. Adventure tourism in Goa is fast becoming a trend and getting extremely popular among the young travellers who are constantly looking for something new.

Anushka Singh works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analysing sources of news.

‘Eco-friendly’ India leads by example

Nikita Shastri points out that while the world grapples with the ill-effects of development, eco-tourism is compatible with sustainable development. It serves the twin benefit of promoting tourism with a conscious sensitisation and awareness towards the environment and its protection and conservation. Every participant becomes a stakeholder in the process.



Uttarakhand's popularity as a biodiversity hotspot is soaring with its picturesque mountains and dense forests

India is one of the most geographically diverse countries in the world and this is also what makes it a popular tourist destination on the planet. Tourists from across the globe descend on this land of wide-ranging geography and landscapes to destress, rejuvenate and to connect with nature. Eco-tourism is the name of the game now and every second tourism project in the country is being promoted as being eco-friendly.

Eco-tourism can be defined as a kind of tourism that involves travel to zones that are rich in biodiversity and ecologically diverse. The main purpose behind such activities is to be able to observe wildlife of an area and learn about the environment, its components and the biodiversity. Eco-tourism not just promotes sustainable tourism and development but also promotes sensitisation and awareness towards the environment

and its protection and conservation.

In most cases, tourism is detrimental to sustainable development. Eco-tourism, on the other hand, is a conscientious form of tourism that promotes sustainable tourism development. This kind encourages and ensures 'going back to nature' and its by-products. All aspects of eco-tourism help preserve nature, maintain ecological balance of the zone and hold the key to sustainable ecological development.

The importance of eco-tourism

Today, most nations on the planet are struggling to cope with the side effects of development and developmental activities. Climate change and global warming has led to countries adopting measures that will help protect their natural

resources and, in turn, that of planet earth. Today, survival of the human race is at stake. Several measures have been adopted to ensure a safer and greener home for future generations and eco-tourism is one of them.

Eco-tourism not only furthers conservation of natural resources but also focusses on making every participant a stakeholder in the entire process. Today, in India, eco-tourism is gaining momentum. Every day, more entities are focussing on promoting eco-tourism and striving to address the needs of eco-tourists.

Every country has a set of laws, known as green laws that are enacted to ensure citizens are made aware of the importance of environment protection and conservation and are penalised if there is a violation. The laws also help in spreading awareness on how man and environment can exist in a symbiotic relationship. Eco-tourism is one of the most effective ways to maximise the benefits of tourism – social, economical and environmental.

Eco-tourism strengthens and promotes conservation initiatives. Some of the advantages of eco-tourism include:

- Sustainable development of remote and rural areas surrounding urban centres and cities
- Preservation of natural habitat of indigenous flora and fauna and preservation of the zone's wildlife
- Awareness about the natural wealth of the zone and the rich biodiversity
- Involvement of locals, tribals and indigenous groups of the zone in tourism activity that ensures sustainability, prevents misuse or abuse of resources and also provides revenue-generating opportunities
- Revenue generated from eco-tourism activities help improve prospects of long-term development of the zone, in a sensible and sustainable manner

India abundant in natural resources

In India, there are many ways one can experience the beauty of Mother Nature. Some regions in the country are abundant in natural resources and are extremely popular among travellers looking for eco-friendly zones for tourism.

The Himalayas in the north offer great eco-tourism opportunities. States and Union Territories such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, etc., are some of the favourite destinations for such tourists. On the other extreme are Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, extremely rich in biodiversity and natural landscapes, where tourists make a bee-line round the year.

Thenmala, in Kerala, was the first planned ecotourism destination in India. Thenmala lies at the conjunction of the Kollam-Shencottah Road and the Trivandrum-Shencottah Road and has ten ecotourism spots that cover the great hill ranges of Thiruvananthapuram, Pathanamthitta and Kollam districts.

The literal meaning of Thenmala is 'Honey Hill' and high quality honey is exported from the zone. The area is surrounded by dense forests and rubber and tree plantations. The Nakshatravanam, a nursery of trees that are considered sacred to the 27 constellations, is very popular among tourists.

Also, the Deer Rehabilitation Centre situated nearby is home to several deer species. The deer are released into the forest when their population reaches optimum levels to maintain

the natural balance. Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary also offers great experience, with its rich flora and fauna, in the lap of nature. The World Tourism Organisation selected Thenmala as one of the premier eco-friendly projects in the world.

Initiatives to protect eco-diversity

India has a wide variety of rare and endangered species and the declaration and demarcation of several zones as wildlife areas and national parks has helped in the conservation and protection of these natural resources, especially the wildlife.

At present there are about 80 national parks and 441 sanctuaries in the country that are being protected by strict laws in place that also extend severe punishments for poaching, hunting, illegal trade of animals, plants or their products. In addition, the many botanical and zoological gardens also ensure protection of the ecosystem and offer great potential for eco-tourism.

Ecotourism encourages travellers to spend time in the lap of nature to experience its richness and magnanimity. So, tourists looking for an eco-tourism experience not only get to enjoy a new place and learn about it, they do so in a manner that is not destructive and less intrusive.

Be it undertaking a nature walk in the forests or meditating in the quiet of the grand mountains, eco-tourism is the one-stop solution to prevent the damage caused by tourism in general. Eco-tourism helps in promoting native cultures and ensuring the local flavours and elements remain intact amid tourism-based development.

Popular eco-tourism destinations

India has some of the best ecotourism destinations in the world and slowly, but surely, India is developing destinations that offer the perfect experience without disturbing the natural surroundings or the local population.

Uttarakhand's popularity has been soaring recently as it is popular as a biodiversity hotspot with its picturesque mountains, dense forests, water bodies and rugged terrains. Arunachal Pradesh, on the other hand, is the preferred choice among the north-eastern states owing to its many green mountain valleys, native culture of the many tribes, etc. Sikkim offers travellers great sight-seeing opportunities owing to its location amid the mighty Himalayas where Kanchenjunga stands as the third highest mountain in the world.

God's Own Country and India's first state to execute planned tourism, Kerala is a traveller's paradise. The lush green tree plantations, pacifying backwaters and the gorgeous terrain never fail to impress. Kerala's rich biodiversity can be experienced the moment one lands into the exotic state.

In Karnataka, ecotourism has combined the goals of preservation of nature and uplift of local communities to create a flawless system of ecotourism. Karnataka is home to many eco-tourism destinations including Madikeri, Agumbe, Coorg, Shimoga, Belgaum, Karwar, etc. In Coorg, for example, tourists can make visits to Nagarhole National Park, Brahmagiri Reserve Forests and other eco-sensitive zones without being intrusive.

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Medical tourism in the pink of health

*The concept of Health Tourism is synonymous with wellness. **Manu Shrivastava** makes out a case how over the years, India's popularity as a tourist destination in the West has been increasing steadily. The blend of Eastern Healthcare Wisdom and Western Medicine expertise provides a winning combination for patients across the world and India has got all it takes to be its hub.*



A tourist taking panchakarma treatment at a wellness resort

Official records reveal the Indian medical tourism industry has been registering an 18 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR). The sector is expected to grow at a CAGR of 21.1 per cent from 2020 to 2027. And, India is ranked 10th out of the top 46 countries in the world in the Medical Tourism Index 2020-21 by Medical Tourism Association.

For all practical purposes, among the range of sectors, Health Tourism holds immense hope. The Indian systems of medicines, i.e. Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchakarma, Rejuvenation Therapy, etc. are among the most ancient systems of medical treatment, of the world. It is without doubt that India can provide Medical and Health care and on par with international standard at comparatively low cost.

Why, look at Kerala as a prototype of India's Southern States, which has developed Health Tourism as one of the products for the promotion of tourism in Kerala. The sector of Health Tourism is being promoted by Kerala as a Unique Selling Point (USP) and most of the hotels and resorts in the state have been coming up with Ayurveda Centres as an integral part. A lot

of foreign tourists are known to make a beeline for India only for Ayurveda. In fact, leading tour operators too have included the option of Ayurveda in their material.

Medical tourism growing fast

Also, most of the doctors and surgeons at Indian hospitals are trained or have worked at some of the medical institutions in the US, Europe, or other developed nations. Most doctors and nurses are fluent in English, an issue with most other countries with non-English speaking populations.

Also, top-of-the-line medical and diagnostic equipment from global international conglomerates is available at many Indian hospitals. Indian nurses are among the best in the world. From nearly 1,000 recognised nurses-training centers in India, mostly attached to teaching hospitals, 10,000 nurses graduate annually. Also, the most budget-conscious traveller can afford first-rate service and luxury amenities in India.

There is an acute need for India to promote health tourism world-wide. If pertinent focus is given to Health and

Medical tourism, the potential of growth of Medical and Health Tourism in India can be much higher. India possesses, on her part, a wide range of advantages.

For one, India has world-class doctors and hospitals as compared to most other countries. In comparison to source markets, the cost of treatment is a fraction of what it would cost there. Also, importantly, for those looking for speedy relief, there's no waiting period for various medical processes as opposed to the rest of the world.

Over the years, India's popularity as a tourist destination in the West has been increasing steadily. The blend of Eastern Healthcare Wisdom and Western Medicine expertise provides a winning combination for patients across the world.

Government initiatives promoting medical tourism

It is in this regard that the Ministry of Tourism has taken a range of steps to promote Medical Tourism. Indian Healthcare Federation, a Non-Governmental Organisation affiliated to the Confederation of Indian Industry, on the advice of the Central Government, has prepared a guide on select Indian hospitals of the country for health tourism purposes.

The guide has been placed on the website of the Ministry of Tourism www.incredibleindia.org to boost visibility and publicity. Brochure, CDs and other publicity materials to promote Medical and Health tourism have been produced by the Ministry of Tourism and have been widely circulated for publicity in target markets.

At various international platforms such as World Travel Mart, London, ITP Berlin Medical, health tourism has been specifically promoted by India. Of late, a new category of 'Medical Visa' has been introduced, which can be provided for specific purpose to foreign tourist coming to India for medical treatment.

Guidelines for accreditation of Ayurvedic and Panchakarma Centres have been circulated to all State Governments for swift implementation and placed on the website of Ministry of Tourism i.e. www.incredibleindia.org to boost visibility and accessibility.

