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Youth, India's Fountainhead



YOUTH SYNONYMOUS WITH NATION BUILDING

EMPOWERING THE YOUNG

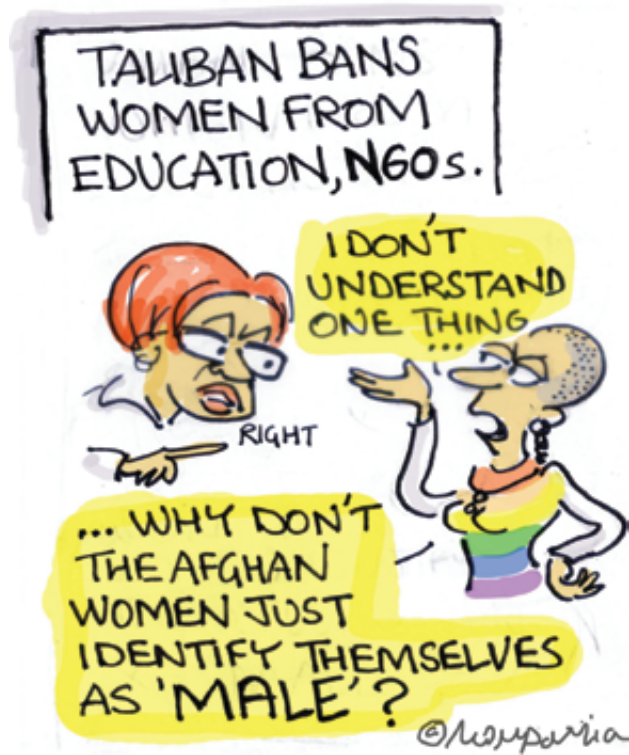
NEW GENERATION, NEW CHALLENGES

Know India Better

AYURVEDIC MAGIC IN THE TIME OF
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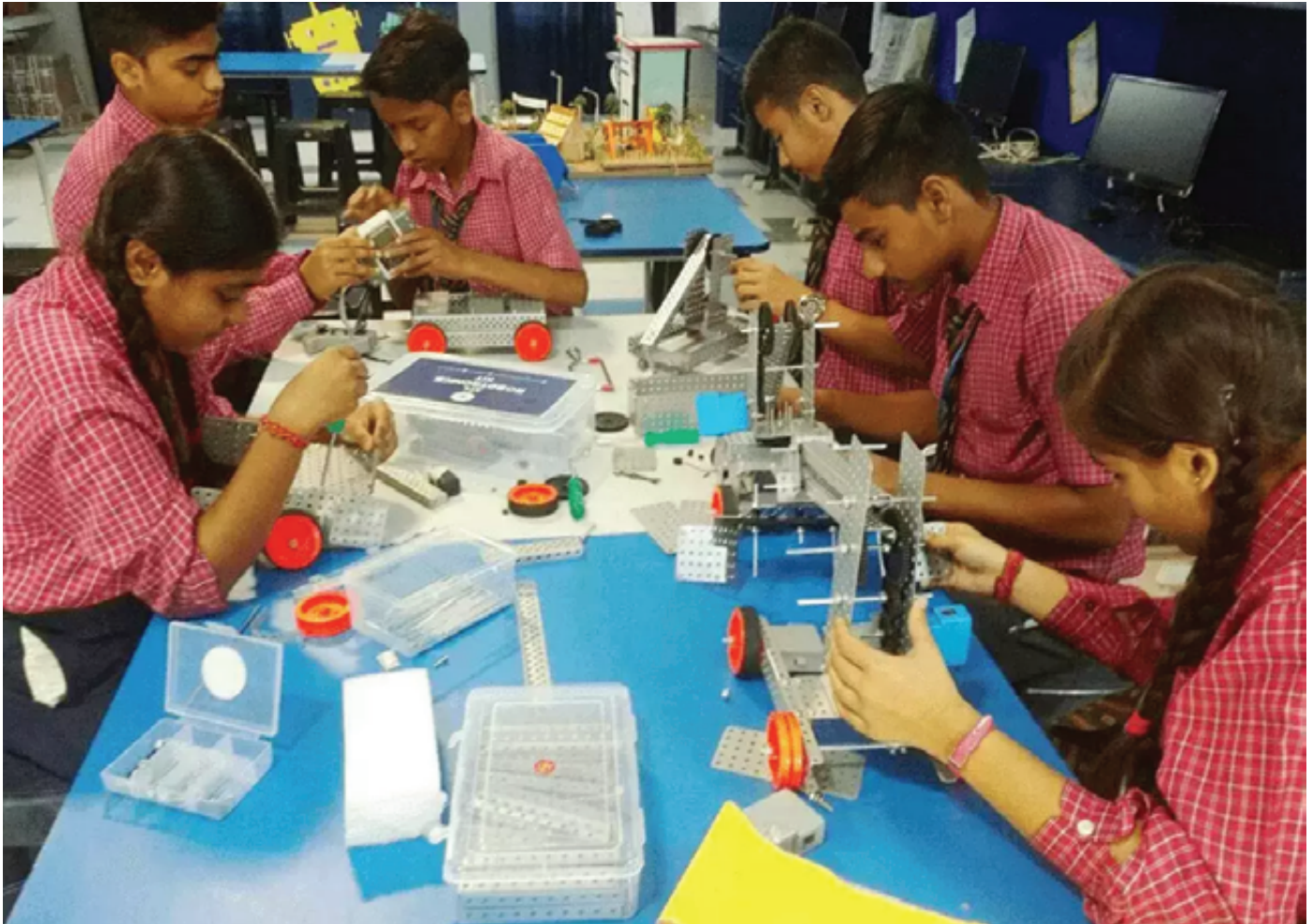
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Youth synonymous with nation building

Kriti Kalra points out that in India, the youth play a crucial role in development adding there are many instances where they have made the country proud by their genius and innovations. A lot of great ideas have come from those who have not fared too well in formal education set-ups and, on the parameters, laid down by these systems to assess intelligence, etc, she concludes.



Atal Tinkering Labs in schools powered by ISRO are promoting space education

There is a strong and direct correlation between youth and nation development. One cannot be seen or evaluated or analysed without the consideration of the other variable, partly or in full.

This relationship is also mutually beneficial and dependent on the other one. Youth and national integration or national development go hand in hand. The importance of youth in the nation's progress cannot be emphasised enough and India is no exception.

A country as big as India, and with a significant youth population, the role and interplay are of paramount importance and interesting at the same time. For a stable and steady progress of a nation, the participation of youth is mandatory.

Contribution in progress

The biggest contribution that the youth can make to nation building is through their skills to create and innovate. At a young age, when the mind is not influenced by external factors and by limits that are usually put by formal education, the mind is likely to think freely, uninfluenced and challenge the laid down norms and standards.

There are many instances where the youth have made the country proud by their sheer genius and innovations that no one else could think of. In fact, a lot of great ideas have come from those who have not fared too well in formal education set-ups and, on the parameters, laid down by these systems to

assess intelligence, etc.

For the advancement of a nation, and for future development, the role of youth is crucial. For the growth of technology and innovation in the country, increased tech access to youth is important.

The government has taken several initiatives to encourage involvement of the youth in technology and innovation and to

Tech and innovation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his inaugural speech at the Bengaluru Tech Summit said that India's technology and innovation have already impressed the world but the future will be much bigger than the present because India has innovative youth and increasing tech access.

He also spoke about how the power of the youth of this nation has been recognised worldwide and led to talent globalisation. It's no surprise how Indians have made a name for themselves in the science and technology sectors and related domains such as healthcare, finance, management, etc.

In the Innovation Index, India has already improved its position from 81st position in 2015 to 40th position in 2022. This is the result of increased contribution in the tech and innovation sector. Another factor is youth empowerment through increased tech access.

Another vital variable that has led to the increased number of start-ups and research and development centres in India is due to the growth in the number of youth in India. The talent pool and the skill set presented by the country's youth are contributing to the growth in more ways than one.

Presently, India is the third largest start-up hub in the world with around 41,000 recognised start-ups. At the same time, in India, there are R&D centres of several international companies and outfits.

The World Youth Skills Day is observed every year on 15 July and sees innovators and creators from around the world who are making this world a better place. Recent events in India's timeline such as the election of India for the eighth term as Non-Permanent UN Security Council Member and the Prime Minister's clarion call to make India 'Aatmanirbhar' have put Indian youth in the spotlight, again.

Government of India's NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) enables the youth to learn new skills. The Covid-19 pandemic that was dreadful in so many ways, did present an opportunity to innovate and leverage digital technology for enhancing the skills and creativity of young students during the lockdown.

The Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) community enabled setting up a connection of the Indian youth with NITI Aayog ... to step up, learn and innovate!

Consequently, AIM launched the #TinkerfromHome initiative and the ATL Community Day Challenge on Ambedkar Jayanti (14 April 2020) where young students and teachers honed various skills such as design thinking, artificial intelligence, 3D design, game development, mobile and web app development, drones, creativity and digital learning.

Conducive environment

The youth of a nation is important because they are the future - future leaders and creators. The youth are enthusiastic and energetic and free to think outside the box. Not just that, they have an innate ability to learn quickly and adapt to situations. If channelised properly, their energy and enthusiasm can be drawn for positive growth of the nation.

Another important quality the youth possess that can be beneficial for the nation's progress is the willingness to learn and then implement the knowledge to achieve desired goals. Youth can transform communities and improve the society. No matter what field they choose, if they set their minds to it, youth can make changes like none other.

It's the focus and clean intention that is not adulterated by greed for money or power and other vices that makes the youth so powerful and their actions so impactful. It doesn't matter which field they contribute in, the youth can choose any and contribute in the development of the nation.

The numbers game

India is one of the youngest nations in the world which means in India, the percentage of youth population is the largest as compared to any other population age group. India has more than 55 percent of the population below the age of 25 years and more than 60 per cent of the population is in the working age group which is between 15 to 60 years.

Estimates reveal that the average age of India's population by the year 2023 would be 29 years old. As compared to the world, this figure falls as follows - In Japan, the average age of the population would be 47 years and in the United States of America it would be 40 years old.

There is no doubt that the population numbers are promising because the larger number of youth give India an edge over most other nations in terms of the demographic dividend - which is the growth in the economy of the country due to the change in the age structure of the country.

India is fast addressing the lingering problems that haunted the nation's development since freedom, including economic growth, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption. The fact that a very big portion of the country's population is young means there's a lot of scope to channelise this section of society towards national development and advancement.

The numbers keep changing but fact remains youth are crucial for a nation's growth and prosperity. They are the future of a nation and in order for a nation to progress, the youth have to come forward and take responsibility head on.

It's the age of the youth, worldwide. They have taken over several areas such as social media and have shown their calibre time and again. A little push in the right direction will go a long way for the youth to be an effective and strong catalyst of national growth.

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.

Youth in the age of social media

*With its humongous population, India is a favourite among social media giants and almost all have already made deep inroads into the digital marketplace in the country. And, their main target among the Indian population is the teenagers. On an average, social media users in India spend 2.4 hours on various social media platforms every day, finds out **Kriti Kalra**.*



Social media users spend majority of the screen time on various social networking websites and platforms

Social media has taken over our lives completely. It has been dominating national debates, social discussions, news coverage, etc. Needless to say, social media platforms are known to be ripe with implications, positive and negative, specially affecting the youth.

Although, during the Covid-19 pandemic, social media turned out to be a boon as it allowed individuals to stay connected with their loved ones, helped them stay abreast of the happenings around the world, assisted many of them in their professional lives and kept millions entertained when there was nothing else to do.

However, there is a downside to this hyper-connectivity. Social media usage had increased by 70 per cent in the first five months since the beginning of the pandemic. In the same period, there was an exponential increase in the number of posts made on all the popular social media platforms including Facebook,

Instagram and Twitter.

The big jump in social media usage, especially by the youth, was a major factor in the analysis that followed, reviewing the growing dependency on social media on a daily basis and the transformation of these portals into a necessity in certain age groups. Most such analyses stemmed from the direct fact that dependency on social media increased significantly in a very short span of time. Also, the dependence was largely seen in specific age groups such as among teenagers.

The number of social media users is increasing by the second. India is home to the second largest population in the world and that makes it a favourite among social media giants, almost all of which have their eyes set on India and many have already made deep inroads into the digital marketplace in the

country. And, their main target among the Indian population is the teenagers.

On an average, social media users in India spend 2.4 hours on social media every day. India boasts of 290 million active social media users who spend hours using social media apps such as Instagram. Majority of the screen time of these users is spent on various social networking websites and platforms.