Over the last few years, across print, electronic, internet and outdoor medium, Yoga / Ayurveda / Wellness have been promoted under the Ministry of Tourism's 'Incredible India Campaign.' Brochures and CDs on Body, Mind and Soul covering the traditional systems of medicine have been produced and circulated extensively by the Ministry of Tourism.

Other entities promoting health tourism

Other agencies besides Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Tourism have also been involved in the development of health and medical tourism in the country. The support extended by government agencies and the initiatives taken to promote health tourism has significantly boosted the popularity of India as the hub of medical tourism among foreign tourists.

Indian Healthcare Federation is an independent non-statutory body comprising non-government hospitals, diagnostic centers, medical equipment manufacturers and pharmaceutical

industries. The main objective of the Federation is to promote and encourage healthcare industry in the country and it seeks to function as a liaisoning medium between Government, health care providers, medical equipment manufacturers and other medical institutions. It is affiliated to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CH) and works closely with the CH National Committee on Healthcare.

Wellness centers springing up

In keeping with this growing need, there has been a parallel mushrooming of wellness centers across the country giving rise to concerns regarding the quality of service. The guidelines for accreditation of wellness centers have been developed by the National Board for Accreditation of Hospitals and Healthcare Services (NABH) in consultation with AYUSH.

The Ministry of Tourism has also extended its Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme to wellness tourism service providers including accredited wellness centers. Presently, the wellness centers accredited by State Tourism Departments are also eligible for the MDA. After the accreditation guidelines of NABH is in place, all wellness centers seeking MDA would be asked to be as close to the accreditation guidelines of NABH as possible.

The initiative of accreditation of wellness centers by NABH and AYUSH has been greatly driven by the Ministry of Tourism as also consultation with the Wellness Tourism Service Providers, State Governments and other stakeholders.

Travelling for health and wellness

The term 'Medical Tourism' also known as medical travel, health tourism or global healthcare is used to describe the rapidly-growing practice of travelling across international borders to seek healthcare services. Services typically sought by travellers include elective procedures as well as complex surgeries, etc.

While addressing the inaugural session of CII Asia Health 2021, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that it was due to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that health had been linked with development in India and underlined that the country's healthcare sector has immense investment opportunities. Mandaviya urged the private sector to invest in the Indian healthcare sector, saying the country has the potential to become a hub of international health tourism.

"Earlier health meant only treatment but development has now been linked to health. Only a healthy society can become a prosperous country and this is Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's primary thinking," he said. The theme of the summit was 'transforming healthcare for a better tomorrow'. Emphasising that preventive care is an essential component of the health sector, he said that initiatives such as 'Khelo India' and Yoga play a vital role in realising the aim of a healthy society.

Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAtHome and #MeTooBeyondBorders initiatives.

India wins when tourism meets culture

*When it comes to culture-based tourism, India has many things to offer. Add to that the wide spectrum of hues and flavours that come from the country's rich heritage and multi-splendoured festivals! You get a complete package that is a tourist's delight, argues **Ruchi Verma** listing the advantages of Culture Tourism.*



Pushkar fair, Rajasthan

India is a land of unmatched cultural richness and diversity which is the result of an amalgamation of cultures and religions for centuries. The eclectic mix of cultures is one of the biggest draw for tourists from the world over. India is one of the few zones that offer a cultural diversity of this nature and magnitude.

The desire to experience new cultures has, over decades, brought many tourists and seekers to India. India's culture that runs synonymous with its history - perceived in new light - forms the focus of a new tourism sector called Culture Tourism that has only grown in leaps and bounds.

Over the last few years, hidden cultures, obscure lifestyles and their alluring effect have become the focus of this sector that has been attracting more visitors now than ever before. The World Tourism Organisation suggests that more than 40 per cent of all international tourists are 'cultural tourists'.

Diversity key to popularity

Culture tourism is a specific kind of tourism where the focus is on a country's or region's culture, lifestyle, architecture, art, festivals, rituals, etc. that distinctly defines and shapes their way of life. The diversity entrenched in the Indian society, in rural and urban areas alike, is the perfect recipe for promoting cultural tourism.

When it comes to culture-based tourism, India has many things to offer. Rock shelters that were inhabited by humans millions of years ago; rock cut caves used by Buddhist monks centuries ago for meditation; archaeological sites and ruins; places of pilgrimage; ancient temples, with intricate carvings and sculptures, built by patron kings; structures and landmarks that played an important role in India's freedom struggle; etc.

And, not just this, the varied food, clothing, festivals, fairs, processions, art work, handicrafts, folklore, dance and music, unique to each cultural, ethnic or tribal group and those indicative of the ever-lasting influence of the many dynasties and religions that have come to this region - all of these form the rich cultural capital of India.

The ancient land speaks

The region, now known as India, is the land where the earliest known traces of human life have been found. For example, the Bhimbetka rock shelters situated at the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh are India's oldest caves and today a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Bhimbetka caves were used as rock shelters by humans millions of years ago.

The paintings in the caves date back to approximately 30,000 years old and are one of the earliest art and rock paintings in the world. There are some 760 rock shelters in one of the largest prehistoric complexes, of which 500 are adorned with paintings.

The word 'Bhimbetka' comes from 'Bhimbaithka' which means the place where the mighty Bhim, one of the Pandava brothers in Mahabharat, used to sit. The paintings, mainly coloured in red and white with little use of yellow and green colours, depict scenes from everyday life such as dancing, hunting and of animals such as tigers, elephants, antelopes, etc. – primarily life in the Mesolithic period.

Bhimbetka rock shelters are popular among tourists coming to India and among domestic tourists too. On the other hand are rock carvings in Goa's Usgalimal that are not known to many. Situated on the banks of river Kushavati, the petroglyphs exhibit earliest traces of human settlement in the region and are approximately 30,000 years old.

The petroglyphs in Usgalimal in Goa were discovered by sheer coincidence. Sadly, of the nearly one lakh foreign tourists who visit Goa every year, only a few hundred visit these rock carvings. There is a need to popularise similar zones and encourage tourists to visit these rare sites.

Planning is the key

The Tourism Division of NITI Aayog provides 'strategic and directional guidance' to the Union and State Governments for the development of the tourism sector. NITI Aayog is an apex public policy think tank of the Government of India. The entity works towards catalysing economic development and fostering cooperative federalism through the involvement of state governments in the economic policy-making process.

NITI Aayog's tourism division aims 'to develop India into the most preferred destination for tourists through the development of responsible and sustainable tourism policies, focusing on niche tourism, eco-tourism and wellness tourism, infrastructure development, capacity development and increasing tourist footfall.'

The Culture Division of the think tank, on the other hand, endeavours 'to develop, preserve and promote India's arts, culture and heritage with a greater policy and planning coherence in the sector.' Both the division play an important role in promoting cultural tourism in the country by liaising with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Culture of the Government of India.

Both the divisions have undertaken projects to further

common objectives. The Tourism and Culture Divisions regularly review and analyse strategies and policies for tourism and culture development at the national and state levels and provide directional inputs. The policy suggestion and policy formulation for the two sectors are done by these entities.

Culture tourism and festivals

Some of the most popular destinations for culture tourism in India lie in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, etc. Festivals, around the world, play an important role in attracting tourists who want to experience a new culture and want to see one up close. In India too, festivals have been, for very long, inviting a large number of tourists and are being recognised as a form of cultural tourism by government of India's Ministry of Tourism (MoT) and by the state tourism boards.

Every year, millions of tourists attend major Indian festivals. The diversity of cultures in the country is reflected in the many festivals that are celebrated round the year. The smallest of occasion such as celebrating the harvest of a crop (Rabi or Kharif), welcoming a new season (spring, rain or autumn) or observing an event in the solar or lunar movement such as a full moon, makes a good reason for a festival in India. Some of these festivals include Lohri, Gudi Padwa, Mahashivratri, etc.

The story of culture tourism in India is incomplete without the mention of the fairs held in different parts of the country. These fairs, such as the annual cattle fair in Pushkar in Rajasthan, are very popular among international as well as domestic tourists.

What started as a trade fair for the buying and selling of cattle in the desert has now become a very popular tourist attraction. Tourists from all over the world through the small town of Pushkar towards the end of the year where hundreds of herders donning colourful turbans and artistic moustaches land to trade cattle. The fair attracts more than three lakh people and more than 20,000 camels, horses and cattle.

In South India, in Kerala, the Snake Boat Race also known as Vallam kali - a form of canoe racing - is held every year during the harvest festival of Onam. A major tourist attraction in Kerala and a unique feature of the backwaters, the snake boat race festival has now become an icon attracting lakhs of tourists every year.

Many states in India are popularising attractive and unique features of their respective cultures that have, for decades lured tourists, receiving overwhelming success in terms of visitors and revenue. Then there are those that are venturing newly in the culture tourism arena such as Goa. The smallest Indian state is now promoting and packaging festivals such as Sao Jao, Cashew & Coconut Festival, Bonderam, Shigmo and Tirpurari Purnima to attract tourists.

Ruchi Verma 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.

Religious tourism, slice of development

*Citing the example of Ayodhya, **Manu Shrivastava** explains India's turnaround to become one of the most favored destinations for Religious Tourism with both foreign and domestic travelers. Quite pertinently, the Indian tourism industry has outperformed the global tourism industry in terms of growth in the volume of foreign tourists as well as in terms of revenue.*



Varanasi Ghat

That there would be development here, was a given, apart from being the popular sentiment, distinctly upbeat, and swift on the heels of the Supreme Court verdict on Ayodhya. It was time Ayodhya moved away from the hatred.

Varanasi's locals had lived in peace together for years but had become pawns in the hands of political parties in India who saw profit in the hatred. One would imagine that the Supreme Court verdict directing the land to be given to a trust for the ultimate creation of Ram Mandir would be flayed and soundly by dissenting groups yet wasn't. And, that came as a pleasant surprise.

With the exception of a handful of rabid clerics from both religions going public with their versions on the verdict, it were the common masses - Hindus and Muslims - of Ayodhya who behaved in the most mature manner and predictably so. Members of both communities had lived in harmony and unison for generations together.