Teenagers and adolescents are the ones dominating the social media user base – individuals in the age group of 13-19 years make up 31 per cent of social media users in India, as per data revealed by Statista in 2021. Users in the age group of 18-24 years mainly use Instagram and Facebook in India.

As on January 2022, the number of Facebook users in India was about 329 million users. This makes India the leading country in terms of Facebook audience size. Some estimates put the number of Facebook users in India at 450 million users.

Of these, the number of teen adults that are active on Facebook stands at 97.2 million users. India leads the way in the number of Instagram users as well with 230 million Instagram users, making it the highest in the world. Again, most of these are millennials and the gen-z users.

Impact on youth

Social media is a great way to stay connected, to know what's happening in the rest of the world and for professional collaborations as well. It offers the perfect opportunity to identify talents, boost creativity, initiate change and digital activism, conduct research and surveys, peer motivation, etc.

However, there are many negative effects of these networking platforms and apps that are impacting the youth and society and need attention. Recently, Instagram and its parent company, Facebook came under the public scanner for their negative impact on youth. Facebook whistle-blower Frances Haugen also revealed that for the many social media giants, an individual is just a number that will drive their profits up. Revenue is their top priority and not mental health of individuals especially the youth.

Mental health of an individual is at risk with excessive social media usage. Studies across the world have established close links between teen depression and use of social media mainly because of the incorrect and fake impression they get from the content that is posted on these platforms seamlessly and that they believe to be true.

For instance, youth with moderate to severe symptoms of depression are twice as likely to use social media constantly. The incessant imagery that draws the perfect life of icons and influencers on social media is damaging for young individuals who are battling anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, etc.

FOMO or Fear Of Missing Out is a very real condition where an individual develops anxiety when he or she realises they are missing out something that is real. Among the youth, adolescents are very susceptible to develop FOMO by using social media.

Apart from mental health issues, excessive social media use is also a cause of concern for the physical health of a young individual. The more time youth spend on social media or in the virtual world, the less time they are able to devote to physical activities, meeting real people, eating and sleeping healthy. This leads to a host of health problems sooner or later.

Cyberbullying

Perhaps one of the biggest downsides of social media usage, cyberbullying has now taken epic proportions worldwide. Cyberbullying or Trolling is a very serious problem that is disrupting lives of young individuals. Apart from teenagers and adolescents, older unassuming individuals are also falling prey to cyberbullies and predators.

Cyberbullying has been closely linked to teenage suicides as well. And, teenagers who commit or further the acts of cyberbullying are much more likely to indulge in other delinquent activities such as substance abuse, aggression, etc.

Unregulated and mindless social media use is also affecting social relationships among the youth. With more and more time spent in the virtual world, their social skills take a backseat and interpersonal relations at home and at workplace are affected.

In fact, excessive social media or internet usage also leads to what some call as tech addiction, which is a real condition. Overuse of gadgets and social media platforms stimulates the brain in a similar manner as habit-forming substance and addictive behavioural patterns do. So, it's very important that the youth keep social media usage in check in order to lead a physically and mentally healthy and safe life.

Checks needed

A decade ago, no one would have imagined that virtual networking platforms or social media apps will completely take over human life in this manner. Now that it has, there's a need for a dedicated and smart social media policy to regulate usage, pin accountability and ensure the safety of users especially the youth.

The role of parents, teachers, mentors, education institutes and social agencies is equally important. Social agencies come into play when older youth have been affected. Parents and teachers need to be resolute in dealing with children and students by imposing appropriate checks and controls, explaining the risks of social media to them properly and offering support when the situation warrants.

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Indian youth and entrepreneurship

*Statistics reveal 54% of India's population is below the age of 35 years and, of these, about 15 million enter the country's workforce every year. Providing employment to all of them is a huge challenge. The only way to create enough jobs for such a huge population consistently is by creating an environment for entrepreneurship and innovation, says **Nandini Rao**.*



Pranav Goel – Founder of Porter startup



Ritesh Agarwal-Founder and CEO – OYO



Aditi Gupta – Founder, Menstrupedia

Anation is on a growth trajectory when there are more people providing employment than those seeking one. India, in the last few years, has reached new heights when it comes to entrepreneurship and India's youth are contributing in a big way to push the entrepreneurship bandwagon.

The Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is working towards harnessing the power of the country's youth by skilling and empowering them in a manner such that they become self-reliant and, additionally, create jobs for the others.

Statistics reveal that 54 per cent of India's population is below the age of 35 years and, of these, about 15 million people (youth) enter the country's workforce every year. The numbers



Sreelakshmi Suresh – Founder eDesign

are astronomical and the challenge to provide employment to every eligible candidate is a big one.

For the progress of a nation, it's important that the youth get employment and there are enough opportunities for the skilled and the unskilled young to make a living.

The only way to create enough jobs for such a huge population, that too consistently and continuously, is by creating an environment for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Innovation holds the key

Young minds in India are highly creative and innovative and with a little push can do wonders when it comes to entrepreneurship. There are several initiatives taken by the government

and the industry to promote innovation and, in turn, entrepreneurship.

It's no secret that India has become a desired destination for potential entrepreneurs and is fast becoming an emerging market for investors from across the world looking to invest in creative businesses and smart and profitable entrepreneurial ventures. These new trends are positive indicators for commerce and the economy in India.

Several initiatives in the last few years such as Digital India, Make In India, Start-Up India, Atal Innovation Mission, etc. have successfully created a nurturing environment for India's youth to indulge in entrepreneurship. These initiatives are encouraging the young to think beyond the regular programmes and fields and giving them the impetus to start something of their own.

Growing start-ups

The start-up initiatives in India are looking at a bright and stable future. India is providing all the right ingredients to its youth so they push themselves in creating businesses that, in turn, will create jobs for many more.

There are programmes that support potential and new entrepreneurs and help them in the areas of fetching and securing funding, enable ease of doing business, offer tax benefits, create new incubators and facilitate capacity building of the existing incubators.

A conducive entrepreneurial environment and a stable ecosystem are important to encourage more and more young Indians to dabble in entrepreneurship. Today, there are more and more advanced innovation-based entrepreneurial initiatives in the market along with technologically-advanced entrepreneurship.

A proper ecosystem for these is also needed as these are large-scale entrepreneurial initiatives that need more care in the initial stages but the returns are much higher later and sustainable.

Large-scale entrepreneurship

The government of India's Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has been promoting large-scale entrepreneurship that includes innovation-based and high technology entrepreneurial ventures.

A functional and stable ecosystem for large-scale entrepreneurship has developed over time to provide support to young Indians looking to start their unique ventures. The Common Norms for Skill Development 2015 recognises self-employment at par with placement as outcome benchmark of skill trainings.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras have been converted to Entrepreneurship Hubs to facilitate entrepreneurship by providing interested trainees mentoring and handholding support. The Ministry is collaborating with the Department of Financial Services, SIDBI, Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) and civil society organisations like DeAsra to educate young Indians on start-ups and mentorship.

The Ministry has instituted National Entrepreneurship Awards to recognise and honour outstanding young first-generation entrepreneurs and organizations/individuals committed for entrepreneurship development.

The Ministry of Science and Technology's Department of Biotechnology's annual flagship programme ABLE encourages the budding entrepreneurship talents of college students. It creates human resources by nurturing and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship among young researchers.

India's young entrepreneurs

In a big country as India, with the second largest population, there are many young Indian entrepreneurs that are making a mark. It's no surprise that the start-up culture in India is growing stronger with each passing day and young entrepreneurs are making a difference with their unique ventures.

Their struggles and stories inspire many not just in India but across the world as their entrepreneurial ventures make a difference in the lives of thousands.

Young Indian Entrepreneur and the founder and CEO of OYO Rooms - India's largest hotel room aggregator, Ritesh Agarwal started the company in 2013 when he was just 19 years old. He started OYO Rooms after struggling to find a hotel room in India that was comfortable and cost-effective at the same time.

By September 2018, Ritesh's company had raised one billion dollars and, by July 2019, it was reported that Agarwal purchased two billion dollars in shares in the company. He is the youngest self-made billionaire in the world. He is also listed in the Forbes 30-under-30 list for Asia.

Another start-up called Porter - a logistics start-up that helps businesses with last-mile delivery - was founded by 19-year-old Pranav Goel. Today, it is one of the leading logistics start-ups in India with a team of over 500 people. It has raised over 100 million dollars in funding from investors such as Sequoia Capital and Tiger Global.

Lenskart founder Peyush Bansal was very young when he started the online shopping portal for eyewear in 2010. Since then, the company has been providing quality eyewear at affordable prices to customers in India very successfully. He is presently one of the most successful young entrepreneurs in India and has been featured in Forbes 30-Under-30 list.

Women entrepreneurs

In India, 58 per cent of female entrepreneurs were in the age range of 20-30 when they started their enterprises. And, nearly 73 per cent of them report revenue of approximately Rs 10 lakhs in a financial year. Among these, about 57 per cent women entrepreneurs started out individually and independently, with no other support and 35 per cent had a co-founder. About 71 per cent of Indian female entrepreneurs employ five people or less.

A social-cause entrepreneur and the co-founder of Menstrupedia, Aditi Gupta is considered to be one of the most successful women entrepreneurs of India. Menstrupedia works on spreading awareness about menstruation that Aditi started with husband Tuhin Paul.

Seelakshmi Suresh is the youngest woman entrepreneur in India. In 2020, at the age of 21, she became the youngest web designer-cum-CEO in the world. She designed and developed the official website of her school located in Kozhikode (Kerala) when she was only eight years old.

Not just this, Seelakshmi was only ten years old when she designed and established eDesign - a web designing company that offers SEO, design and other related services. She has developed over 100 websites for many entities across India.

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.

Multifarious roles the youth play

Trisha Sharma says the key to realising India's new dreams rests heavily on the youth as more and more youngsters are leaning towards technology, creating wonders, innovating technology and encouraging others too. The same applies to other areas like politics where they play a crucial role in the healthy functioning of a vibrant democracy with fresh ideas and the will to implement them.



ISRO's Yuvika (Yuva Vigyani Karyakram) programme, launched for school students in 2019, aims to integrate youth with science

Young individuals in India have been contributing with their talent and acumen in traditional areas like politics, literature, art and music, etc., but now they are taking a keen interest in new areas such as science and technology, innovation, research and development, etc.

The enthusiasm of the young in science and technology can be gauged when they gathered in huge numbers for the launch of Chandrayaan-2, stayed awake the entire night and exhibited genuine curiosity during the event.

Chandrayaan-2 is the second lunar exploration mission, after Chandrayaan-1, developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), to map and study the variations in lunar surface composition and the location and abundance of water on the lunar surface. The spacecraft was launched on its mission to the Moon at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh on 22 July 2019 by a GSLV Mark III-M1, entered into the Moon's

orbit on 20 August 2019 and began orbital positioning manoeuvres for the landing of the Vikram lander.

Developing interest

It was primarily to nudge the young towards scientific exploration and to develop scientific temple that a facility has been made recently to watch rocket launching at Sriharikota - a barrier island off the Bay of Bengal coast in Tirupati district in Andhra Pradesh that houses the Satish Dhawan Space Centre and one of the two satellite launch centres in India. The facility is open for all and can be booked online as well.

ISRO's Yuvika (Yuva Vigyani Karyakram) programme, launched for school students in 2019, aims to integrate youth with science. This programme is also in consonance with the country's vision - Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhaan.

Estimates of the United Nations Population Fund reveal that presently India has its largest ever adolescent (ages 10-19) and youth (ages 15-24) population so far and will continue to do so till the year 2030. This demographic dividend is the basis of the declaration of the Amrit Kaal – the next 25 years till India's 100th year of Independence.

Today, more and more young individuals are benefitting from and contributing to indigenisation in the areas of science and technology. More are aiming for positions in space research and technology that was considered out of reach till a decade ago.

The key to realising India's new dreams that rest heavily on the youth is innovation. Today, many more young members are leaning towards technology, creating wonders, innovating technology and encouraging others as well.

Using technology for social causes

The biggest inventions are those that make the world a better place, help a group of people or uplift the society. More and more young individuals in India are using their talent for social causes.

Sisters Aditi Prasad and Deepti Rao Suchindran have always been intrigued with education and technology and how the combination can help young minds. The duo runs Robotix Learning Solutions as the COO and CIO, respectively. Through their works they are reaching out to young girls to involve them in robotics and other avenues of STEM education.