That the creation of a Ram temple would solve all of Ayodhya's problems was an emotionally-charged pitch as old as probably religion itself. It isn't as if all was hunky-dory at the administrative headquarters of Faizabad District. There were

simmering voices of discontent among a few Muslims within Ayodhya and beyond, across India too. But, they respected the Court's verdict but hoped that this would put an end to the entire controversy and everyone moved on.

Among most, it was Ayodhya's District Magistrate Anuj Jha who had a tall task ahead. After the successful handling of Ayodhya's law and order after the Supreme Court verdict, Jha has been working around-the-clock to maintain peace, calm and harmony till the Babri Masjid Demolition anniversary that falls on December 6 th .

Ayodhya heralds the change

Even before the verdict, lakhs of devotees had visited the town for 14 Kosi Parikramas and five Kosi Parikramas and then, soon after, on 12 November on Karthik Purnima when five lakh devotees visited Ayodhya. This augured well for the scope of religious tourism in Ayodhya, in particular, and the zone in general.

A lot of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders both at the National as well as State levels had made statements that the verdict will clear the way for a Ram temple and, with it, Ayodhya's all-round development. Locals were filled with hope

that, religious sentiments apart, the Central government and the State government will ensure the holistic development of Ayodhya.

The judgement ordered the central government to draw up a scheme in three months for the temple's construction and locals put aside their scepticism. They were hopeful that the State and the Centre are serious about the temple-town's development.

It was India's most awaited judgement. One that risked sparking riots and violence across India as tempers were guaranteed to run high. In the Supreme Court ruling, that nation watched with abated breaths expecting a simplistic reaction: One would celebrate a victory with a sense of vindication rather than relief while the other simmer with a rage that could spill over across India. And then, the unthinkable happened.

The Supreme Court delivered a gem of a verdict on 9 November amidst record security measures by the police in Ayodhya and political parties' call for peace across India.

An airport and Lord Ram's statue!

The Ayodhya verdict had flagged off two of Ayodhya's largest projects - the Ayodhya airport and the Lord Ram statue. Taken up as priority by the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh, the state announced plans to acquire more than 285 acres for the airport which will also be named after Lord Ram believed to have been born in Ayodhya.

Also, moving ahead in the direction, the state released Rs 400 crore towards acquisition after which the existing airstrip would be re-developed to tackle larger aircraft.

The existing airstrip set to be 1.5 km long and 30 meters wide permits only small planes and will need to be 45 meters wide with a runway of 2.5 km to handle wide-bodied flights.

In February 2019, the state cabinet cleared the proposal of investing Rs 640 crore on the airport project even authorised the district magistrate to acquire land on a mutual agreement basis. The Uttar Pradesh Government is all set to catapult Ayodhya on the national and international tourism network while providing the much-needed boost to local economy.

While the Yogi government has initiated the process of acquiring land for the proposed 221 metres Lord Ram statue slated to be the world's tallest and 38 metres taller than the current tallest 'Statue of Unity' in Gujarat dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the locals in Ayodhya exercise rare and mature restraint in their demeanour.

Incidentally, inspired by Sardar Patel's statue in Gujarat, the Adityanath cabinet even cleared the proposal worth ₹ 447 crore for the acquisition of 61 hectares (150 acres) towards a range of tourism projects that include a spectacular Lord Ram statue, a digital museum, an interpretation centre, a library, parking, a food plaza, and landscaping and other basic infrastructure facilities.

The Yogi Adityanath government had, immediately after coming to power, made its priorities crystal clear. The renaming of Faizabad district to Ayodhya and upgrading the local municipal council to Ayodhya Municipal Corporation apart, the much-awaited verdict on Ram Mandir was a given.

And now, a ₹ 126-crore project to redevelop and model

model the Ayodhya railway station building along the lines of the under-construction Ram Mandir — down to the stone used for construction — is set to be completed anytime soon.

From two years back when the facade of the small railway station that now has a capacity of 4,000 people per day, in Ayodhya town had been designed to resemble a temple, with a painting of Lord Ram at his throne with Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman at the entrance, the structure is now dwarfed by a massive 10,000-square metre, two-storey station building nearing completion next to it. The construction started in November 2018 and the first phase is set to be finished soon. It heralds a huge fillip in the arena of religious tourism in India. And a tourism that was synonymous with development.

India's diversity needs to be tapped

In modern India, religious tourism has the potential to register exponential growth. According to World Economic Forum, Travel and Tourism accounts for five per cent of India's employment. The nation registers seven million international visitors to China's 55 million and despite India having diverse resources be it cultural, or natural or intangible heritage or even sports events, it plays very significant role in socioeconomic development of the Nation.

India has, over the last decade, turned out to become one of the most favored destinations for religious tourism both foreign and domestic travelers. It is through tourism that the International traveler manages to understand the miscellany of India's cultural ethos. In a surprising achievement, according to official estimates, the Indian tourism industry has outperformed the global tourism industry in terms of growth in the volume of foreign tourists as well as in terms of revenue.

Growing economy remains driving force

Intriguingly, the driving force behind the exponential growth in religious tourism in India is the enormous progress made by the Indian economy. However, where India's infrastructure is concerned, there are areas that need to be developed. To boost the current growth of religious tourism, the India government must invest in providing better facilities such as transport, accommodation, conveyance, health and hygiene, security, etc.

India is widely known for a range of exotic religious places. Developing India has been synonymous with the growth of religious tourism.

It isn't without surprise to find places such as Kedar-nath, Mahakaleshwar, Jagannath Puri, Tirupati, Kashi Vishwanath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath, etc., being among the most visited religious places in India. This, for obvious reasons, being above and beyond the Varanasi zone and associated places in Uttar Pradesh.

The most recent win for the second term for Yogi Adityanath will only go on to augment the prospects of tourism, religious tourism in particular, in Ayodhya, in and around Varanasi that stood 200 kms away – better known as the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency.

Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAtHome and #MeTooBeyondBorders initiatives.

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GORGING ON MUMBAI'S STREET FOOD

For a bustling metropolis that is never known to sleep and keeps racing against the time, Mumbai's denizens depend heavily on the street food – not only to fill their craving tummies but also tickle their taste buds. From the plethora of 'chaat' items to south Indian to continental to Chinese and Mughlai, Mumbai's street food offers a rich and wide fare that suits the pockets of all and is a sort of parallel economy. Manu Shrivastava treks the streets of the city to give a succulent picture.



Shawarma, a Levantine Arab dish now a popular street food in Mumbai

If in Mumbai, there's anything that could be associated closely and only with the city itself, it's Street Food. And, the food comes in all shapes and sizes, in all forms and at myriad costs. There's something for everyone here; For the strict vegetarians there're the dosa and idli, for the fish lover, there's the fish thali served on the streets for as low at Rs 30 per plate, for the rushed, there're kebabs and vada pavs, for the first-timer there's the Bombay Bhel so linked to the city and its stories.

And then, there's ganne ka juice, nimbu paani, aam ras, chaas, lassi and you name it to wash the food down. The sights, sounds and the smells of food rafting through your nostrils are sure to entice the most resolute. It isn't a surprise that thousands of Mumbaikars thrive on street food for subsistence, out of choice and habit. The foods are the best here...and not restricted to a particular zone, type, cuisine or variety.

The one thing about the monsoons that the quintessential Mumbaikar looks out for, it's the kebabs that come associated. It's a regular sight: Kebabs on skewers being readied for customers huddled in groups below umbrellas at corners of lanes; amidst market places even on the pavement. Nagpada and all along Mohammad Ali Road are known for roadside vendors making brilliant kebabs that come meaty and so soft that they almost melt in the mouth. The boti kebabs garnished with onions, chopped tomatoes and fresh mint leaves are simply too good to be dodged.

The best of kebabs

And then, there are the usual *sheesh* kebabs which turn out to be the best bets for meals. *Sheesh* kebabs permit one to use any combination of meats, seafood, fruits and/or vegetables to please any palate, making it the most preferred choice. Kebabs can be prepared well in advance as opposed to most other foods



Sheera, a traditional Indian pudding

that need to be cooked and served fresh. It's the best thing to make when you want to indulge in a social get-together without having to stay in the kitchen for long hours.

For the uninitiated, it may be news to note that Reshmi Kebab's origins can be traced back to the Moghul era. The name is derived from the succulence of the meat after prolonged marinating and light braising. While usually, chicken, beef or lamb meat is used, sometimes prawns or scallops are good substitutes too. And, the monsoons associated with kebabs aren't restricted to benefit non-vegetarians only, there're the luscious Hara bhara kebabs that are hot favourites among vegetarians.

Made with a mildly-spiced mix of various greens accordingly the name 'hara bhara', the kebab's mix is precooked and comes in the form of patties. They're so simple to make even at home. Whenever you're ready to serve, all you need to do is deep-fry the kebabs in hot oil. You could serve with sweet and spicy jelly dip. All it takes is less than five minutes to prepare.



Bhel puri, said to have originated within the street food stalls of Mumbai

Street food safer than ever

Today, street food is as safe as can be. Having a *bhel puri* or those endless *pani puris* at Mumbai's Chowpatty is safe as ever. Why, Mumbai's Chowpatty at Girgaum and Juhu also managed to procure India's 'Clean Street Food Hub' certification on 5 March 2019.

Ironically, this came within a month of the Food and Drug Administration cracking down on 27 restaurants across Mumbai, suspending their licenses and issuing show-cause notices for violating basic food and safety guidelines. Apparently, eating at a roadside eatery is as safe as dining at a restaurant, if not safer.

So, reportedly 80 stalls at Juhu Chowpatty and 30 stalls at Girgaum Chowpatty offering *pani puri*, *bhel puri*, *pav bhaji*, *golas* and *sodas* were observed closely by the Food and Drug Administration officials over six months before being awarded the tag. Now, "a seal of assurance that the food has been cooked in clean conditions following hygiene standards and is absolutely safe to eat," has been provided to the stalls.

All stall workers use clean water, gloves, uniforms, caps and have waste-bins lined up at regular intervals. Staying safe is serious business for the stall owners. After all, they get audited by FDA every three months.

Incidentally, the FDA clean tag that Mumbai's Chowpatty

earned was on the lines of Ahmedabad's Kankaria Zone, the nation's first 'Clean Street Food Hub' certification earned in September 2018 after the zone's personnel received intensive training in cooking and hygiene standards laid down and ascertained by officials of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and Gujarat Food and Drug Control Administration.

The FDA authorities conduct regular raids on restaurants across Mumbai and issue show-cause notices to them if found violating food and safety guidelines. The idea isn't to force them to shut shop but to comply with safety norms to ensure that they do not put public health at risk.

So, in keeping with the trend, FDA had, a while earlier, clamped down on more than 500 popular restaurants and finding hygiene and food safety violations in more than 74 per cent of them. A large number of restaurants across Mumbai had ignored mandatory health checks of staff.

The issue of staff shortage also plagues FDA which is manned by less than 300 food inspectors who have to monitor lakhs of restaurants. Owing to acute staff shortage that plagues this industry, most cannot retain staff for too long. Maintaining records and ensuring they meet hygiene. Now with the 'Clean Street Food Hub' tag, the risks of eating out are minimised immensely and Mumbaikars can binge at Chowpatty.



Masala dosa, a hot favourite at the Matunga food joints



Malpua is a traditional north Indian pancake made during Ramzan

Mumbai's mini Madras

Matunga's restaurants – a distinct cry from others – are known to take immense pride in their gourmet specialities made of Coimbatore ghee considered a lot superior to labeled ghee

products. Food lovers and regular visitors to the restaurants in the zone swear by the authenticity of Matunga's food joints.

Incidentally, most of the cooks here aren't employed – they work part-time. Much in demand, these cooks earn a fortune by cooking at weddings and other ceremonies that require an expertise – so rare to come by. The food here is probably the best you can get anywhere in Mumbai.

Tamilians are very particular about their food. Their adai, elai adai has to be just perfect. Hotels here are known to not cheat their customers. Matunga seems to have retained an originality that's synonymous with old Madras. If at all, there's any place to grab an original Kanjeevaram idli, ven pongal and some original filter coffee, try Matunga.

Popularly known, and for all the right reasons, as mini-Madras, the area virtually transports you out of Mumbai. And, bang into a Chennai by lane. Elderly women with chandan applied over their foreheads; bare-chested vadhyars (priests) hustling their way to the nearest temple and young girls in pavadai and dhavani (half sari) outfits is what Matunga's all about.



Mumbaikars love to beat the heat by slurping on Gola sharbat or ice gola that come in a variety of flavours

The feast of Ramzan outdoors

And then, if it's Ramzan, it's the feast that follows the fast which grabs every non-vegetarian Mumbaikar's fancy. And, what better way to feast other than in style and at Mohammad Ali Road near Minara Masjid. There is no way a Mumbaikar would not know about the zone's *Khau Galli* where thousands throng to soak in the festivities, learn about the grace of locals and grab a treat of a lifetime with street food that's symbolic of the zone almost like a patented form of work.

It isn't without reason that thousands make a beeline for Bhendi Bazaar, without fail, for a week during Ramzan. Now, particularly after the two years of lockdown, this year may well be a return to normalcy. The street food at *Khau Galli* near Minara Masjid is just so good that it is said to make the fasting well worth it. It sure offers something to look forward to.

It's against the backdrop of the beautifully-lit Minara Masjid, that the settings of Ramzan come alive for foodies. The perfect time to visit the *Khau Galli* here is around 7.30 pm when everyone breaks their fast and the feast begins. Within minutes, *Khau Galli* has a sea of feasting revellers flowing into the zone, with some stopping by to taste a *falooda* or two or grab a plate of kebabs swiftly before moving on.



Bhajias, bata vadas and samosas – favourite street snacks

Jalebi that taste like gulab jamuns

Among the legendary delicacies in here is the *mawa jalebis*, also known as *khoya jalebis* and usually unmissable. And, if it's *mawa jalebis*, it will have to be the *Burhanpur Mawa Jalebis* displayed proudly in a distinct heap below a signage that reads 'King of Mawa Jalebi'. Try tasting it and you will realise you simply can't disagree. They make them at breakneck speed and instead of the usual crisp *jalebis* you've had all your life, these made with *mawa*, look like the regular ones yet taste like *gulab jamuns*.



Mawa jalebis, a legendary delicacy much in demand during Ramzan

Burning one's tongue while eating is a regular occurrence here as you jostle with surging customers while trying to quickly gorge on jalebis that taste simply out of this world.

Here, it's common to find food lovers lining up religiously from evening at their favourite food stalls that may open easily a couple of hours later. The teeming crowds here are huge and patrons are 'expected to know' what to order.

Apart from the regular meat delicacies in *Khau Galli*, is Noorani Milk Centre's Masala Milk which sell a range of sweets and drinks. The best of the lot, the *Masala Doodh* in small glass bottles, is served chilled and flavoured with a special masala along with *kesar* (saffron) and turmeric. It's a big favourite with regulars who swear by it and usually buy a dozen odd to take back home.

Providing meals from homes

Food is the most essential of all needs. And, for most living away from home and working in the Mumbai, it's home-made food cooked by home-makers that matters the most. After all, it's clean, healthy and economical too. Little wonder then that most of the city's students, workers even locals

travelling far to work make a beeline for the nearest slum where a few home-makers sell fresh food right outside their homes for customers to take-away and consume at their homes, offices or workplaces.

So, when the national lockdown was announced by PM Modi and restaurants forced to shut business, locals were left with little option but cook at home. If it weren't for, say, Colaba Koliwada's home-makers, thousands of migrant workers and students - living in basic small rooms with no scope to cook - would have to grapple with hunger. Those days, the fear of hunger was real and palpable.

True to their wont, Koliwada's residents worked around the lockdown and provided basic food items like eggs, bread and snacks to 'outsiders' while keeping the mandatory 'safe distance' and wearing masks throughout. And, from the times of containment where the entire *Nagari* was locked down exclusively for residents, they've come a long way.

Today, the opening up has led to a mushrooming of food providers - all home-makers with their husbands pitching in - cooking the choicest of wares - safe and economical to those without kitchens and viable food options. Mothers and



Providing quality meals during lockdown



Veg Cheese Toast Club Sandwich

mothers-in-law too pitched in with their bit.

Among the newer food providers, a few home-makers proved to be hugely talented. So now, in most of the city's slums there are a multitude of options for residents, passers-by and the general working population. Locals are preparing and selling dosas, idli, wada, sambhar, chutney, puri bhaji, keema pav, sandwich, 'Frankie', etc.



Vada Pav

The unassuming *vada pav* is synonymous with Mumbai. And, Colaba, Mumbai's oldest precinct, isn't any different. So, once the lockdown opened out, it had to be the *vada pav* business to start off again. Now, with things inching back to normalcy, it's the *Vada Pav* filling, healthy and affordable, that has made its comeback. Its importance is realised the most following the lockdown that has affected thousands financially.



Keema pav

Demographic diversity at play

A lot of Mumbai's eclectic zones, especially the city's older history-rich areas, had a demographic diversity that was evident from the variety of food items that were made available, even during the lockdown.

Some prepared and sold keema pav during the day and sandwiches in the evenings. During Ramzan, when people would be looking desperately for something as basic as even bread, a lot of stalls decided to start selling bread and eggs. Then, there was a demand and it helped thousands make a living even during the lockdown.

They'd start the day at 6.30 in the morning selling *keema pav*, bread, eggs, etc. And, in the evening, make different sandwiches that are in high demand in the area. Their new venture helped give them a new identity also...and that stayed.

The street food providers braved the Coronavirus

situation to fend for themselves and provide for those venturing out to work despite the threat. Their voyage is no less brave than a doctor's in these times. Providing food at one's doorstep to keep another alive is as risky a proposition as treating one to stay alive.

Food and the street sort is, by far, the most promising of prospects for travellers to and residents of the 'masaledaar' city of Mumbai.



Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAt-Home and #MeTooBeyondBorders initiatives.

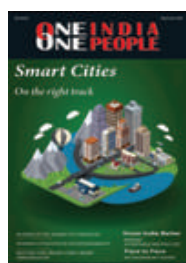
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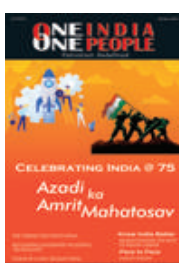
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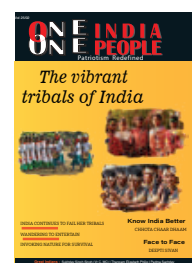
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A fictional, non-fictional blend!



Joshy Joseph

After several decades in filmmaking, what made you decide on an autobiographical film which appears to be a docu-fiction?

I was making all kinds of films all these years, but mostly non-fiction films. The idiom of story-telling in my films were more or less indebted to a fictional tradition. I pushed the boundaries to such an extent that it becomes invalid after a point if I could hook my viewers. In some films, obviously a viewer-friendly idiom happened and in some others, a labyrinth signalled to more subterranean plots. In *'Walking over Water'* a lot of 8mm home-video footages were blended with enacted 'drama' and I don't know whether a conventional terminology like 'docu-fiction' is apt to use for it.

Why the name *Walking Over Water* and how do you link your film with the Biblical miracle of Jesus, that is, if I am right?

They say that Christ was cent percent human and cent percent God. One can accept or reject it. *'Walking over Water'* is both fiction and non-fiction at the same time. The spiritual life of Anandmayee Maa and the dedicated service of late Sindhutai Sapkal have also influenced me.

It is a very personal film where you use the medium and language of cinema as an outlet for letting off the steam of your emotional pain through your entire journey as a filmmaker. Why?

This actual life conflict is a daily reality for the character of Ozu. It

In an exclusive interview with **Shoma A. Chatterji**, award-winning documentary filmmaker **Joshy Joseph** makes out a case that *"Walking Over Water"* does not conform to be a docu-fiction as perceived. He concedes that there may be a genuine issue of dissonance for some viewers with the film, but the idea was to try and push the envelope as we live in our fractured lives, by attending to a WhatsApp message and watching a film or a play or while listening to music.