Indian Robotix League is a mega annual robotics and training competition developed by the two sisters to inspire young innovators. They also run Indian Girls Code that inspires young girls to learn coding and develop real-world applications. They feel such initiatives empower the youth especially the girls in many ways.

A Class IX student from Arunachal Pradesh, Anang Tadar, developed a pair of goggles to help the visually-impaired navigate hands-free. The goggles use the same technology used by bats, called echolocation, to sense their surroundings and basically help the wearer by altering him or her of an object within two metres of the field view.

In 2017, his innovation fetched him the Dinanath Pandey Smart Idea Innovation Award. UNICEF also expressed interest in refining his prototype so it is market ready. Rifath Sharook, an 18-year-old student from Tamil Nadu designed the world's smallest satellite that weighs merely 64 grams. It was launched into space by NASA in 2017.

Contribution in politics

An active political participation from the youth plays an important role in the healthy functioning of a vibrant democracy like India's. Youth offer fresh ideas and when equipped with adequate resources will implement these ideas well.

History is witness how change has been brought by youth in cases when everything else failed. The youth have helped advocate ideas undeterred by social norms and restraints that usually limit others.

In political systems, all parts of the society must be included and well represented. In cases where the youth of the society are detached or disenfranchised from political processes, democracy weakens as a big portion of the population loses its voice. In the absence of or with the weakening of influence in democratic decision-making, there is a risk to the entire segment or portion, in this case, the youth.

In 2004, 50 per cent of the Indian population was aged 30 years or younger and there were only 35 young Lok Sabha members of the total 543 seats that were under the age of 35 years, a mere six per cent share. All political parties have student and youth wings and most of these produce young leaders who later take up important positions in national politics.

Among the rising stars of Indian politics, popular names are Tejasvi Surya, Aditya Thackeray, Tejashwi Yadav, etc. Rishabh Mukati is India's youngest politician and is working with the slogan of public service first.

Young politicians are the future of the nation. Some belong to political families and others have worked their way up by sheer hard work and determination. Aishe Ghosh, Goddeti Madhavi, Prajwal Revanna, Shreyasi Singh, Chandana Bauri, Priya Ranjan, Hardik Patel and a few other are also leaving their mark in India's political arena.

In the recently constituted 17th Lok Sabha in India, 253 of the 543 (47 per cent) Members of Parliament (MPs) are over the age of 55, as per a report by PRS Legislative Research. This forms the largest number of MPs to be elected to the Lok Sabha who are above the age of 55 in the history of the country. In the previous Lok Sabha, the percentage of MPs over the age of 55 was 43 per cent.

With every election since Independence, the Lok Sabha has been getting older. As per the report, in the latest or the 17th Lok Sabha, only 71 MPs, a mere 13 per cent, happen to be under the age of 40. The median age in India is 27.9 years but only 2.2 per cent of Lok Sabha MPs are below the age of 30. And, only 1 in 4 Indian MPs (22 per cent) are below the age of 45. India ranks at 19th position, among 98 countries, when it comes to the number of MPs below the age of 30.

According to the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), the median age of the global population is around 26.4 years and among the voting age population worldwide, 49 per cent are between the ages of 20 and 39, but the average age of those sitting in the world's parliaments is now between 51-60 years.

In a young democracy like India, the inclusion and involvement of youth in formal political processes is important. Active contributions from the young keep democratic values and principles alive that are important to keep power elements in check and for the nation's growth.

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Empowering the young

*The Indian government prepared a new draft of the National Youth Policy earlier in 2022. It contains some important clauses for youth empowerment. The policy has been designed to address the problems faced by the young today and offer sustainable and far-reaching solutions. The draft identifies the objectives and priority areas that are considered important for empowerment. **Anushka Singh** elaborates.*



The youth are the future of a nation and their sound development and empowerment is crucial for the bright future of the country

In 1999, in its resolution 54/120, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon 1998) that 12 August be declared International Youth Day.

The UNGA also recommended that public information activities be organised to support the Youth Day as a way to promote better awareness of the World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995 (resolution 50/81).

So, every year, on 12 August, the world observes International Youth Day as, it was on this day, the United Nations recognised the youth as an integral part of the society. On the same day, the UN also acknowledged that it's important to effectively harness the energy of the young and in a productive manner.

With inputs from youth organisations and members of the UN Inter-Agency Network in Youth development, The Focal

Point on Youth selects a theme for the day each year and events are organised to encourage youth around the world to raise awareness about their situation in their respective countries.

Around the world, and in India, there are entities and mechanisms that constantly work to empower their youth. A very important segment of the society, the youth are often overlooked and not paid attention to. However, with little efforts and focus in the right direction, the youth can achieve a lot and contribute to the society.

Finding solutions

The Indian government prepared a new draft of the National Youth Policy earlier in 2022. The draft contained some very important clauses for youth empowerment in India.

The policy has been designed to address the problems faced by the young today in India and offer sustainable and far-reaching solutions. The draft identifies the objectives and priority areas that are considered important for empowerment of youth in India.

The policy, that is work in progress, has laid focus on long-term and sustainable development of the youth in India and envisions a ten-year period to achieve the goals set for youth development.

Like most over-encompassing and comprehensive policies and plans, the policy for the youth in India is also closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The aim being, to be able to tap on the immense potential of youth in India, in order to further progress of the nation.

The policy has identified five priority areas and special emphasis has been laid on social inclusion to ensure marginalised sections of the society are included as well. The five priority areas for youth empowerment are social justice, education, employment and entrepreneurship, youth leadership and development and, lastly, health, fitness and sports.

Sustainability at the core

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals were etched out in 2015 by UNGA as part of the post-2015 Development Agenda, which, in order to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended in 2015, sought to create a future global development framework.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked objectives designed to serve as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet now and into the future.

The priority areas highlighted in the National Youth Policy for youth empowerment are closely linked with the SDGs. The SDGs are as follow:

No poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnerships for the 17 goals.

Any new world order has to overlap with plans and actions for youth empowerment as they are the future of this planet. And, sustainability is at the centre of this all because reckless human actions over the past couple of centuries have degraded the planet and short-term quick solutions are not helping anymore.

Sustainable, long-term action plans hold the key and SDGs emphasise the interconnected environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development.

Empowering tools

One of the most important tools for empowering the youth is by providing them with quality education. Efforts are being made to develop an education system or tweak the existing one to make it more in sync with the National Education Policy.

Most importantly, education should be such that it imparts key life skills to the youth and opens up career opportunities for them. Education should be such that it enables the youth to provide for themselves and those dependent on him or her.

Additionally, education modules should be such that the youth are empowered and skilled to not only provide for themselves but also enable them to generate employment by different means. These may include micro-region-specific strategies, foster entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, among others.

What's important is that education should empower the youth to revive rural economy, where applicable, and support the more recent, informal and emerging gig economy i.e., a labour market characterised by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.

Legally sound

Another important aspect of youth empowerment is ensuring the safety of the youth and enabling a justice delivery system that is quick and holistic. Those most affected in the absence of these empowerment tools are the youth from marginalised groups and the vulnerable ones. It's very important that there is quick delivery of justice and adequate rehabilitation support is provided to those affected.

When it comes to inclusion also, there's still a lot of scope for improvement. Youth from the marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups often lag behind in availing leadership opportunities. There's a need to involve them in leadership and volunteering opportunity to empower them so they can lead the way and mentor more leaders for the future. There has to be an ecosystem of like-minded individuals and groups empowered with enabling and mobilising technology to support such initiatives.

Health is also an extremely important factor that affects youth empowerment. Any individual, male or female, cannot perform to his or her best capability if the health of the person is not in order.

India's astronomical population puts pressure on existing healthcare systems and facilities. The health and well-being of the youth especially young women is an important variable in the equation.

Ensuring and strengthening preventive and palliative healthcare for the youth for mental health, reproductive health in case of young women, substance abuse disorders, sexual health, etc. is crucial.

Technology has been one of the biggest enablers in the recent past and when it comes to youth empowerment, the role of technology is equally important. Mobilising technology and data to improve healthcare delivery for the youth and initiating specific interventions to provide them access to quality healthcare is needed.

The youth are the future of a nation and their sound development and empowerment is crucial for the bright future of the country. There's a need to amplify the needs and problems of the youth and to understand the importance of sustainable solutions. If not addressed in time, problems affecting the youth can impact an entire generation and affect the growth of a nation as well. National and state entities must focus on providing holistic and futuristic solutions and draft policies and legislation accordingly.

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.

New generation, new challenges

*Unemployment woes, depression and other such accruing challenges stare the Indian youth in their face. **Ruchi Verma** dwells on those saying very often, the distress for the young begins with these changes and the inability to adapt. The constant tussle between modern and traditional way of living causes a lot of stress for the youth as well.*



Unemployment is probably the biggest challenge faced by the youth today

It will be unfair to say that the young get everything on a platter and don't have to work for it. With a few exceptions, the youth face many challenges in their day to day lives. Even the over-achievers and the prodigies are not spared. They say when the going gets tough, the tough gets going. And, the internet and the digital revolution has made most things easy in terms of availability and access, the challenges are far too many to be discounted.

The youth are defined as individuals between the ages of 15 to 29 years. Individuals in this age group in present day mostly face problems of unemployment, drug abuse, risks from social media, stress owing to nuclear families, loneliness, suicidal tendencies, etc.

The pace at which the world is changing and societal / family structures are transforming is drastic and disturbing. Very often, the distress for the young begins with these changes and the inability to adapt to them fast enough. The constant tussle between modern and traditional way of living causes a lot of stress for the youth as well.

Unemployment woes

It's the youngsters in a nation that hold the promise of contributing to the economic growth of the nation. It's in these years that individuals finish their schooling and their graduation and are ready to jump in the job market. Although, today, there's no upper limit to getting more educated - with the sea of skills and knowledge upgradation forums available online and offline - most youngsters start looking for a job in these crucial years that lie between the ages of 15 to 29 years.

The youth unemployment rate in India has been gradually rising in the last few years, only to hasten due to the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic that halted recruitment and hiring the world over, like never before.

As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey, for the age group of 15 to 29 years, the youth unemployment rate stood at 25.5 per cent for the period between April - June 2021. The survey was done in 22 states and each of these had a double-digit unemployment rate for the youth of this age group.

The overall unemployment rate in India in the same period had also increased to 12.6 per cent from the previous quarter's 9.3 per cent.

Other numbers reveal that, in India, the youth unemployment rate for 2021 was 28.26 per cent, for 2020 was 24.90 per cent, for 2019 was 22.74 per cent and for 2018 was 23.05 per cent - a 0.47 per cent increase from 2017.

With a significant population of youth unemployed, this is probably the biggest challenge faced by the youth today. Among the 13 million joining the workforce every year in India, 1 in 4 MBA degree holders, 1 in 5 engineering degree holders and 1 in 10 graduates are employable.

Mental health concerns

One of the most common mental health problems that's overlooked quite often is depression. Globally, more than 300 million individuals are suffering from depression and the number is increasing by the minutes. Despite the increase in the prevalence of depression, the efforts taken to combat it and to ensure a happy and stress-free life are far beyond.

Depression is a common mental disorder seen across all age groups including children and adolescents. In the age group of interest, commonly reported symptoms include concentration difficulties, depressed mood, diminished interest in play activities, behavioural problems such as anger or aggression, decreased sleep, indecisiveness, restlessness, etc.

Depression is ranked as the single largest contributor to global disability (7.5 per cent of all years lived with disability in 2015). Worst cases of depression may end up in suicide and over 8,00,000 people die due to suicide every year – the second leading cause of death among people in the age group of 15 - 29 years.

A National Mental Health Survey 2015-16 conducted in India revealed that nearly 15 per cent Indian adults need active intervention for one or more mental health issues and one in 20 Indians suffers from depression.

There are some effective programmes that have shown promising results in terms of prevention. Even school-based programmes that further community approach have been effective in instilling a pattern of positive thinking in children and adolescents.

India's National Mental Health Programme of India comprises life-skills training and counselling in educational institutions, workplace stress management and suicide prevention services, etc., and is an example of the government's commitment in this area. Even Health and Wellness Centres under Ayushman Bharat have a provision for mental healthcare services.

Apart from mental health issues, the youth in India today are also becoming more and more prone to general health issues such as undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, stress-induced conditions and other lifestyle diseases.

Corruption and competition

Corruption is something that poses challenges not just for the youth but any individual who works hard and with honesty. Corruption, of any kind, deprives the deserving of opportunities they would have otherwise availed. It is a big hindrance in the progress of any nation and India is struggling with this as well.