Joshy Joseph is a national award-winning documentary filmmaker, a talented writer on cinema and works with the Films Division, Eastern Region as its head. He is from Kerala. But Films Division brought him to Kolkata more than 25 years back. Since then, he has become a Kolkatan. Recently, noted journalist Vidyarthi Chatterjee was awarded the prize for the Best Writing on Cinema by the Chidananda Dasgupta Centenary Trust, Kolkata for *Calcutta Lives – A Joshy Joseph Trilogy* which underscores the long and eminent track record of Joshy Joseph. The three films Chatterjee covers in his book are - *One Day from a Hangman's Life* (2000), *A Poet, A City and a Footballer* (2014) and *Walking Over Water* (2021), a feature film. In a one-to-one, Joshy opens up about his very personal film.

is his experience that his father (in this case, the filmmaker) breaks cups at home while quarreling with his mother on the subject of cinema. It is a bizarre situation for the viewers as well as for the young man. When this 'Grihajudha' or war at home is put under trial in the family court of writer Mahasweta Devi, it is a documentary sequence. But when the same quarrel between his parents is discussed between Ozu and his girlfriend Prasanti, it is purely a fictional sequence. You actually see a cup there where the word 'DIRECTOR' is inscribed.

Some of the most outstanding directors in the world have, at some time or other, ventured into personal films such as Truffaut's *400 Blows*, Kieslowski's *Camera Buff*, Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* and so on. But all them were heavy on fiction with very little reality which came across later when the directors admitted to these being partly autobiographical. But *Walking Over Water* is not entirely fiction. Can you explain this very unusual approach as director, conceiver and scriptwriter?

Prasanti comes up with a story which acts as a springboard for Ozu to think about his parents. So, the structure of the film alludes to different metaphors like the Golden Record in the NASA Space-ship Voyagers and the very title 'Walking Over Water'. It is a network of metaphors. There may be a genuine issue of dissonance for some viewers with this film, but I was prepared for it. I tried to push the envelope as we live in our fractured lives, by attending to a WhatsApp message and watching a film or a play or while listening to music.



A scene from 'Walking over Water'

or while listening to music.

Basically, your film is about the director's (your) conflict with the wife and his son Jose, looked at from the point-of-view of the three characters who people the film. The perspective of the director dominates the film while the wife and the son are given their space, true, but are overwhelmed by the voice-over presence of the director who is related to them. Why?

Most of the time, we are obliged to live a much fractured life, where we are separate from our selves. *Walking Over Water* attempts to make you aware of life which is not separate. Because, what is explored in it is actual life, absent from our 'everyday'. Every character/persona is present in the film. It is structured in a very Indian way of story-telling in which the audience can see even those details which characters/persons are not aware of themselves. The narrative and its atmosphere are kept open so that viewers can climb into the film and touch it.

The director who is the protagonist, is present only through his voice-over and never appears visually in the frame. But his wife and son do enjoy screen space quite a lot though Jose is very silent, passive and confused. He hardly has anyone to share his confusions with. Is this a reflection of his real-life character?

This was a deliberate exercise from my perspective as I, as the

protagonist of the film and also its director, did not wish to dominate the scenario which might have marginalised the other major characters like Jose and Amma and Prasanti. My aim was to make them let off steam through and from within the frames and I hope it worked.

What about Jose, the son of the director also your own son in personal life?

I shot my son for a period of 14 long years from the age of eight. He is not acting out a role of a character in the fictional part of the film. But keeping the basic character of Ozu (his name) remains unaltered, I had planted other characters around him. It is not to say that everything about what you see in the film about his character is real and all other characters are part of the fictional narrative. For example, the conflict between his parents on the subject of 'fiction' is real.

His mother is theologically opposed to fictional films dubbing them as an escape to an imaginary world bereft of reality. She actually believes that making feature films is cursed and brings curse upon the family. I, as a filmmaker myself, believe cinema to be my Life, my mission and my way of expressing myself. The son is tragically caught between this ideological and real tussle between his parents.



Walking over Water Poster

Looking back on the film, what is your take, as a husband, father and filmmaker, on this very unusual film?

Even in the midst of fights, disagreements between Amma and Appa, what has kept us together as a family has been our one, unified belief in Christ and his word, The Bible. The tribulations, mentally and physically, could not have made us move away from each other. Neither did it weaken our faith in Christ. Rather, the odds in our lives were translated into testimonies that Amma could share with others as a pointer to Jesus. As for Appa, he could apply his artistic skills and blend of mind and come up with such a profound film. Let the mist and mysteries remain. I could arrive at that zone in 'Walking Over Water' through a narrative which conceals and reveals or vice-versa, which is essentially an Indian way.



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

Theme contd



Changing face of tourism in India

Nandini Rao points out how Tourism has become a very important segment in bolstering the Indian economy as also becoming a brand ambassador for the country on the world stage. While government initiatives and policies have helped strengthen the sector in a big way, India is also one of the largest foreign exchange earners. In 2020, tourism sector contributed more than USD 12 billion.



The Statue of Unity at Sadhu Bet islet near the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Kevadia, Gujarat is the world's tallest statue

India's growth story is one for the books, more so that in the last five years. Several sectors have helped boost the growth of the nation, including the tourism sector. Tourism is not just a growth engine but also an employment generator and a significant one in the Indian economy.

As per the Economic Survey 2011-12, tourism sector has the capacity to create direct and indirect large scale employment. Additionally, these employment opportunities absorb people from diverse strata of the society, making it inclusive for the skilled and unskilled workforce.

According to UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism sector provides for six to seven per cent of the world's total jobs directly and multiple times more indirectly through the multiplier effect. In India, every one million invested

in tourism creates 47.5 jobs directly and around 85- 90 jobs indirectly. Looking at these numbers in comparison, agriculture creates only 44.6 jobs and manufacturing 12.6 jobs.

Other than providing jobs and supporting millions of families, tourism in India is also one of the largest foreign exchange earners. In 2020, tourism sector contributed more than USD 12 billion and between 2000 and 2019 the foreign exchange earnings from tourism grew steadily that reached a new high of USD 30 billion in 2019.

Tourism has become a very important sector for the Indian economy and also a brand ambassador for India on the world stage. Government initiatives and policies have helped strengthen the sector in a big way.

New visas boost tourist influx

In June 2021, Nirmala Sitharaman had said that once visa issuance resumes following the COVID-19 pandemic, the first 5,00,000 tourist visas would be issued free of charge. The scheme would be applicable till 31 March 2022 and would decrease the government income by INR 100 crore approximately. This announcement was made to incentivise short-term tourists visiting India.

It was in October 2014 when the tourist e-Visa for India was launched to simplify the process of obtaining a visa, attract more foreign visitors and boost tourism sector further. As part of this visa regime, some of the reasons to travel to India with this type of visa include to engage in tourism activism, to visit friends and family and to attend a yoga retreat.

The online tourist visa was first introduced for 43 countries and was initiated to promote travel to India without the hassle of going to the embassy or wait in long lines. In October 2019, the government reduced the e-Tourist visa fees for foreign nationals for one year from USD 80 to USD 40.

Additionally, from the April to June period, the fee for e-Tourist visa for a 30-day period was reduced from USD 25 to USD 10. In 2015, India expanded the e-Visa programme and included more countries in the list. In 2017, the e-Visa programme was revamped and several sub-categories were included such as business travellers and medical visits.

India flexes muscle

On 31 October 2018, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the 182-metre (approximately 600 feet) tall statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel - the world's tallest statue. The statue stands on the Sadhu Bet islet near the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Kevadia, Gujarat.

The statue, a dear project of PM Narendra Modi, has been built as an ode to the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who played a huge role in unifying India post-independence. He was also the first Home Minister of independent India. He was responsible for uniting all 562 princely states of the country to build the Republic of India.

The gigantic statue, the Statue of Unity, leaves the visitors awestruck when they see it against the backdrop of the dramatic Satpura and Vindhyachal hills in Kevadia. The beautiful and colossal monument looks grand standing near Narmada River.

A 300-meter long bridge over River Narmada connects the Sadhu Bet hillock to mainland. The Statue of Unity overlooks the vast river basin of the Narmada River and the sprawling Sardar Sarovar dam.

The Statue of Unity symbolizes unity in the truest sense. When the project was being conceptualised, as part of an outreach programme, the state government had asked Indian farmers to donate their used farming equipment to collect iron needed for the statue of Sardar Patel. At the end, about 5000 tonnes of iron is believed to be collected for the statue.

There is an in-house museum also that details the construction of the statue and the history of one of the strongest freedom fighters of the nation. Other than that every evening, except on Mondays, there is a Laser Light and Sound Show that uses laser technology projecting on the Statue of Unity.

The mesmerising colourful laser lighting system is accompanied by a narration of the history and life of Sardar Patel, his contribution to India's Independence movement and the unification of India as one nation.

Encouraging quality service

Like any other tertiary sector, in tourism also service and that too professional and quality service is of utmost importance. While the private sector, owing to competition, is upgrading its services and ensuring customer satisfaction, the state-run entities are catching up.

In March 2022, the Ministry of Tourism constituted Swadesh Darshan awards in different categories in order to acknowledge the efforts undertaken by the State Governments, Union Territory Administrations and various implementation agencies.

The Swadesh Darshan awards will highlight 'best practices including achievement of planned objectives, innovative approach, adoption of sustainability principles in planning, design, and operations, efficient project monitoring, ability to attract private investments in peripheral development and efforts undertaken to ensure optimal operations and maintenance, etc.'

In this welcome move, the Ministry has invited entries under the following categories - Best Tourist Interpretation Centre, Best Log Hut Facility, Best MICE Facility, Best Cafeteria, Best Craft Haat / Souvenir Shop facility, Best Sound and Light Show and Best Waterfront Development (Beach / River/ Lake etc.).

The entries for the awards will be done online. It must be noted that the one-of-its-kind initiative by the government, the flagship scheme of 'Swadesh Darshan', has sanctioned 76 projects in 31 States and Union Territories of India with a budget exceeding INR 5,500 crore. It is a very ambitious project and upon successful implementation, it will take India's tourism sector to newer heights.

The Swadesh Darshan scheme is a Central Sector scheme launched in 2014-15 by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India for the 'integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits'. As part of this scheme, tourism-related infrastructure has been developed at more than 500 tourist destinations so far.

The scheme aims to promote, develop and harness the potential of tourism in India. Under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, the Ministry of Tourism provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments, Union Territory Administrations for the infrastructure development of circuits.

This flagship scheme also aims to collaborate with other schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, Skill India, Make in India, etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, the driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realize its true and full potential.

Nandini Rao 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.

Colours are going out of Holi

In her essay, **Rashmi Oberoi** reminisces her childhood when Holi was unvarnished fun – literally and figuratively – and how this colourful festival started losing its charm what with all awareness about preserving the environment and conservation of water thrown to the winds.



Holi

When it's Holi, you know it's time to tuck away 'winter' in all its forms and shades and say goodbye to those cold grey days. Spring is in the air and the festival brings with it unadulterated joy and laughter, music and dance and the beautiful hues of colour. It's all about those bright coloured powders, known as 'Gulal' that are believed to signify energy, life and joy. This is also a time to indulge in intoxicating drinks and mouth-watering delicacies.

Holi does conjure up images of colour, gaiety, fun and frolic. We mustn't forget that the festival also signifies the ultimate victory of good over evil and that power lies in truth. There are innumerable legends of course associated with Holi but in the end they all speak the same language of truth and getting rid of evil. Ironically, this message is all the more pertinent in the times we live in where evil and dishonesty lurks in every corner.

Over the years, playing Holi has reduced slowly and steadily for me. For no particular reason the thrill of playing has ebbed. Growing up in army cantonments, there was always a joint celebration with everyone meeting at a central place and the bonhomie and jousting made it all the more special. It was always a day's event which started with playing Holi and then would be followed by music and dance and a sumptuous lunch and eventually a game of 'tambola' till the time it dawned on the parents that the kids needed a desperate scrubbing!

It was all the more exciting for us children as everyone was particularly indulgent and the merry-making and boisterous activities all around generated good vibes and energy. Everyone would be greeted with dry colours which would slowly get messier and then the coloured water balloons and squirt guns and buckets of concoctions that you wouldn't really want to know the ingredients of as words like 'paint/turpentine/potassium permanganate/boot polish resonated around... All this slowly and steadily leading to people being tossed into pools and drenched under fountains. I distinctly remember the dunking in mud pools as well!

During school and college life the Holi revelry was even



messier and lively. I can never forget being bombarded with eggs and metallic paint that stuck for days and green and purple hair that would have given a zombie a run for his money. It also used to annoy us immensely that 'Holi' always took place right in the middle of our exams and there was nothing we could do about it but stare into our text books remorsefully especially when the dreaded Board exams loomed up on us.

While I agree Holi brings us all together and society as one --strengthening the secular fabric of our country -- we also need to sit and think about how not to waste and conserve water in these changing times. I understand the need to revitalise and strengthen ties but I also feel that in all this we shouldn't forget about the environment and the global changes fast catching up on us. That would be the true spirit of the festival.

Sadly, this year, the wastage of water was terrifying to see. While the pandemic ensured no celebrations in the past two years, it really was unreasonable and irresponsible of people to go bananas and care a fig about the colossal waste of water this Holi. It just took a moment for people to stop being responsible citizens!

So whether it is called 'Rang Panchami' or 'Yaosang' or 'Lathmar Holi' or 'Holi Mohalla' – it doesn't matter as the essence behind the festival remains the same and the message that signifies the triumph of good over evil.

"Let the colours of Holi always spread the message of peace and happiness."

Rashmi Oberoi, an army officer's daughter and army wife is passionate about writing and has authored two story books for children – My Friends At Sonnenshine and Cherie:The Cocker Spaniel. Her third and latest book – "Blues, Hues & All Things Wonderful" has short anecdotes. She continues to write articles and middles regularly.



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The Lata seldom heard (Part II)

*The woman who sang in Lata's voice was invariably a 'good' woman. In hindsight, some observers see it as Lata's limitation but actually, it is a reflection of the kind of protagonists that populated popular cinema in the 1950s and 60s and the style that the composers asked her to adopt. She was invariably called to justify the most intricate compositions and she never let any composer down, avers **Raju Korti**.*



Lata Mangeshkar with her favourite music director Madan Mohan.

Lata's voice echoed the soul of India that was exuberant and plaintive at the same time. From the first flush of youth to the twinge of separation, there is no mood, no shade of human psyche that Lata didn't give voice to and along the way made a legion of followers believe that perfection is not unattainable in creative art.

But for the fate that reduced her to the sole breadwinner in the family of five siblings at a very young age, Lata would have shone on the firmament of classical music. It was something that she regretted all her life. It also meant that singing became her life. She would starve through the day so that she could save every single penny for the family. The early struggle ingrained in her a sense of discipline and a guarded approach towards the world.

In the recording studio, none could match the purity and clarity of her voice and the control over the pitch. Her mentor Ghulam Haider instilled in a young Lata the importance of feeling the joys and pain of the character. Anil Biswas taught her the value of breath control and Naushad and Salil Chowd-

hury tested how high she could go with notes. Her sweet voice quickly displaced the robust nasal voices like Shamshad Begum and Geeta Dutt.

Outside the studio, in white saris and side-parting braids, she carefully crafted an image where even the film media, which thrives on gossip, presented her as a sisterly figure who loved to tie rakhis on the industry's big wigs.

However, beneath that benign half-smile and muted silks, the resilient Lata was all steel. The woman who sang in Lata's voice was invariably a 'good' woman. In hindsight, some observers see it as Lata's limitation but actually, it is a reflection of the kind of protagonists that populated popular cinema in the 1950s and 60s and the style that the composers asked her to adopt. She was invariably called to justify the most intricate compositions.

That brings us to the fact how even the words of best lyricists got that additional sparkle with Lata's voice. From Zia Sarhadi to Naqshab to Kaif Irfani, Shakat Dehlvi, D N Madhok,

Sahir Ludhianvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri and others to the next generation poets like Shailendra, Rajinder Krishen, Shakeel Badayuni, Hasrat Jaipuri, Jaan Nisar Akhtar, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan, Indeevar, Naqsh Lyallpuri down to Gulzar, Anand Bakshi and Sameer – the number might exceed 250 if you include those from other languages – all have profited immensely from Lata's rotund throat.

Take for instance the 1948 musical "Anokha Pyar". It had as many as nine Lata songs, each with a different hue and flavour. If it was a pathos-ridden "Mere liye wo gham intezaar chhod gaye," there was also the boisterous

"Meri phoolon me chhipi hai jawani." It can be a subject matter of research on the films, especially in the forties and fifties, which had songs that revealed Lata in a wide band of spectrum.

Mind you, most of these films had males as protagonists and were anything but women-oriented. Yasmin (1955) was a predictably flop movie and it just about kept the producer-director afloat because of its music. The timeless classic "Mujh pe ilzaame bewafaai hai" filmed on Vyjayanthimala was one of its saving grace. These Lata songs were making waves when songs sung by her illustrious male counterparts from the same movie had the advantage of patriarchal supremacy of being picturised on the hero. It was not just about the hero or the heroine. It was also about those who propped them up from behind. Lata was the heroine behind all the heroines. One voice, many effects!

Striking starkly sharp, contradictory notes and feelings was Lata's USP. The "thehraav" in "Tere bina soona" (Khidki-1948) would be quickly dispelled with an exuberant "O paradesi musafir kise karta hai ishaare" (Balam-1949) or the effervescence of "Chak chak chali hamare rail" (Naach-1949) and "Chalo ho gayi taiyar" (Shadi S Pehle-1947). For that matter, she also had this ability of singing three songs with similar moods from the same film Subhadra (1946), yet each one with a subtle difference. In Asha (1948), she straddled four distinctively different genres – classical, romantic, bhajan and sad with her characteristic aplomb.

There were films where Lata surpassed herself much to her own disadvantage. The 1948 classic Ziddi had five Lata songs but four of them – all sung as divinely – failed to touch chord as much as "Chanda re jaa re jaa re." It had left composer Khemchand Prakash wondering what else he could have done to polish the other songs. C Ramchandra, the predominantly female composer – a label that stuck to him for his clear proclivities with Lata – also found that too much Lata in his repertoire resulted in a situation that some of his finest compositions got buried under the superincumbent weight of the more popular ones. But to his credit, he along with Salil Choudhary succeeded where other composers unfortunately did not. This was, however, no reflection on Lata but the unpredictability of the juke box office.

An honourable exception to this phenomenon was Madan Mohan who struck a consistent equation with Lata – both at the personal and professional levels. From the *Baaghi* days of early 50s to the *Dastak* days of mid-seventies, there was not a note lost between the two. The supreme irony here is Madan Mohan who created a huge garland of unforgettable melodies for Lata, never won a single popular award. All that he got was a critic's award for the Dastak classic "Baiyaan naa dharo o balma" and that too after his death. There cannot be a greater travesty of truth that here was a music director who was so close to Lata's heart. Little wonder Madan Mohan drowned his sorrows in



Lata with Anil Biswas who taught her the value of breath control

O P Nayyar, the born rebel who prided on never having used Lata's voice even once in his glittering three-and- half-decade career, was unabashed in her admiration. He had especially singled out her songs under Shankar-Jaikishen, who were his arch professional rivals then. At the height of his obsession for Asha (Bhosale), he had publicly stated that Lata with Anil Biswas, C Ramchandra and Madan Mohan would never be replicated again howsoever they (the fraternity) keeps trying. Prophetic words those!

It is a measure of Lata's growth in stature that she stood up to many composers and lyricists and sang under her terms and conditions. When asked about one very popular song she had sung for Shankar Jaikishen, she wrinkled her nose and bluntly dismissed it saying that it was plagiarised. Most people would bask in her songs do not know the pleasant or unpleasant stories that accompany them but that is just as well. Who bothers? It is the song that matters. It would be a separate chapter to list the songs that Lata sang in the midst of the discordant notes she had with many composers, including the ones who exploited her tonal gold to give her the best place in history.

It is a different story with/of Lata in the post 60s. She was revered, worshipped, admired, disliked and depreciated for both right and wrong reasons. She was a Queen Bee, the prima donna whom none had the courage to take on. To be fair to her, her frailties lay well covered by her dignified demeanor and disposition.