Bribing administrators, bureaucrats, clerical staff, law enforcers, etc., fuels corruption and help the undeserving buy education and job opportunities, scholarships and other benefits.



Nearly 1.58 crore children aged between 10 and 17 years are addicted to various substances

It's a big burden on India and serious efforts must be made to free India of corruption.

Apart from that, competition in education and job sectors pose serious challenges to Indian youth. Not only are there very limited merit-based seats in education institutes but also limited job opportunities. As a result, the young are constantly jostling to upgrade their CVs by paying for additional courses or programmes ... for a better seat or a more stable job.

Other vices

Although literacy rates have increased in India, they still fall short of the optimum numbers. As a result of illiteracy and, consequentially, unemployment and financial instability, the youth very often resort to petty crimes such as stealing, looting, etc., and sometimes more serious offences and beggary.

Another challenge that this rigmarole poses is drug addiction or substance abuse. Although mostly found in the poor and the uneducated, drug abuse is now rampant across young individuals from all economic strata.

Joblessness, bad company, peer pressure, lack of supervision from parents, etc., often pushes young individuals into addiction.

A survey revealed that around 13 per cent of those involved in drug and substance abuse in India are below 20 years of age. This is a very serious situation that requires immediate intervention from relevant authorities.

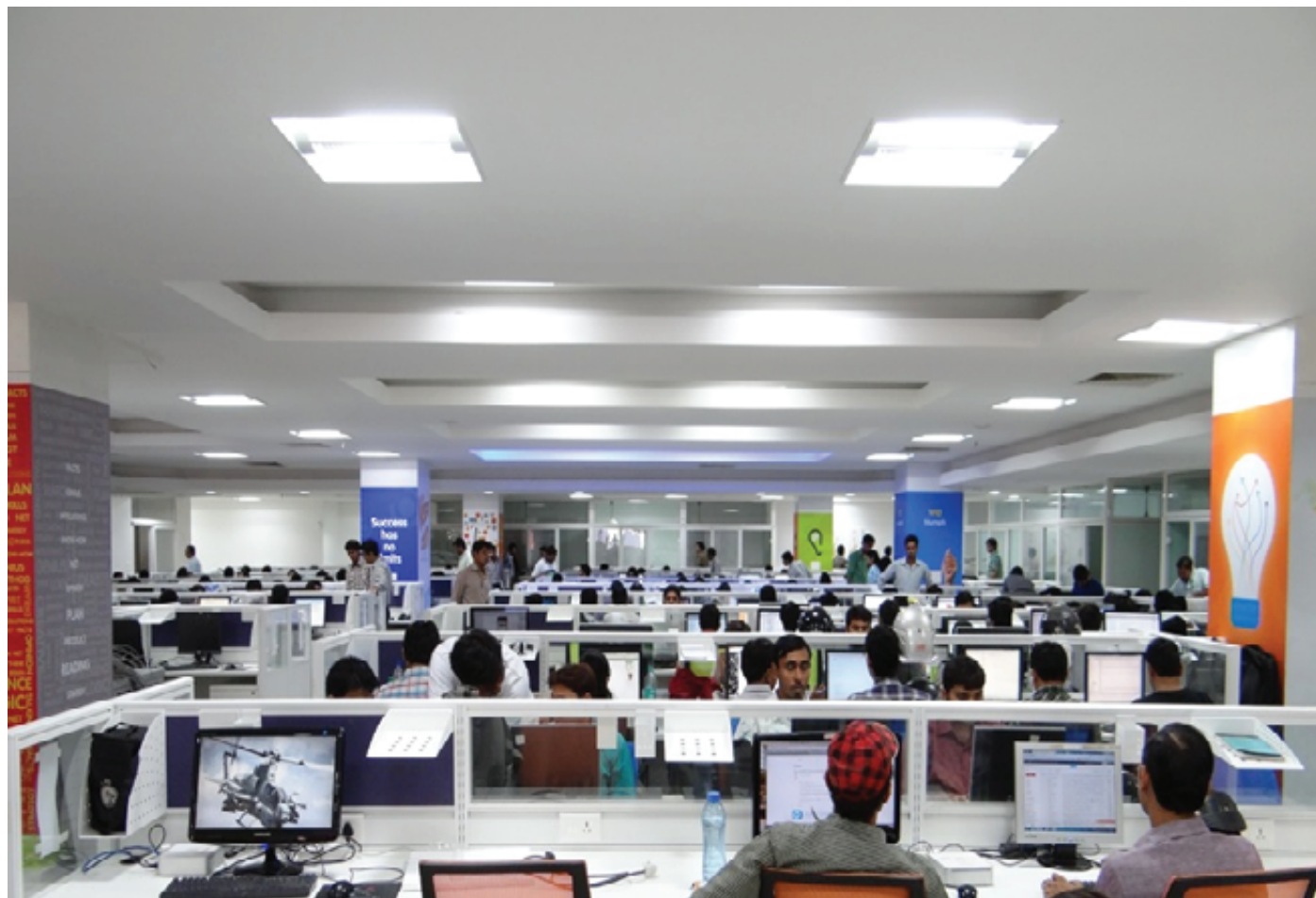
In December 2022, the Indian government told the apex court that in India, 1.58 crore children aged between 10 and 17 years are addicted to various substances. It further added that alcohol is the most commonly used psychoactive substance by the Indians followed by Cannabis and Opioids.

Substance abuse not just damages the mind and the body; it destroys everything around an individual including relationships, families, etc. The user soon becomes a burden on the society, begins to lean towards criminal activities and risks contracting HIV/Aids.

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.

Youth are the nation's mainstay

India's youth population is not just a workforce that will help in the country's growth and bring prosperity but the high youth population in India is also a very promising market that is already drawing investments from big industries, foreign investors, etc. India's gigantic youth population is driving a range of factors towards growth. **Neeti Prakash** figures out.



India's tech industry is on a roll with the Information Technology sector registering a 15.5 per cent YoY growth for FY 2022

The biggest asset of a nation is its people and it couldn't get better for India as the country's demographic dividend in terms of youth population is a key factor that is expected to catalyse all the drivers of economic growth.

A demographic dividend is defined by the United Nations Population Fund as economic growth resulting from a shift in a population's age structure, mainly when the working-age population is larger than the number of dependents.

India is the second most populous country in the world and also home to a fifth of the world's youth population. The staggering numbers of the country's youth population create a demographic dividend that will play an important role in helping India achieve the ambitious target of becoming a five trillion-dollar economy.

Workforce and market

The big numbers mean much more than that. India's youth population is not just a workforce that will help in the country's growth and bring prosperity but the high youth population in India is also a very promising market that is already drawing investments from

big industries, foreign investors, etc.

India's gigantic youth population is driving a range of factors towards growth. India's young are catalysing and leading a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Presently, with the more than 1.3 billion people, the average age in India is 29 years – making it one of the youngest populations globally.

The steady rise of India's middle class had changed many variables that drive economic growth in a nation, namely higher literacy rate, new skills, financial security, improved quality of life, higher dispensable income, increased investments, etc.

Data from a recent report reveal that India has beaten all other countries of the world in creating engineers and science graduates – 25 per cent of world's science and engineering graduates are from India. In terms of research, India lags behind and China and USA are the leaders. Still, by contributing the highest number of qualified engineers and technologists to the global workforce even today, India is leading the tech race.

(Continued on page 30)



Ayurvedic Magic in the Time of Covid

More and more under-exercised Indians are checking in and opting to experience and rediscover their ancient heritage of good health and wellness, as well as seeking cures for long covid symptoms and chronic ailments at Kairali Healing Village, a 63-acre green haven of paddy fields, organic farmland in Palakkad, Kerala. Gustasp and Jeroo Irani take a three-day restorative break at the ayurvedic resort and return home rejuvenated.

Text and Photographs: Gustasp and Jeroo Irani



A bridge straddles a monsoon stream at the Kairali Healing Village, Palakkad

The touch of the therapists' fingers felt like the flutter of butterfly wings on our bodies. Slowly, the pressure intensified and the four-handed massage by two therapists became a lesson in synchronicity – hands sliding up and down our bodies like a musical instrument being strummed by maestros. Our bodies melted into the teak wood table and our minds turned inward in the deep silence, igniting a love for life that had been virtually extinguished by the harsh realities of the pandemic.

We were at Kairali Healing Village in Palakkad, Kerala, and the soft sing-song cadence of our therapists' voices were as soothing as the green vistas outside. A 63-acre green haven of paddy fields, organic farmland, vegetable and herb garden, with a stream winding around it, the Ayurvedic resort snuggles in just 15 acres of this forest-like landscape. Indeed, the Kairali Ayurvedic Group, a pioneer in promoting Ayurvedic retreats and treatment centres globally, was the first to promote Ayurveda therapies in India, way back in 1989. It prides itself on being rooted in pure Ayurveda.

We were at Kairali for a three-day restorative break in the monsoons, the best time it is believed for Ayurveda's regimen

of detox, as one's pores are open and receptive to the healing oils and ministrations. We adhered to a strict 5,000-year-old Ayurvedic regimen that helped us balance our *doshas*. (Doshas are the three life-giving energies of Ayurveda such as *vatta* or air, *pitta* or fire and *kapha* or water which mould a person's mind, body and even type of skin and hair.)

The days and nights slipped past in slow motion in a blur of restful therapies based on ancient scriptures, and yoga and meditation sessions in the new Yoga Deck with its floor-to-ceiling glass doors. While we contorted our bodies, rain pitter-pattered outside and the lush vegetation glistened as though the Gods had gone amok painting the world in various shades of green. While younger more nimble guests followed the yoga instructor's whispered commands, we floundered, creaky joints and ageing limbs refusing to obey. During mindful meditation, the red-tiled, wood-beamed ceiling of the Yoga Deck reverberated with the sonorous chanting of Oms. Was our utterance of the ultimate cosmic sound laced with pain? At night we slept like babies, slight joint pain banished into the forest that surrounds this green jewel.

The fluid rub-downs with medicated herbal oils left us



A stream winds around rain-washed villas

feeling limbered up and brimming with good health. After years of neglect, our skin felt supple, our joints did not squeak like a large pair of rusty shears. The classic *abhyanga* was done by two sari-clad therapists whose brisk rhythmic strokes danced and did cartwheels across the tense knots in our bodies. During another session, herbal poultices were rubbed on our stressed joints, and after a *shirodhara* or oil-drip treatment, we felt disassociated from our bodies. *Shirodhara* is said to ease headaches and insomnia. The *kashaya dhara* – a brisk massage followed by the masseuse trickling streams of medicated warm water felt like gentle rain falling all over our bodies which revelled in this new-found coddling... Were we afloat and buoyant in a warm sea?

We looked forward to the relaxing massages and the simple wholesome meals like desperate Bedouins in search of an oasis in the desert. We relished organic vegetarian meals for breakfast lunch and dinner, washed down with a rose wine look-alike called *paithimugham*, reputed to be a blood purifier. Nature invaded the cosy dining area in gentle shafts of sunlight and vistas of vibrant green outside. Over nutrient-dense healthy

meals, we swapped life histories with guests from across the world who had come in the hope of curing injured knees, arthritis, cervical spondylosis, weight loss, relief from the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, and just a pure detox. All of them left feeling feisty and fit and were determined to return.

Most guests had opted for the rigorous *panchkarma* therapy which requires one to stay for 15 to 21 days and involves living in a tranquil environment, consuming a diet designed to suit the patient, yoga, meditation, oil massages, purges and enemas. Some guests said they felt a sense of renewal after *panchkarma*, of living in a new body and of having sloughed off the old one. Friends who had such 'out-of-the-old-body' experiences, tried to persuade us to opt for *panchkarma* too but fear of the unknown held us back. We were addicted to our *abhyanga* and *shirodhara* therapies, familiar antidotes for ageing joints and skin.

K. V. Ramesh and Gita Ramesh, the founders, started their wellness journey with a treatment centre in Delhi, harness-

(Continued on page 25)

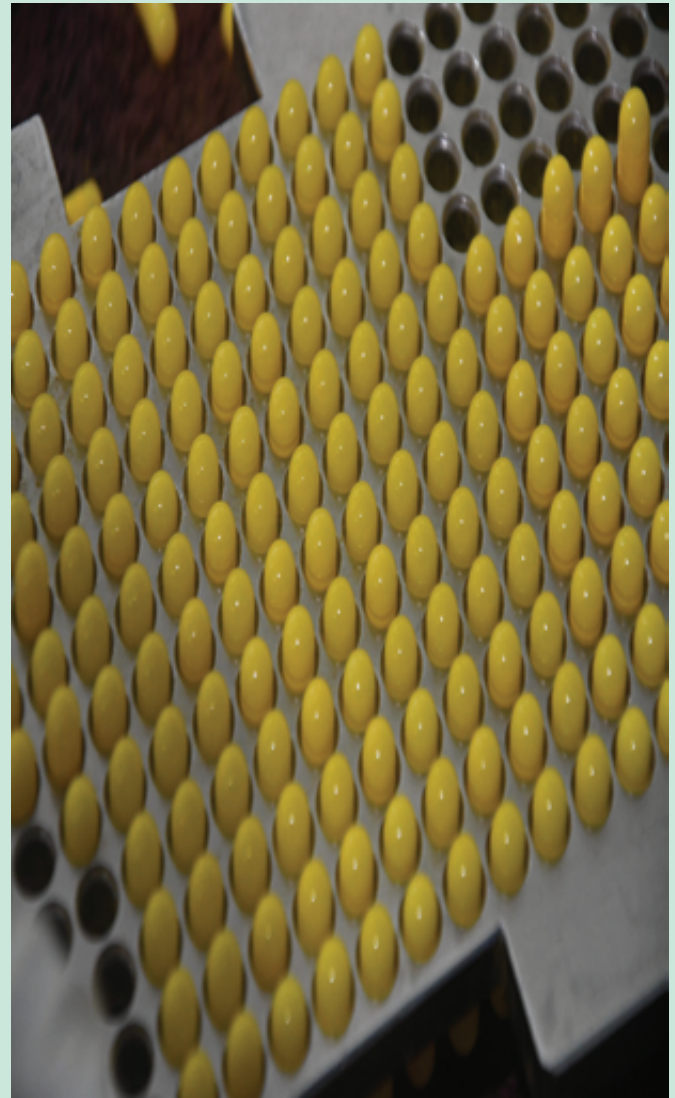
Ancient Ayurveda in a modern capsule



Ayurvedic medicines prepared with modern equipment

A rich aroma rode on clouds of smoke which filled the thatched-roof shed where a cauldron of oil and herbs simmered like a wizard's brew over a wood fire. Stir, stir, stir – a man stood over the bubbling contents and swirled the viscous liquid around with a long-handled ladle. We witnessed this in the 1990s at an Ayurvedic spa that prided itself on making its own oils for various Ayurvedic therapies.

Fast forward to 2022 – to the modern-state-of-the-art factory of the Kairali Ayurvedic Group, the country's leading Ayurvedic and wellness brand. Indeed, the group's inception goes back way back to 1908, followed by the establishment of its first manufacturing unit in 1948, and its first treatment centre in Delhi in 1989. In 1999, Kairali's picturesque healing village dedicated to pure Ayurveda saw light of day.



Traditional medicines in modern capsules

We were on a tour of their factory in Pollachi, Tamil Nadu, where tradition and modern technology tangoed in an intricate balancing act. While tall brass lamps, and urns with flowers bedeck the lobby, within, there's the quiet hum of high tech-- technicians hunched over computer terminals to monitor the Ayurvedic concoctions that were brewing in large metal vats. The Kairali Group's factory is reportedly the most modern manufacturing unit in the country, marrying modern processes and strict quality control with natural and organic ingredients, mentioned in the ancient scriptures. The company also banks on four generations of expertise in Ayurveda as the founders K. V. Ramesh and Gita Ramesh come from a line of *Vaids* (Ayurvedic doctors).

The sleek, modern glass-fronted factory, located on



Healthy vegetarian ayurvedic cuisine

seven and a half acres of land, is backdropped by the Nilgiris and lush forests. We saw heaps of herbs stacked in one section of the factory (most are home grown in Palakkad, location of their award-winning healing village) where a botanist identified each root, stem and unrecognisable herb by name. “Every department has specialised knowledge,” said Abhilash Ramesh, the suave, young Executive Director of Kairali Ayurvedic Products, whose desk was stacked neatly with his group’s products, ready for a briefing of our band of journalists.

Of the expansive range of Ayurvedic supplements listed in the ancient scriptures, Kairali manufactures 77, including immunity boosters, health tonics, and curative formulas as well as skin care and body products totalling up to 350 products. “The processes are still the same,” said Abhilash.

“The ingredients are dried, washed, heated and cooled up to a certain temperature and then they are mixed in the correct proportion... It’s just that the processes are now more



A table for two in a greenery-encased restaurant



Interior of a villa

efficient. Yet it can take 4 to 7 days to manufacture a product.”

The Kairali Ayurvedic Product Division is divided between Spalab which includes patented drugs such as Lipidex, Spaliv, Spazyme, Mulberine researched and developed by the

brand; Proprietary Products which mainly consists of Ayurvedic oils for massages either patented to Kairali or sourced from classical scriptures and concocted from herbs, flowers, fruits, barks of trees, milk and minerals; and all herbal internal medicines such as *arishtas*, *asvas*, *lehyas*, *choornams*, *gulikas*, *bhasmas* and *gritham* are formulated to treat disease without

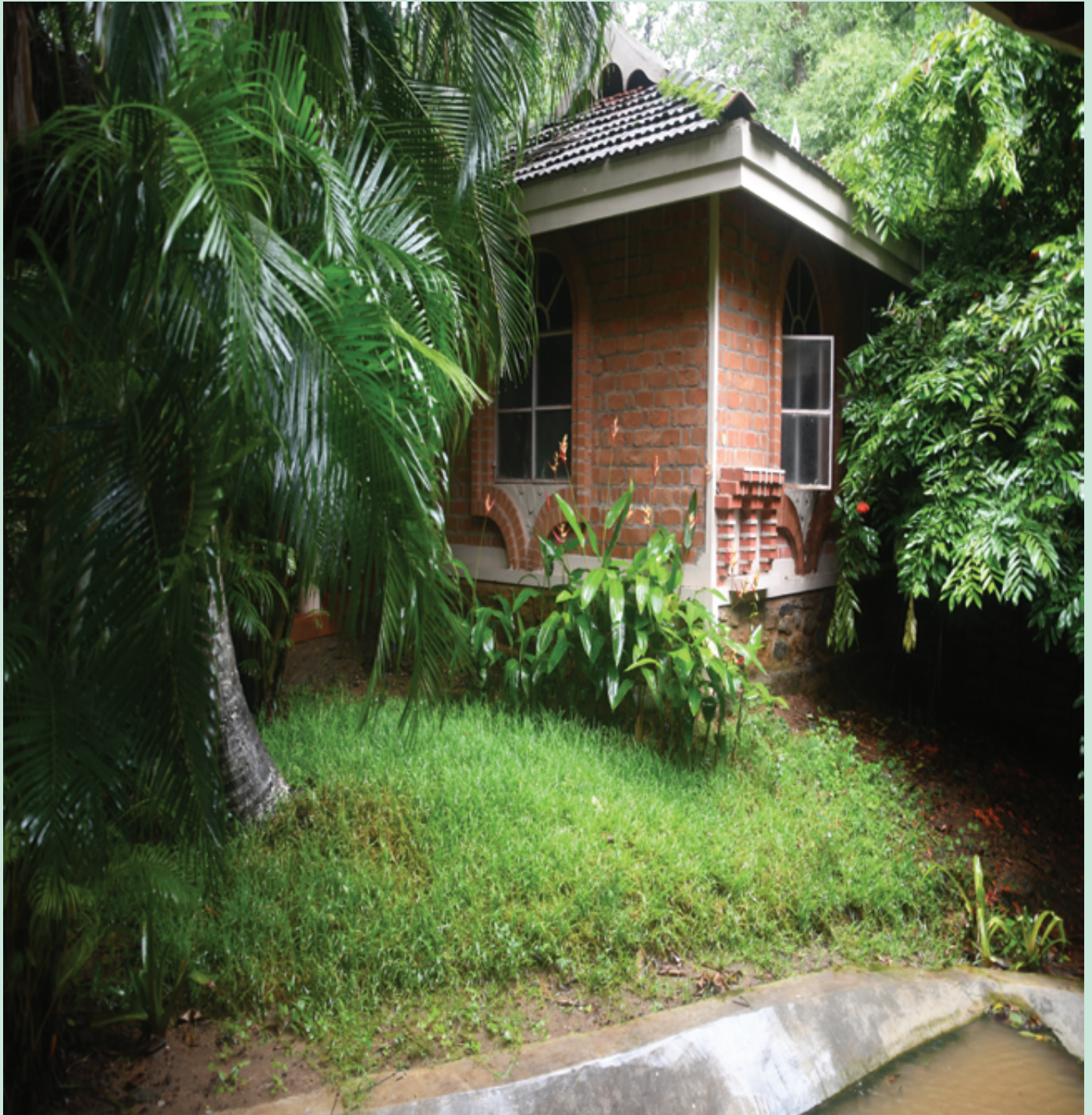


Reception area

side effects. “Both our herbal care beauty division as well as the Ayurvedic medicine division have seen consistent growth year on year,” revealed Abhilash.

During the pandemic, the demand for their Ayurvedic

sanitizers and immunity boosters soared and 32 new Ayurvedic products are to be launched soon as Research and Development is an ongoing process. Indeed, Kairali Ayurvedic doctors adhere to Ayurvedic principles for product development. There is a Cosmetics Division, too, which manufactures soaps, shampoos,



A villa snuggles amidst lush vegetation

moisturisers, shower gels etc.

As we strolled around the factory, we saw nimble-fingered uniformed workers with masks and shower caps on, fill capsules with powder, and top up bottles with healing liquids. Dark brews bubbled and were mechanically stirred in huge vats

only to emerge as smooth glutinous liquids.

Everywhere, we were enveloped in the fragrance of nature's bounty, typical of an Ayurvedic factory where modern technology preserves an ancient system of wellness.



A therapy room at the healing village

ing the knowledge of their forefathers who were traditional Ayurvedic doctors or *vaid*s. Today, the group is spread across three continents, 10 countries and 35 locations and the healing village is billed as an Ayurvedic hospital in a resort setting. At one time, Kairali treated only overseas guests. Now, more and more under-exercised Indians with out-of-whack systems are checking in and opting to experience and rediscover their ancient heritage of good health and wellness “as well as seeking cures for long covid symptoms and chronic ailments,” revealed Gita Ramesh, managing director of the group.

“When the pandemic struck, Indians did not have the immunity and the power to fight it,” she said. Covid-battered, they are now flocking to Kairali, to detox their bodies flooded with high doses of steroids and antibiotics that they ingested to combat Covid. “We have had cases of long covid - inflamed thyroid, high fever, lingering fatigue, joint pain, insomnia, recently. Plus, the usual arthritis and de-addiction cases,” adds Gita. Addiction to drugs, smoking and alcohol can all be treated by Ayurveda. “Follow an Ayurvedic regimen of eating right - fresh seasonal food at the right time, oil your body, do yoga, meditate and avoid junk food, excessive drinking and partying,” she suggests as the best road map to good health. “Moderation is the key.” We had clearly ignored that dictum all our lives, as was evident in our weather-beaten look and parchment-like skin.

“Thirty years ago, no one knew about Ayurveda,” explained Gita who has published a number of books on the Ayurvedic diet and massages. This ancient knowledge was suppressed by the colonialists and initially people were hesitant and even apprehensive. “But once they got results, they were reassured,”she said. “In the old days, kings and nobility had a separate space for Ayurveda and *vaid*s would go to their palaces and homes for 21-day treatments. Even today, in Kerala, we practice Ayurveda in our daily lives. The *abhyanga* massage if done daily prevents disease and is rejuvenating. This is why even old people in Kerala are healthy. Essentially, impaired digestion leads to disease,” she adds.

Kairali received a major facelift last year and all the 30 villas in the vastu-compliant property have been refurbished with new en suite bathrooms and are spacious and muted in their décor. A *valambhari* conch shell in each room is said to emanate positive vibes while a stream meanders past each villa done in the Kerala style. The villas come with private sit-outs for night time stargazing and listening to the sawing of crickets and croaking of frogs. At dawn, we woke to tuneful bird song and, occasionally, the raucous cry of peacocks preening in the foliage. Thirty-five new species of plants and herbs have been planted recently.

The main therapy building which has also been expanded and refurbished is ensconced in leafy vegetation, with glimpses of greenery and natural light streaming in through glass skylights. Indoor plants glow green there and the space is fragrant with the aroma of freshly roasted and pounded herbs and spices. A post therapy relaxation space is where we chatted with other guests over sips of herbal tea - a lady from Sweden who had come for a de-tox and another Indian who was on a weight loss regimen.

We left after three days, feeling like we had recovered much of our sense of well-being and mojo, pummelled by a cruel pandemic that had been even-handed in its destruction of the world we once knew. We, too, vowed to return even if our yoga-weary joints protested. Our minds, now cleansed of nameless fears, longed to return to retrieve again and again that unique sense of quietude we had experienced at Kairali Healing Village.

Fact File

How to Reach

AIR

Coimbatore International Airport is the closest airport from where Kairali Healing Village in Palakkad district is a little over one and a half hours away. Kochi airport too is an option but is a two-hour drive away.

RAIL

Palakkad Railway station is the closest railway station and is half an hour away from the healing village.

ROAD

Taxis are available from the two airports and Palakkad railway station.

STAY

Kairali Healing Village has 30 villas and offers a number of packages but the line of treatment is generally decided by the resident doctors.



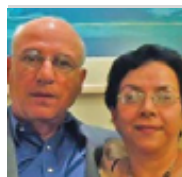
The new Yoga and meditation deck

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Traditionally, according to Ayurveda, Ayurvedic therapies work well in the monsoons. However, Ayurveda therapies are effective year-round.

SIGHTS

Check out Malampuzah Dam, Tipu Sultan Fort, and Silent Valley National Park or get sucked into the Arabian Nights atmosphere of Palakkad market and return with bags full of spices.



Gustasp and Jeroo Irani are travel companions for whom life is a never-ending journey. Over the last 25 years they have travelled extensively across India and the globe, taking the rough with the smooth; sampling different cultures and cuisines. In the

process they have trekked in the Australian Outback, slurped snake soup in HongKong, have danced with the Samburus in Africa, stayed with a local family in a Malay village, cracked the Da Vinci Code in Paris... For them, writing and photography are more than just freezing moments of that journey; it's a passion.

Our Last Six Issues

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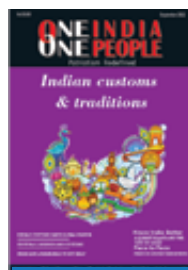
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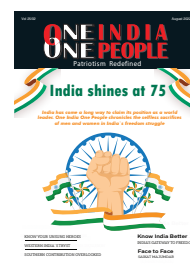
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August 2022



“The book has been an amazing success, earning rave reviews”

An ardent admirer of Kishore Kumar, Parthiv Dhar recently released his co-authored debut book 'Kishore Kumar: The Ultimate Biography', through Harper Collins. It is a celebration of the music, the films and the genius of Kishore Kumar, an outstanding biography for a new generation of readers.

A Bengali, Guwahati born **Parthiv Dhar** (50), is presently posted with Indian Oil in Hyderabad as DGM, LPG Operations, Telengana. He spoke to **A. Radhakrishnan** about his book and the singer he adores.

What inspired you to write a book on Kishore Kumar? Compare him to other popular singers.

As a child, I was made to believe that Kishore Kumar was a very good singer. Subsequently, I realised he was also quite an actor. In college, I came to know of his direction and composition skills. An interview gave us a tryst with the man and it was enough to conclude that the person was no way less iconic than his songs and his super hits.

Thus began a journey of knowing the person spread over a period of twenty years with stoppages at Khandwa, Indore, and Bhagalpur, among others. The book is a compilation of information in a structured fashion.

Quoting my co-author, Anirudha Bhattacharjee, retired SAP consultant, Wipro, and musician, “All our male singers except Bhupinder and too some extent Yesudas have been tenors. Maybe the timber has varied, but they are tenors, nevertheless. Similarly, K L Saigal, Kishore Kumar, and Pankaj Mullick were tenors with a unique quality in their voice - Dhaar and Bhaar (Sharpness & Weight).

For other singers, it was a case of either/or. Hence, Kishore could playback for Dev Anand using his dhaar (e.g. - Hum hain rahi pyaar ke), complement it with some bhaar and mizaaz when he sang for Rajesh Khanna (e.g. - Kuch toh log kahenge), and use his bhaar when he would sing for the next superstar, Amitabh Bachchan (e.g. - *O Saathi re*).

He also had a very strong *swarranth*, which gave the songs resonance. Plus, his flux density was unique. Even with such a heavy voice, it would remain steady when negotiating long notes, something very difficult to achieve. I know from experience as I sing.”



Parthiv Dhar

Why does he deserve the Bharat Ratna?

The Bharat Ratna deserves him. Kishore Kumar as a person stands out among others, quite contrary to what the general thought process is. He was probably India's first dancing star between 1956 to 1958 and Helen is on record concluding that she could not match up to his steps. Similarly, Shahrukh Khan felt the energy while emulating Kishore Kumar in live performances. As an actor, he was a complete natural in the societal and romantic scenes but looked awfully out of place in action scenes which actually is a tribute to the persona that he is.

From whatever we have found in our research, his reel life was just an extension of his real-life mannerisms and thus he didn't need to 'act', probably the only actor to do so. I categorically state that as an entertainer he had no competition miles apart. Even half of his deserved recognition in that arena would have been sufficient for the most prestigious of awards.

Have you ever interacted with him personally? What help did his family give for the book?

How we wish!! He passed away way too soon. We had a couple of interactions with his son Amit. However maximum inputs attributed were from the public domain.

Which songs of his do you like the most? Why? Do you sing too?

There are so many but to name a few ... *Aa Chalke tujhe, Mere deewanepan ki dawa, Chand roz, Maine Tumse Kuch nahin maanga* are my all-time favourites. Kishore Kumar would make singing appear easy to the extent that emulation became an everyday affair. Later clones would realise that the songs were after all not everybody's cup of tea. But yet, everyone would attempt a Kishore song. The very fact that he was an actor made him think like one when he would playback. Also, he was perhaps

the only one to develop his texture and baritone with the infrastructural progress each decade after Independence. This led to him being probably the only one to realise that tragic songs need to make the audience cry, not the singer.

How long did it take to write the book from conception to publishing?

It took us almost 12 years. To finalise the structure itself, we needed two years. The book has been shortened a great deal since the first draft although the basic structure has remained the same.

Why a partnered book? How did you finance your book?

Anirudha-da and I go a long way. In fact, around 2004-05, we started a campaign for the Bharat Ratna for Kishore Kumar and did quite a fair bit of work. Probably during those times, writing a book on Kishore Kumar crossed our minds. I remember, we both were clueless initially on the structure of the book owing to the multidimensional persona of Kishore and thus we started late. The impetus was gained with my visit to Khandwa in 2010 and Anirudha-da nearing completion of his book on Rahul D Burman which later won the National Award in 2012 for best book on cinema. Graduating to Kishore was a natural progression. The Khandwa and then the Indore visits brought me extremely close to his friends and their families, his caretaker at the Ganguly House and his college professors who shared with us anecdotes and documents. Fittingly, the book is being dedicated to Khandwa.

We had a fantastic time at Bhagalpur, trespassing through unknown events related to his maternal side, interacting with his relatives like Ratna-di, daughter of his cousin Arun Kumar. Meeting his secretary Abdul was also a high point in the making of the book. For research-based writers like us, writing with a partner helps. Finance was partially by self and the publishers.

Does writing energise or exhaust you? Did you get writers' block?

Writing is one of the few things which excites me. It does not exhaust me much as I spend maximum energy in imagining and creating visuals while taking forward one sentence to the next. This gives adequate rest to the pen. While I take extra precautions on readers' perception, till now the writer's block has eluded me.

How did you use social media as an author?

Social media exposed us to many knowledgeable Kishore fans, many of whom gave us significant inputs during the book's

making. A few collectors/ sellers were also traced through the social media and their contributions too can't be ignored. We have followed some discussion threads too in case it added value.

How successful is the book?

The book has been an amazing success, earning rave reviews. That credit of course should go to the subject of the book and the cover. Our role comes once you start opening the pages. The fact that many are using the book as festive season gifts has been deeply gratifying.

How do you deal with negative reviews?

I love to have genuine constructive criticisms but ignore trolls.

Any regrets?

I will always rue the fact that my father passed away in 2021 before he could see this book. He would have told you how many commas and semi colons, the biography had!

What according to you are the elements of good writing?

Good writing in my opinion should be simple and ideally close to how we talk and understand. The idea should be not to demonstrate our command over the vocabulary but to seamlessly communicate the intended message to the reader. Empathising with the reader's mindset is the key. Secondly while writing a biography, we have tried to flavour it from the eyes of a raconteur. While ending a chapter and going on to the next, especially the narrative should flow as a well-oiled machine. Good writing should also be accustomed with the value of silence. Skipping and letting the readers decipher instead of concluding everything.



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



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INDIA.

Tech and start-ups

India's tech industry is on a roll with the Information Technology sector registering a 15.5 per cent YoY growth for FY 2022 and the tech sector revenue exceeding two hundred billion dollars. The youth have contributed in a big way to achieve this.

India is a start-up haven. The total number of recognised start-ups in India rose from 471 in 2016 to 72,993 as on 30 June 2022. Presently, there are more than 25,000 tech start-ups in the country including more than a hundred such ventures that have now achieved unicorn status (Unicorn companies are those that reach a valuation of one billion dollars without being listed on the stock market and is the dream status of any tech start-up) and eleven start-ups that have launched an IPO.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stressed upon the global position of India in the technology sector when he was giving his speech during the 76th Independence Day celebrations. He emphasised on India's invaluable contribution towards the fourth industrial revolution.

To encourage youth participation in the tech sector and support their start-up ventures, the government has extended support through various incubation centres and initiatives such as Seed Fund, Digital India Programme, Atal Innovation Mission, Start-up India, Software Technology Park (STP) Scheme and campaigns like Think Digital, Think India.

The government of India's Skill India Mission aims to empower the youth with adequate skill sets that will enable them to work across relevant sectors and also improve productivity. With an increase in literacy rate among the youth and higher internet penetration across rural and urban India, there has been a drastic increase in digital literacy among the youth.

At a time when upgradation of skills and knowledge is mandatory for improved career prospects, the young in India are racing to grab opportunities and create more for others. Access to internet, availability of online resources, affordable smartphones and gadgets, etc. are helping them upgrade themselves and prepare for the market demands of the future.

Creating opportunities

India's youth are a formidable force not just in numbers but in talent and skill. They are not only availing opportunities to grow but creating many more for themselves and for individuals like them. The start-up boom in India is fuelled by the youth creating such opportunities. With the inundation of disruptive technologies, internet-based services, access to information and resources, there's no stopping for India's youth.

India's population presents itself as not just a workforce but a market also and the youth are skilfully tapping on that. The young entrepreneurs are creating services or environment for services that has many takers.

In areas such as education or edu-tech, healthcare, fitness and wellness, sustainability, etc. there are many opportunities of entrepreneurship. The availability of e-commerce, online wallets, diverse credit facilities, etc. is enabling the digital savvy young to take risks and venture into entrepreneurship. Government initiatives are further enabling entrepreneurship ecosystems and employment opportunities for the youth in India.



India's youth have proved their mettle in all spheres of life

Melting pot of cultures

Today, Indian cities and bigger towns are fast becoming a melting pot of cultures. The youth from villages and smaller towns are migrating to the cities that have become the centre of employment and entrepreneurial ventures.

The movement of people is making the urban pockets more and more culturally diverse. The interaction of people is enabling exchange of ideas, skills, innovative thinking, languages and creative and sustainable solutions that is leading to the formation of a young, robust and productive workforce.

India's demographic dividend opportunity is the longest in the world that will be accessible for the next 50 years beginning from 2005. The rapid increase in the working population of the country that is young and productive is the basis of India's promising future and economic expansion and the opportunities are endless. It will be relevant to note here that India is also set to become one of the largest consumer economies in the world.

India's youth have proved their mettle in all spheres of life – sports, education, technology, science, literature, arts, music, etc., and their thirst for achieving more is not dying anytime soon. Not only are they scaling heights for India, they've become the country's brand ambassadors worldwide.

Neeraj Chopra became India's first field athlete to win a gold medal during the Tokyo Olympics 2020 and he is inspiring millions of young Indians to push boundaries. He is the first Asian athlete to win an Olympic gold medal in Men's Javelin throw. Kedarnath's Parikul Bharadwaj is India's youngest social worker. She has won the National Bravery Award for saving the lives of the two pilgrims.

Mumbai's Malhar Kalambe started a drive with his friends in 2017 where they would collect the garbage thrown by visitors and locals at Dadar beach. A weekend activity soon became a mass clean-up initiative engaging over 20,000 people. His efforts led to the collection of around 1,000 tons of plastic waste and other waste material from the beach and the United Nations recognised his work by felicitating him on the International Volunteer Day on 5 December 2018.

Neeti Prakash 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.

The song and dance about Naatu Naatu

*In a review of sorts, **Shoma A. Chatterji** talks about the composer of this award-winning song and the impression it creates given the backdrop of the film which is set during the colonial times. She feels that despite the obvious absurdity of some of the film's subplots, the song-story, insisted by film-maker as Telugu and not Bollywood, has a simplistic narrative for the western audience.*



NTR Junior and Ram Charan dancing to Naatu Naatu in RRR which won the Golden Globe Award

Naatu Naatu in Hindi translates as “Naacho Naacho” while in English it simply means “dance dance.” This song from the Telugu language film strangely named RRR has won the Golden Globe for the Best Original Song this year, bringing this award home for the first time in Asia in the award’s 80-year-old history winning over international music greats like Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga and Rihanna.

The song is composed by MM Keeravani whose face adorns the pages of media in the country holding the trophy, the Golden Globe aloft in one hand and the thumbs up sign. Who is MM Keeravani? He is known as MM Kreem in Bollywood and Marakathamani for the music he composes for Tamil films. He is

a talented music composer of long standing having written the lyrics for Tamil and Telugu films. MM Keeravani has already bagged other awards such as a Saturn Award nomination, a National Film Award, eight Filmfare Awards and eleven Nandi Awards. This Golden Globe therefore, is no flash in the pan; nor does the entire credit go to Keeravani because it is the dance number that has made the film and the song famous and not the other way round.

Those who have watched RRR and drooled over this song across the globe will be able to remember this which actually defines a sub-plot in the story and also fleshes out the various talents of the two heroes more sharply than through the



MM Keeravani, composer of Naatu Naatu holding the Golden Globe Trophy

confusing storyline with sub-plots failing to make a cohesive statement and dozens of characters making their own statements. All of this is kicked up against the abduction of a little tribal girl from a closed Dalit community in British ruled India only because the wife of the British governor in the State takes a fancy to the girl and demands she be taken as a servant maid. The community she belongs to is no less aggressive, arrogant and proud than the White rulers and her elder brother takes it upon himself to rescue his kid sister and bring her back home. He acquires another friend as equally strong, macho and courageous as he is and the two go on this long adventurous journey filled with song-dance numbers, incredibly fanciful fights and leaps and other heroic acts and actually fleshes out the fragments of the “story” that is filled with absurd subplots.

Somewhere along their search for the girl, the two macho young men, full of energy deliberately walk into a grand party being held on the grounds of a lavish palace probably when an engagement party between a White girl and a White young man is about to begin. The White young man with his hair falling

over his forehead, approaches them and orders them to walk out at once as they are intruders. The two men respond with “Naatu Naatu” and when the White man asks the meaning, they begin to dance.

The two portrayed by NTR Junior and Ram Charan are dressed in three-piece suits with their trousers held up by a pair of suspenders was popular during the period the film is set against. But as they begin their dance number along with the song that provides the background, the rhythm, the music, the beats and the energy to the dance, they begin to shake off their coats without stopping even for a moment in their performance. The men in the party seem to be doubtful of the presence and performance of these “native” intruders but the beautiful young White women, dozens of them dressed in flowing pink-and-white gowns are not just thrilled but make a move to join in. The entire song-dance number was shot at the President’s palace in Ukraine in the midst of the tumult.

The young guys use their suspenders within their

dance gracefully without missing a single step. The creative and constructive use of suspenders, first popularised as “braces” in 1822 by Londoner Albert Thurston, enhances the dance number and is perhaps unique in Indian cinema. Note that director SS Rajamouli insisted in interviews that RRR was by no means a Bollywood film but a Telugu language film breaking the misconception among foreign film buffs of Indian cinema meaning just “Bollywood” and nothing beyond.

This dance which begins right in the centre of the palace gardens shifts gradually to the red carpet on the floor and as the pace speeds up, to the open grounds kicking up a lot of dust with their feet movement which the pretty young ladies try to join in laughing all the way, sometimes falling on the floor while at others, trying their best to join in the steps of the two young men.

This song-dance number that literally pays a cinematic tribute to dance can be read as a satiric comment on the British rulers, mainly composed of men which proves that these “rustic” young “native” Indians not only can carry off their Western attire with great aplomb but can also dance brilliantly in the same attire at the same time without missing out either on a single step of failing even for a fraction of a moment in their complete harmony during the dance which includes their ever-smiling, caustic facial expressions when the suited-and-booted White young men are aghast at their performance.

Naatu Naatu is composed by MM Keeravani and the original Telugu lyrics are written by Chandrabose. Rahul Sipligunj and Kaala Bhairava have sung the energetic track. KD Harisankar, Yazin Nizar, and Vishal Mishra have sung the dubbed versions. The high-octane dance sequence of the song was choreographed by Prem Rakshith. It took 20 days to complete shooting the song-dance number; 30 days of rehearsals, of which only three hook steps were approved out of 110 planned. It took 60 days to choreograph the steps which might have taken a complete film to be shot, edited and certified under normal conditions.

Writes Shaoni Sarkar in News18 (13 January 2023) “The impact of colonialism is never over; the phenomenon having permanently altered societal structures. Still, it’s undeniable that there is a particular sensibility - an aesthetic, if you will - that relieves the ‘White Man’s Burden’. While it originated as the term for imperialists’ instinct to “civilise”, it has now shaped itself into a kind of performative guilt that allows relief while simultaneously absolving the performer of any further accountability. This is the kind of art coming out of India that the Western audience is most likely to gravitate towards. After all, it is much easier to understand the impact of colonialism rendered in broad, blunt brushstrokes - a cruel, ill-tempered white man; a group of nice and benevolent white ladies who support the Indian protagonists, and of course, the protagonists themselves. This simplistic narrative appeals to the sensibilities of Western viewers who can gesture towards themselves as enlightened individuals, having participated in and celebrated the kind of music that condemns their racist past, obfuscating the fact that racism is not in the past at all.”

Bollywood film buffs however, are convinced that MM Keeravani has given better music. Among these, the top favourite is the Criminal number *Tu mile, dil khile aur jeene ko kya chahiye* which has become an inseparable part of our musical memory dating back to the 1990s. There are dozens of others like *Jism (Jaadu Hai Nasha Hai)*, *Saaya (O Sathiya)*, *Zakhm (Gali Mein Aaj Chand Nikla)*, *Sur (Kabhi Shaam Dhale)* and many more. And he did not need dance numbers like *Naatu Naatu* to hold these songs and prop them up. Period.



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.



Facilitating eco-friendly farming

*An effort to spread natural farming based in Tikamgarh district (MP) which is fast spreading to other districts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and some other places as well has placed a lot of faith in several such natural farming entrepreneurs who are known for their deep commitment to natural farming, observes **Bharat Dogra**.*



Natural farming entrepreneur Balchand Aharwal of Lidhaura Tal village

While a lot of research has strengthened the case for spreading natural farming, a practical factor which has hindered its spread in India is that several farmers find it difficult to take up production of organic manures and pest-repellants for self-use, even though all the raw material is available within their home or neighbourhood.

In the most commonly used natural farming practices in India, organic soil nutrients (solid and liquid) are made using cow dung and cow urine with some jaggery and gram flour thrown in, these being mixed and stored for a certain number of days while organic soil-repellants are generally prepared in the form of concentrated sprays based on leaves of certain plants which are known to keep away pests. Ideally a natural farmer would be preparing this for self-use, but many find this difficult and so this becomes an inhibiting factor.

One way of overcoming this is for a few local farmers to assume the role of 'natural farming entrepreneurs' by taking up production of organic nutrients and pest-repellants on a commercial scale so that it can be sold to other farmers of this village who need this in ready-made form.

An effort to spread natural farming based in Tikamgarh district (MP) which is fast spreading to other districts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and some other places as well has placed a lot of faith in several such natural farming entrepreneurs who are known for their deep commitment to natural farming. Bio-Resource Centres have been set up with the help of such natural farming entrepreneurs more commonly called Prakriti Shiksha Kendra or natural farming centre by villagers) in several villages.



Farmers turn to organic farming in Bundelkhand

Recently, I visited one such center in Lidhaura Tal village managed by a natural farming entrepreneur Balchand Aharwal. Near the entrance there is a cow shed where the urine flow gets collected in a tank. On the other side, there are farming tools like power tillers and sprayers which can be hired on daily basis. The various forms of organic nutrients made are displayed along with a rate list. Even after considering that a higher quantity of organic nutrients may be required for per acre use compared to chemical fertilizers, the cost of the organic nutrient works out to about one-third. In the case of the organic pest-repellant the cost is drastically less compared to chemical pesticides used. This includes a reasonable return for the entrepreneur. Thus, farmers who opt for organic soil nutrients save money, get sustainable benefits, protect environment, and the money spent remains within his village. Although a new initiative, Balchand has so far sold organic soil nutrients and pest-repellants worth ₹ 60,000. If the government subsidises these organic nutrients over chemical fertilisers, both farmers and farming entrepreneurs can benefit significantly.

Further, traditional seeds of diverse varieties collected from in and around the village are stored. Then there is a newly constructed room for conducting training in natural farming. Beyond this there are fields of natural farming of food grains and legumes, as well as vegetable garden and orchard.

Such a centre can thus become pivotal in learning about natural farming as also in procuring ready material. The senior activist observes that as the number of abandoned cattle

roaming around is very high in Bundelkhand region and it should be easy to use them for getting soil-nutrients – individually or by a centre -- while also taking care of them.

Women farmers have played key role and special attention is given to ensure adequate representation to those from weaker sections. They have been found to be receptive to natural farming as these methods are cost-effective and make them self-reliant at a time when people are emerging from Covid lockdowns.

These efforts are being strengthened at the level of farmer producer organisations as well as by more articulate rural women like Varsha Patel, who has emerged as the CEO of the Ken-Betwa farmer producer organisation. She says: 'Awareness of health related and other benefits of natural farming is increasing and hence there is higher acceptability for this method among women. The fact that the efforts are largely woman-led; makes it all a significant force of social change. Also, these contribute in climate change adaptation and mitigation, apart from reducing economic burden.

The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include India's Quest for Sustainable Farming and Healthy Food, Man over Machine and Planet in Peril.

KIRAN BALA SACHDEV (TABASSUM) (1944-2022)

Pioneer of talk shows on Indian television

Kiran Bala Sachdev *alias* Tabassum Govil was an actress, producer, director, film maker, editor, talk show host and You Tuber, who started as child actor.

Vivacious, eloquent, Tabassum was born in Bombay. She was named Tabassum by her father Ayodhyanath and Kiran Bala by her mother Asghari Begum. An Arts graduate from Aligarh Muslim University, she had the distinction of being active in film, television, radio, print, stage shows and journalism for over five decades.

She was the editor of the popular magazine *Grihalaxmi*, a Hindi women's magazine for 15 years and published more than 10 books of jokes and Urdu *shayaris*. On You Tube, in her show *Ye Thi Tabassum*, she shared film memories of bygone days, and in *Tabassum Talkies*, with 737k subscribers, she spoke about Indian cinema legends.

As a pioneering 70s host, of the first ever TV talk show, *Phool Khile Hain Gulshan Gulshan*, on Doordarshan, based on film celebrity interviews, she became a household name. Versatile and erudite, Tabassum won hearts with her smile and nasal twang. A rose tucked behind her ear became her style statement.

Her show ran for a record 21 long years (1972 to 1993), helping her take to stage compering too. Initially, DD wanted to name it *Guldasta*, but she chose a Begum Akhtar's couplet *Phool Khile Hain Gulshan Gulshan*. Doorsharshan paid her a paltry ₹ 70 per episode, and towards the end, ₹ 750! Hurt, she quit when the younger generation in the same format, were paid in thousands. She continued to host the show *Abhi Toh Main Jawaan Hoon* on TV Asia USA and Canada, based on the golden era of Hindi Cinema.

In 2006, she made a TV comeback as an actress in *Pyaar Ke Do Naam: Ek Raadha, Ek Shyaam*, produced by Rajshri Productions; became a judge in a reality stand-up comedy show *Ladies Special* (2009); was seen in a lead role in the Hindi TV serial *Zimbo Ka Beta* (1966) and hosted a devotional TV show *Bhakti Main Masti, Tabassum Bhajan*

Sandhya.

At four, Tabassum hosted a children's radio show *Phulwari*, aired on A.I.R.; was a radio jockey in 1970 for the TV show *Saridon Ke Saathi* with Ameen Sayani and hosted *Maratha Darbar Ki Mehkti Batein*, a comedy radio show. On stage, she performed in a show, *Tabassum Hit Parade*. stage, she performed in a show, *Tabassum Hit Parade*.

She began her film career aged three, for the 1947 Hindi film *Nargis* getting recognition as Baby Tabassum. After that came *Mera Shad*, *Manjhdhar* and *Bari Behen*, *Sangram*, *Afsana* and *Bahar*. In *Deedar*, she played Nargis's childhood role. The iconic song, *Bachpan Ke Din Bhula Na Dena* was picturised on her and Parikshit Sahni. In the film *Baiju Bawra*, she played Meena Kamari's childhood role. After *Sangram*, *Afsana* and *Bahar*, as a child actor, her last Hindi film was *Baap Beti* (1954). At 10, she was earning ₹ 7 to 8 lakh per film, but sadly most of it outstanding.

Tabassum appeared in 1966 as the lead in the Hindi film *Zimbo ka Beta*. Others films in 1970s included, *Ganwaar*, *Heer Raanjha*, *Johny Mera Naam*, *Gambler*, *Shaadi Ke Baad*, and *Maa Bahan Aur Biwi* and the lead in the Gujarati *Upar Gagan Vishal*. After a hiatus, she played character roles in *Sur Sangam*, *Naache Mayuri* and *Chameli ki Shaadi* and the 1990 film *Swarg*.

Tabassum wrote, produced, and directed her debut movie, *Tum Par Hum Qurban*, in 1985 with son Hoshang Govil in the lead, but the film flopped. *Kartoot* directed by her got shelved. She introduced talents like Johnny Lever and Sunidhi Chauhan to Bollywood.



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

DR YUSUF ADAM MERCHANT (1956-2022)

Exemplary anti-drug activist

Dr. Yusuf Adam Merchant was a charismatic Founder President of Drug Abuse Information Rehabilitation and Research Centre (DAIRRC), in Mumbai. The impish smiling psychiatrist and crusader of drug rehabilitation was popularly known by the moniker Doc.

Born in a reputed business family, his childhood tendency was healing and soothing, but faced adversity from childhood, lost loved ones to dark addictions, endured heart-wrenching betrayal, and struggled with the trauma of abandonment.

Resentful of his parents, he was deviant. As a result, his father threw him out of the home and it was on the streets that he got sensitised about drug abuse. He saw the darker side of humanity, and pitted against life with all its brutality.

After his Masters in Medicine from Grant Medical College, Mumbai in 1982, as a JJ Hospital psychiatry department intern, he was drawn to the treatment of drug addicts, treated as criminals and animals. He changed tack, learning everything about drug demand reduction strategies, including drug prevention and rehabilitation.

Treating a small group of drug addicts for 15 years at his own home, he went through their withdrawals, shared their fears, their thoughts and feelings, and used his knowledge to come up with the best combination of drugs to alleviate even the most terrible mainlining heroin withdrawal.

An encounter with a heroin addict he helped recover, prompted him to establish the 60,000 sq. feet Land Rehab Centre in 1982, in Kushiwadi, Ambernath, Thane. At the foothills of the Haji Malang Mountain range, it gradually became a paradise for nurturing the recovery of disturbed souls. Called just 'Land', it promoted deaddiction through group therapy.

Filled with open, green spaces, unlike all the other rehab centres, it had cosy rooms, a gym, a football field, and people who looked happy. No one ever tried to run away.

Not everybody who came to Land was an addict. One third of them were broken for other reasons. What they had in common was an addictive personality type (hypersensitivity,

high IQ, poor EQ, extreme behaviour, low self-esteem).

Unconventional, he used his instinct, sensitivity and innate sense to provide an all-encompassing aura of fortitude, healing, nurturing and compassion, enabling addicts to gain confidence and face reality.

His rehab through community living was a half way home, achieving a success ratio of 85%, helping tortured souls resurrect their lives, excluding the need for drugs and alcohol totally. He got the deadly drug MCAT (Meow Meow) banned in India by filing a PIL, when no one wanted to take on the drug mafia and made many enemies in the process.

Merchant authored several books on narcotics, including a 515 pages anthology on Narcotics, published by the Commission of European Communities, and also a bestseller on life management called Happyness: Life Lessons from a Creative Addict. He was awarded the Indian Excellence Award for Best Anti-Drug Campaigner of India.

Merchant was awarded the Indian Excellence Award for Best Anti-Drug Campaigner of India for his exemplary contribution. However, there was a darker side to him. People Against Rehab Abuse (PARA), a collective of doctors, lawyers, journalists and writers brought multiple charges of abuse against him and accused him of being a sexual predator; appointed some of his recovering junkies as medical heads, giving complete access to prescription medications due to lack of accountability; had shady financial dealings and held only an MBBS degree and had merely served an internship in psychiatry.

Merchant rejected all charges as conspiracy to malign his image. The Maharashtra Medical Council exonerated him honourably. Diagnosed with pelvic cancer three years ago with heart complications, he passed away due to cardiac arrest in Mumbai, aged 66.



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

CAPTAIN NEIKEZHAKUO KENGURUSE MVC (1974 -1999)

The 'Maha Vir' of Kargil war

Captain Neikezhakuo Kenguruse, born on 15 July 1974, hailed from Nerhema village in Kohima district of Nagaland. Son of Neisielie Kenguruse, Capt. Kenguruse had two brothers, Ngseue Kenguruse and Atoulie Kenguruse. After his schooling at St Xavier School in Jalukie, he did graduation from Kohima Science College. He then served as a teacher at the Government High School in Kohima from 1994 to 1997.

Capt. Kenguruse was commissioned into the Army Service Corps of Indian Army on 12 December 1998. He was in the field attachment with 2nd Rajputana Rifles battalion. As his first assignment, Capt. Kenguruse got posted to the unit deployed in J&K. His family would fondly call him 'Neibu' and in the army, he was better known as 'Nimbu Sahab.'

War broke out between Pakistan and India in Kargil sector along the Line of Control (LoC) that demarcates Pakistan and Kashmir. Often the site of skirmishes, Kargil War was the largest and deadliest of these.

In 1999, when the Kargil War started, Capt. Kenguruse was a junior commander deployed in Drass sector. He was made the lead commander of the Ghatak Platoon of his battalion, a privilege for only the most physically fit and motivated. On the fateful night of June 28, 1999, Capt. Kenguruse's platoon was given the responsibility of taking out a strategic machine gun post held by the enemy on a cliff face, the Black Rock. Heavy gunfire had been hindering the battalion's progress for days and it was very crucial to neutralise this enemy position. The assigned task was challenging as the gun post was on a cliff with a steep gradient and the path was open to enemy artillery fire.

Capt. Kenguruse swung into action along with his troops. About seven Pakistani bunkers stood before them, and heavy artillery greeted their journey up the knife-edge cliff of the hill. As they were nearing the first bunker, a grenade was thrown at them, which injured Capt. Kenguruse severely. He sustained splinter injuries in his abdomen but undeterred, he egged on his men.

As the commando team scaled the cliff, they came under intense mortar and automatic fire. Capt. Kenguruse

decimated the first bunker using a rocket launcher. Motivated, the commando team moved further up the cliff. On reaching the final cliff face, they were halted by a rock wall that separated them from the enemy machine-gun post. They had to scale the wall to reach the enemy. While securing the rope to enable his men to climb over the face of the rock, Capt Kenguruse's foothold was slipping.

At 16,000 feet and a temperature of minus 10 degree Celsius, Capt. Kenguruse kicked off his shoes for a better grip and scaled the rock barefoot.

Then two enemy soldiers from the second bunker charged towards him but he hacked them to death with his commando knife. As he was approaching the third bunker, a stream of bullets threw him off the cliff and he plunged down the cliff, a few hundred feet below. Capt. Kenguruse single-handedly destroyed two bunkers and was responsible for neutralising the enemy position.

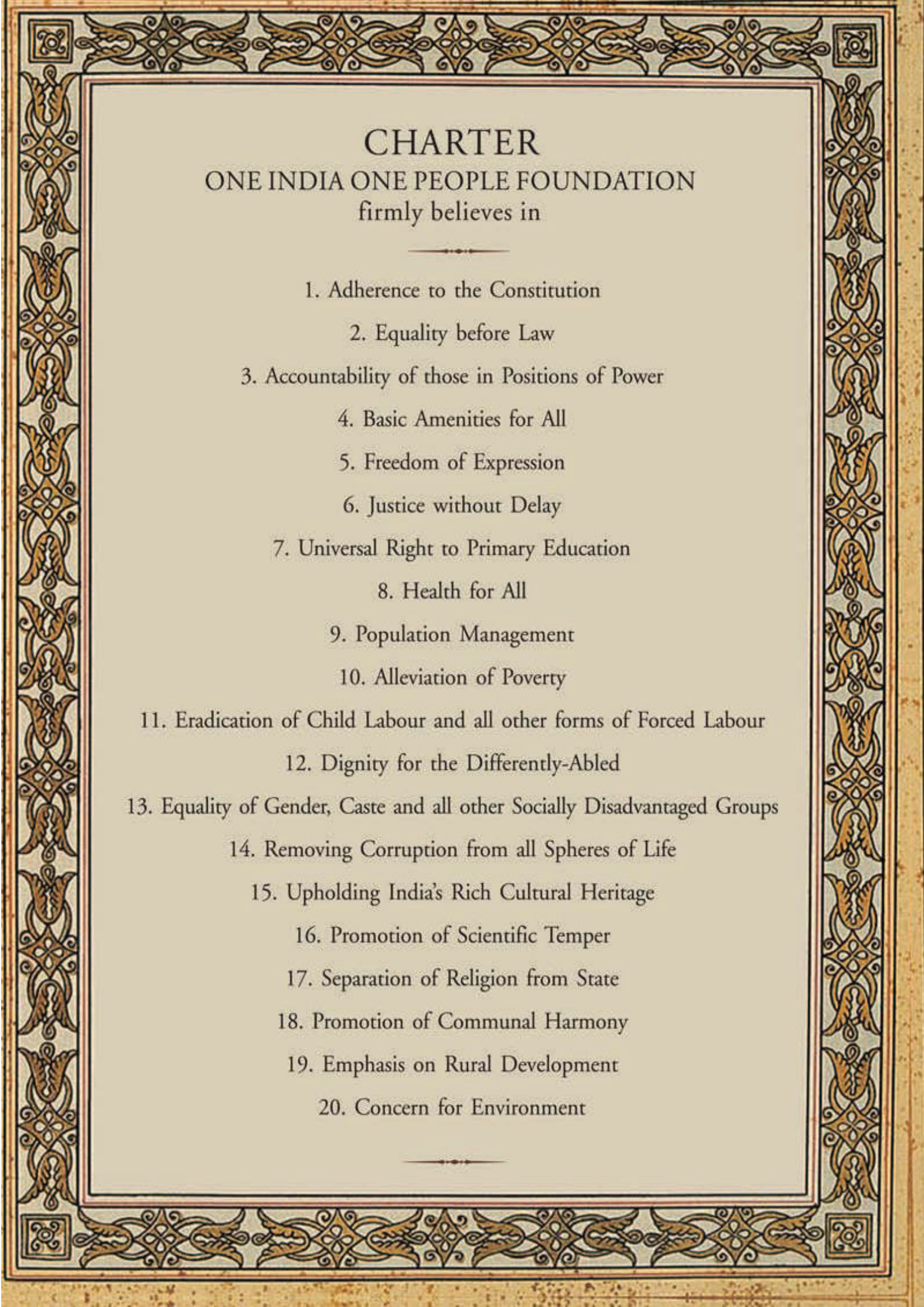
His act inspired his men to capture the enemy position and kill the enemy troops to avenge his death. The mission was successful and the troops attributed their success to the daredevilry of Capt Kenguruse.

Captain Kenguruse was a fine officer who led from the front. The fiercely independent Naga spirit was a family legacy for him. His great, great grandfather, Perheile, had been one of the most respected warriors of the village. Today, there is a mist shrouded monument in Nerhema, dedicated to the warrior's descendent.

Martyred at 25, Capt Kenguruse was given the nation's second highest gallantry award, "Maha Vir Chakra" for his raw courage, indomitable spirit and supreme sacrifice. Capt Kenguruse also went on to become the first and the only recipient of Maha Vir Chakra from the Army Service Corps (ASC).

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)





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
-

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