It is known to very few that she was named Hema at the time of birth but later it was changed to Lata. It was inspired by Latika, a character from her father's play- *Bhav Bandhan*. The name and the emotional connect in the name of the play is the quintessential Lata story.



Raju Korti is a senior journalist with over four-decade experience of working in media institutions

Conundrum called prostitution!

*Around a decade-and-a-half ago, social activists and NGOs toyed with the nomenclature of the prostitute. She is now called a 'sex worker' instead of 'prostitute.' But the Census did not implement this change so the sex-worker still remains labelled a prostitute. This change in nomenclature probably arose to bring these marginalised and stigmatised women within the mainstream. **Shoma A. Chatterji** argues this has not happened and instead it has only vested her with a false sense of self-esteem which she does not possess.*



Alia Bhat in Gangubai Kathiawadi. The film raises questions about the right of sex workers

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's new film *Gangubai Kathiawadi* raises questions about the rights of the prostitutes that reminds us of a gritty sex worker who decided to organise all sex workers of Kamathipura in Mumbai together and fought for their rights to the respect given to other indigenous workers in the country.

The most powerful statement Rima Kagit makes through her 2012 film *Talaash – The Answer Lies Within* is the absolute “disempowerment” of a woman who becomes a sex worker. Her “work” identity barely provides her with the bare necessities of life. Once she steps into the trade, she is reduced to a bonded slave. If she is trapped in a police arrest along with other girls, the police staff often force her to sleep with them without paying. So, the sex worker in films or in real life, does not have any power or control over her life/ work/income. There is no dignity in her work, her life and most tragically, in her death.

Chakra (1980) examines life in the raw in actual slum environs. Sex work here is a way of life, a way of earning a livelihood just like wagon- breaking in railway yards is. Amma

(Smita Patil) is a woman whose name nobody bothers to find out. She is not exactly a sex worker but sleeps around to survive. Her grownup son coolly moves outside the hut to sleep on a cot and asks no questions. Yet, she pathetically urges her son to live a life of *ijjat* (respect).

The Census of India has strong issues about the distinction between “workers” and “non-workers.” It lists home-makers, beggars, prisoners and prostitutes as “non-workers” because they are “economically non-productive workers” by definition. The apex court however, does not seem to notice the gender bias in the Census of India’s labelling the prostitute a non-worker and as economically non-productive.

She continues to be marginalised and stigmatised

Around a decade-and-a-half ago, social activists and NGOs toyed with the nomenclature of the prostitute. She is now called a ‘sex worker’ instead of ‘prostitute.’ But the Census did not implement this change so the sex-worker still remains labelled a prostitute. This change in nomenclature probably

arose to bring these marginalised and stigmatised women within the mainstream. But this has not happened. It has only vested her with a false sense of self-esteem which she does not possess.

If she is deemed a 'sex worker', how does the Census deny her the status of being a productive worker who contributes to the economy directly and indirectly? How did the Supreme Court fail to notice this anomaly while it was hauling the Census for its callous ignorance of the homemaker's contribution? In Indian law statutes, prostitution is defined as the act of a female who offers her body for promiscuous sexual intercourse for hire, in exchange for money or kind. The two conditions that define a woman as a prostitute according to the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, 1956 (amended in 1987 by the Amendment Act 1986 with the name changed to read "Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act" and the 2006 Bill are (a) a female has to offer her body for indiscriminate sexual intercourse, and (b) she should do so for some financial consideration. This is the legal definition which clearly spells out that she is a productive worker because her work has both use-value and exchange-value.

Till today, sex work does not have any legal sanction. So, a sex worker has no Aadhaar Card, no Ration Card, no Pan Card and no Voter's Identity Card. If she is at all given a card, it is linked to some benefit to the Establishment such as a temporary Voter's Identity Card given just before the elections without the rights such a card ensures. She cannot create a trade union as the profession she belongs to does not recognise sex work as a 'profession.' She has no contractual agreement for her work, no pension, no medical and retirement benefits. Nor does she have a birth certificate and rarely if ever, a death certificate. In other words, there is no proof that she exists and therefore, there is no proof of her death.

The 'illicitness' of prostituted sex is due to the social disapproval of commercial sex. This brings prostitution within the ambit of the commercialisation of traditional female roles which leads to ambivalence in contemporary economics. When women place monetary value and claim payment for work that they traditionally (within marriage) perform for 'free' – out of love, instinct, for intangible non-monetary rewards, it is viewed as 'betrayal.' At the same time, when professions get 'feminised' in the wage market such as prostitution which is almost a totally feminised occupation, they get devalued. Commercial sex therefore, is nothing more than an inferior version of 'real' or free and romantic sex.

A beggar is a parasite, a prostitute is not. A prisoner is a criminal. A prostitute is not. The beggar has neither use-value nor exchange-value. The prisoner has use-value when he is given work in the prison and very little exchange-value for his labour. The prostitute has both. Interestingly, the slippages between women who are prostitutes and sell sex for money and women who are not prostitutes because sex is structured into a married relationship are many in theory, argument and practice.

Sex-worker in India caught in the vicious cycle of poverty

Art historian and author Prof. Lynda Nead argues that the prostitute represents all the terms within capitalist production – she is human labour, she is the object that is being exchanged and she is also the seller. She stands as worker, commodity and capitalist and blurs the categories of bourgeois economics the same way as she tests the boundaries of bourgeois morality. As commodity therefore, the prostitute encapsulates and distorts at the same time, all the classic



Sex workers demand for their rights

features of bourgeois economics. This is the full nature of her threat and also the key to her power. (Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Fiction, 1988) In India, she is human labour and she is the object being exchanged. But she is definitely not the seller. Her earnings are appropriated by the system she belongs to. Does this make her a non-worker?

In India, the supply of women from lower castes into the sex trade is driven by the demand for prostitutes, though prostitution is illegal. Its very existence and pervasiveness in Indian society is an anomaly in an otherwise conservative country. There is a historical culture of commercial sex with eroticism enshrined in the myriad religious tradition such as the Devdasi system in the south and in Odisha. There is greater tolerance of prostitution in rural areas where it is seen as a continuation of a cultural tradition. The large number of pimps, bouncers, self-appointed protectionists within and without the legal machinery, the brothel madams and local politicians form an unending link in a chain of middlemen who cut into the meager earnings of the prostitute, placing her back into the vicious circle of poverty she began from. The circular reality of poverty provides the tragic irony of her existence. Does that make her a non-worker? How can the Supreme Court wear blinkers while chiding the Census for categorising the homemaker as a non-worker and ignoring the same categorisation of the prostitute?

The inhuman oppression of women by civilised mankind is not based on common logic. It is based on the feudal lord's inherent proprietary rights over his slave, and on the overwhelming sense of power and control this gives him over the life of his slave. Substitute 'feudal lord' with the Census of India, the Supreme Court and the society at large and the 'slave' with the sex worker and the argument becomes clear.



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

RIFLEMAN THAMAN GURUNG VC (1924-1945)

The pride of Gorkha Rifles

Thaman Gurung was born on 2 October 1924. He joined the Indian Army and was enlisted in 5 Royal Gorkha Rifles (Frontier Force). In September 1944 he was placed in 5/1 Gorkha Rifles. The unit was then part of 17 Brigade in 5 Indian Division of the 8th Army. His battalion was deployed to Italy to fight the German army.

He was serving in 'A' Company. On 10 November 1944 the company was ordered to send a fighting patrol of one platoon to Monte San Bartolo, Italy, high mountain without any cover. The approaches were steep and precipitous. The main position was held by the enemy and the approaches were covered by a number of machine gun posts. The main position was occupied by the Germans, anyone approaching was sure to be observed and annihilated by machine gun fire. Thaman Gurung was one of the two scouts of this patrol.

The two scouts managed to reach the base of the position by skilful stalking. Thaman Gurung started to work his way to the top. The second scout turned his attention to Germans in a slit trench just below the crest, who were preparing to fire with a machine gun at the leading section. Realising that if the enemy succeeded in opening fire, the section would certainly sustain heavy casualties, Rifleman Thaman Gurung leapt to his feet and charged them. Taken by surprise, the Germans surrendered without resistance.

Rifleman Thaman Gurung then crept forward to the summit of the position, from which he saw a party of Germans, well dug in on reverse slopes, preparing to throw grenades over the crest at the leading section. This would have caused heavy casualties. Although the sky-line was devoid of cover and under accurate machine gun fire at close range, Rifleman Thaman Gurung immediately crossed the skyline. Firing on the German position with his Tommy gun allowed the forward section to reach the summit. Yet, due to fire from enemy machine guns, the platoon was ordered to withdraw.

He collected two more grenades and again doubled over the bullet-swept crest of the hill top and hurled them at the remaining Germans. This diversion enabled both rear sections to withdraw without further loss. Meanwhile, the

sections to withdraw without further loss. Meanwhile, the leading section, which had remained behind to assist the withdrawal of the remainder of the platoon, was still on the summit, so Rifleman Thaman Gurung, shouted to the section to withdraw.

Seizing a Bren gun and a number of magazines, he again ran to the top of the hill alone and knowing this could be fatal, stood up on the bullet swept crest. The remaining section was able to withdraw without any loss. Dropping to the ground, Gurung laid down a heavy cover of fire, buying the forward section enough time to pull out with the rest of the platoon.

After sending a full pair of magazines down into the German position, Gurung's luck ran out. He was killed by enemy fire, but not before he facilitated the safe retreat of almost his entire platoon with minimal casualties.

For his gallant actions and dedication to the safety of his brothers in arms, Rifleman Thaman Gurung was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery, the highest honor awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. His bravery that day allowed the hill to be taken three days later.

Rifleman Thaman Gurung was just 20 when he was martyred. The then viceroy, Field Marshal Lord Wavell, presented Thaman Gurung's mother with the Victoria Cross which had been awarded to her son on 19 December 1945 at a parade in Delhi. His mother, Sardi Gurungseni, was accompanied by her husband, Thaman's stepfather and other members of her family, and went through the trying ceremony with a calmness and dignity.

Thaman Gurung was laid to rest in the Rimini Gurkha War Cemetery, Rimini, Italy. The medals are still in private ownership.



Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)

MANNU BHANDARI (1931-2021)

An acclaimed story-teller

Mannu Bhandari was a prominent name in the sphere of Hindi Literature. Having made her mark and admired by countless readers, she will be many teachers and students, particularly those at Miranda House, Delhi University where she taught Hindi literature for a long time.

Born on 3 April 1931, Mannu was recognized for her portrayal of women of changing India – the ones who were drawn to modern influences without compromising on traditions. Caught between modernity and tradition, these women find themselves burdened by various unjust and adverse situations that are queered by gender bias.

The latter aspect was later captured vividly in her own biography *Ek Kahani Yeh Bhi*. Stories like *Nai Naukri* (New job) also reflect this trend in her writing, while *Trishanku* is more about parents, particularly mothers, struggling to choose between tradition and modernity while bringing up children. *Yahi Sach Hai* (This is the truth) is a famous story of a girl living alone being very sincere to the man she loves now, but unable at the same time to get out of the sweet-sour memories of her first love. This story also is remarkable in terms of her strength of a very reader-friendly way of writing. *Yahi Sach Hai*, was later made into a low-budget hit film *Rajnigandha* (1974) by Basu Chatterjee.

At times she came out with stories very different from her normal work and these invariably turned out to be exceptionally brilliant. One such story is *Akeli* (Lonely), a very poignant story of a woman who revels being in groups but is increasingly left alone and neglected as she gets old and poorer. Yet another off-beat story is *Teesra Hissa* (Third Portion), a portrayal of a potentially fiery columnist and editor who is forced by circumstances to live a stifled existence of ordinary clerical work, waiting for opportunities.

Where Mannu scaled great heights was with her two unforgettable novels -- *Aap Ka Bunty* and *Mahabhoj*. *Aap Ka Bunty* portrays the disrupted world of a child troubled by broken marriage of his parents and even more by the remarriage of his mother. It is hailed as one of the best works on child psychology in Indian literature.



This novel which was serialised in *Dharmayug* weekly magazine got wide feedback from readers who worried constantly about the fate of the troubled child. It was also adapted into a play. Unfortunately its film version *Samay Ki Dhara* ran into litigation. It has been translated into Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali, Odiya, Kannada, Tamil, English and Japanese.

Even those who had become prepared for some surprises from Mannu Bhandari could not have reckoned for her to deliver a political thriller, but she did -- in the form of her widely discussed novel *Mahabhoj*. A young man who sincerely struggles for the poorest people in a village dies in mysterious circumstances. As a by-election is approaching, this murder takes strong political overtones. What happens subsequently exposes the many-sided corruptions of the entire political system.

Mahabhoj too was reworked into a play which was performed again and again by several theatre groups. This novel has been translated into English, French, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali and Kannada. A film version of this great novel is still awaited.

Mannu Bhandari will always be remembered for her great contribution to literature and for her fine qualities as a gentle human being. She passed away on November 15 at Gurugram, near Delhi, at 90.

Bharat Dogra is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Planet in Peril, Protecting Earth for Children and Man Over Machine.

RAHUL BAJAJ (1938-2022)

Entrepreneur outspoken and forthright!

Rahul Bajaj who passed away on 12 February 2022 was an Indian billionaire businessman and Chairman Emeritus of the Indian Conglomerate, Bajaj Group. A successful entrepreneur and philanthropist, he was an inspirational legend, who built his company's brands, and Brand India. He was also a Rajya Sabha member (2006-2010).

Rahul spoke his mind; was unwilling to bend rules; believed in the *Make in India* story and was an icon who shaped the two-wheeler industry. He demanded a level playing field for domestic industry while competing with global players. Though not against competition, he refrained from giving stakes to foreign players.

Upright and outspoken he called a spade a spade, even if it meant ruffling feathers in government. When it came to national interest or echoing corporate India's woes, he could be brutally frank.

Rahul spear-headed the CSR activities and charitable trusts of the Bajaj group of companies, among the oldest, with 25 companies, employing about 36,000 people with a massive turnover of over 280 billion, including the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation.

Born to Kamalnayan and Savitri in Kolkata, he was the grandson of Indian freedom fighter, Jamnalal Bajaj. In the 1870s, Seth Bachhraj had built a successful merchant business, which on his death in 1906, his 17-year old adopted grandson Jamnalal took over, building a successful cotton trading business.

Kamalnayan succeeded him in 1942. Within three years he expanded into new businesses, including cement, electrical appliances and scooters. In 1945, the Bajaj Auto Company formed to manufacture scooters, went on to become the market leader.

Rahul, graduating in BA Economic Honours from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, law from Bombay University, and an M.B.A from Harvard Business School, Boston, U.S.A., took over as CEO, the Bajaj Group in 1968 at the age of 30.

He transformed it into a global juggernaut, surpassing the billion-dollar milestone in less than a decade. He then led the turnover of the group's flagship company, Bajaj Auto, from 7.5 crore to 12,000 crore with the Bajaj Chetak

scooter being the main growth driver.

He diversified into group activities, including manufacture and sale of motorised two, three, and four-wheeled vehicles, general and life insurance, investment and consumer finance, home appliances, electric lamps, wind energy, special alloy and stainless steel, material handling equipment and travel.

It is to Rahul's credit that he managed the transition to the liberalised era. He helped find foothold in global markets while warding off emerging competition from Japanese motorcycle makers like Honda who challenged the Bajaj Auto's scooters in the late 1990s. During the 80s and 90s, Bajaj two-wheelers were the popular mode of middle class.

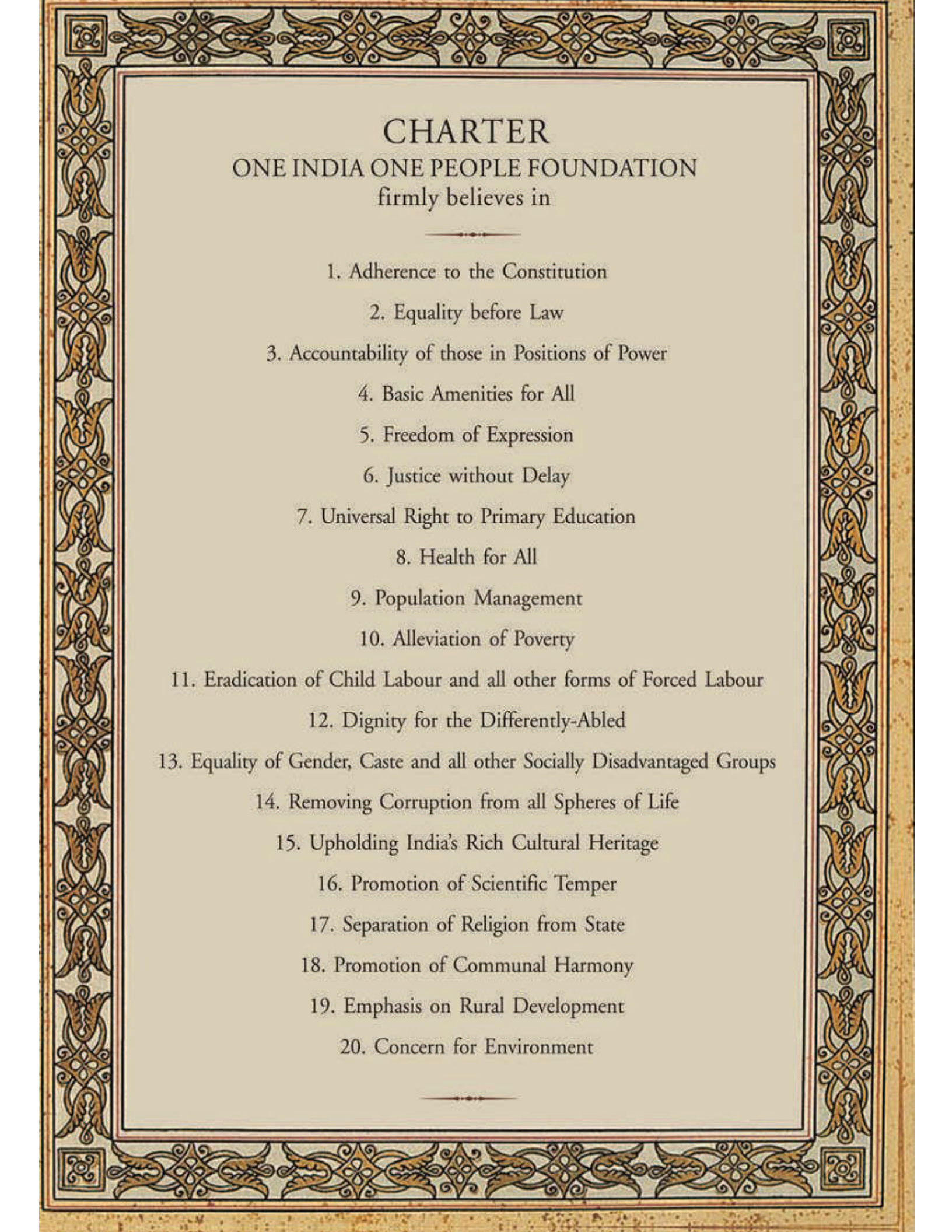
He was the President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for two terms—1979-80 and 1999-2000 and also President of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). He was also the Chairman, Indian Airlines 86-89; Chairman of the Board of Governors, IIT Bombay; Chairman: International Business Council, and World Economic Forum, etc.

He received the Padma Bhushan, in 2001, the CII President's Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2017; the French government's prestigious Order of the Legion of Honour, the Alumni Achievement Award from Harvard Business School and the Lifetime Achievement Awards from Economic Times, CNBC TV18 and Ernst & Young and Honorary Doctorates from 7 Universities.

In 2013, the Bajaj family won the Distinguished Family of the Year award, for dedicating their wealth and time for the public good. In February 2022, it was ranked at 369 on the Forbes list of the world's 39s billionaires with a net worth of USD 9.1 billion.

Rahul, died of cancer, aged 83 and was cremated with full state honours. While Indian business genuflected in front of the powers that be, Bajaj stood tall. Today Indian business has lost its conscience keeper. He was Master of the rough road.

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



CHARTER

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

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



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE