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Face to Face

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Indian Monsoon

Singing paeans to monsoon

Gajanan Khergamker unveils the multi-splendoured majesty of monsoon and how evocative the season in every walk of life down to the boot – the romantic weather after the dry and arid parched months, the indulgence of buying the right gear, the small but compulsive joys of gorging seasonal snacks and many more. Oh, the gusto of the gusty monsoon winds and nature's showers!



Pyaar hua ikraar hua- the iconic rain song from Shree 420

o, they've finally arrived. The fact that the monsoons are closely synonymous with our lives is the reason for the rains featuring almost ceremoniously in every Hindi film worth its salt. The very mention of the rains fetches memories of a wet-to-the-bone Raj Kapoor dancing below staged monsoons with an equally- drenched Nargis crooning *Pyaar Hua Ikraar Hua* in Shree 420; or the same duo singing *Barsaat Mein Humse Mile* in Barsaat or then, a wet Kajol dancing as she lip-syncs notes of *Mere Khwabon Mein Jo Aaye* in Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge. And then, there're more sober filmy numbers like *Allah Megh De Paani De* denoting the Indian's proclivity to rain-dances or ceremonies to usher in the monsoons at times of delay.

In India, synonymous with the monsoons is romance which literally blooms in this much-awaited season. It's also the best time to consume hot *bhuttas* by the roadside sheltered by the rains under an umbrella; hot *bhajias* and the good ol' *chai*. It's the right time to make a beeline for the nearest monsoon hotspot along the Western coastline: The backwaters of Kerala, the beaches of Goa or the hill-stations of Maharashtra.



Aishwarya Rai dancing to Barso re mehga in Guru

The pleasant monsoon winds

Like nature, the monsoons too don't discriminate. The South Westerlies move with a sense of ownership without any prejudice throughout the western coast in early June after an entry in lush-green Kerala. And, as the rains hurtle their way through the entire western stretch of India, accompanied with thunder and lightning all along the coast, the summer temperatures begin to backtrack to bearable levels.

Raag Malhar has been synonymous with India and its rains since eons. The legendary Tansen was known to have the ability to sway nature his way each time he performed. Raag Malhar, among several others, is said to fetch the monsoons each time it is performed. The more-recent rendition of Raag Malhar was Aamir Khan's Lagaan number *Ghanan Ghanan* where a village's prospects are shown depending entirely on the monsoons.

Till date, India's extended summer gets so tortuous towards April and May that it sparks off heat waves that kill thousands in the northern belt of India each year. It isn't of much surprise hence to find the rains being greeted with overwhelming joy and gratitude every year. In most of rural India, fortunes of masses and their very lives pivot around the annual rains where the first showers are met with religious ceremonies of gratitude and celebrations of sorts.

Monsoons integral to life in India

They aren't any ordinary downpour, the monsoons in India: Nowhere else does a season matter so much to a country' prospects. Where else do you find 70 per cent of a nation's citizens' work prospects affected directly by the monsoons? Here, the rains' delay sends millions of farmers into a dismal spiralling quandary of debt, disaster, even suicides.

They aren't the usual unfeeling sheets of showers "reducing driver visibility causing slow vehicular movement sometimes to a halt" as in the United States or simply "spreading a damp, dreary grey cover over the entire city sending most trotting off to the nearest pub for a shot or two of good ol' whiskey," as in the monsoon-familiar England. Our baarish means a lot more to us than just that occasional outbreak. It sparks off a familiar tune in our hearts; fetches a leap in our steps; a song on our lips; a feeling of warmth and concern towards the damp next-door tramp.

This time of the year, the sweltering heat has masses of land dried up for yards deep within registering cracks gaping for the first drops of rain; drooping leaves of swiftly-dying plants having turned a shade of pale yellow in desperate anticipation of water. Here, any delay in the monsoons bears immediate repercussions on the health of the economy and its people.

No other season stirs the senses as potently as the monsoons. The aroma of freshly damp earth wet from the rains; the sounds of twittering crickets, chirping sparrows and the reclusive koel, the eardrum- shattering clap of thunder; sights of the rainbow reaching out beyond the distant hills or wet 'n' well-scrubbed look on Mumbai's colossal archaic residential zones; office-goers scurrying for cover under their brief-cases held atop for protection, the endearing sight of a young couple cuddling up together below an umbrella; the stirring picture of a street urchin seeking cover under a stern policeman's umbrella.

Options to shop open up

It's welcome for shoppers! And, why not, considering that the rains provide a perfect excuse to indulge in that annual shop-till-you-drop spree! Raincoats, umbrellas, windcheaters, gumboots, sandals, tinted rain-protective glasses; the list of monsoon must-buys seems endless!

For most of us, umbrellas are almost synonymous with monsoons. Gone are the days of the huge, rather unattractive, black, 'grandfather' umbrellas. Today, they come in all shapes, sizes, designs and textures, doubling up as one's personal style statement.

To buy umbrellas, Imamwada Road in Mumbai's Bhendi Bazaar is the place to visit for "cheap and tikau umbrellas" from the city's most renowned umbrella- makers.

Most shops in Mumbai have an enviable line-up of loyal customers who come year after year before the monsoons arrive. There is a wide variety of umbrellas available today that come in

various shapes, sizes and prints at most competitive prices.

The monsoon essentials

Umbrellas have definitely come of age. Bright prints seem to be the mantra this season! If you do manage to procure an umbrella with bright prints, it's sure to be a hit. And, the best part is that you can adorn that chic look without causing much of a dent in your pocket.

Consider men's umbrellas, for instance. One can buy black jumbo strong and sturdy umbrellas - either with or without the silver coating inside. Besides, there're the popular two-fold and three-fold umbrellas too - printed, coloured, black, coated from inside, you-name-it.

When it comes to raincoats now being produced in various colours and designs, you have a whole range of choices. You could go in for the current favourite – transparent raincoats. They look as frail as polythene and have a strong zipper that runs down the entire length of the raincoat. One can complement the transparent raincoat by wearing really colourful clothes under it, adding that extra punch to your look. And then, raincoats with belts are a rage too.

Most people tend to rather negligent about the maintenance of raincoats, cutting short their shelf life. Before airing the raincoat, one needs to hang them in air and clean them properly. Damp raincoats, when not kept properly, are known to develop damp moulds that are known to cause skin infections too.

That apart, you need to buy a neat carry-bag to help carry the raincoat around with you wherever you go during the monsoon. That way, you'll never be caught unawares; you'll always be prepared for the showers.

Wearing the right pair

Footwear is another important area to be considered vis-à-vis monsoon buys. Gum-boots are hot buys once again! Not only do they look cool, they're sure to bail you out in water-logged situations that are rather common in the city. While black, ankle-length gum boots go well generally with three-fourths, skirts and cotton casuals, if you're the adventurous type, you could go in for coloured gum-boots too. They're awesome!

If it's difficult to choose a colour, it's best to go in for the boots that match with your coat. Common sense demands that whites and other lighter shades are best avoided during the rains. And, the same goes for leather boots and high-heeled footwear equally avoidable during the rains.

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Indian Monsoon

Harbinger of myriad fests

The onset of monsoon also heralds a host of festivals that promise great food and gala time. **Nikita Shastri** explains the multi-dimensional beauty of the season dotted with various festivals celebrated by different communities. The festive air is also marked by harvesting that has a blend of economy and mythology.



Vallam Kali or the snake-boat race is an important event held during Onam, a monsoon festival in Kerala

ndia is a land of festivals where a diverse mix of groups and communities celebrate every occasion and event. Monsoon is a big event for India and its people. Not only are monsoons a great time to enjoy nature, eat delicious food, it's also a time to celebrate and no one knows it better than the people of this land.

As soon as monsoon arrives in India, a host of festivals are celebrated by various communities, in unique ways and means. Each festival has a significance for that particular community or group of people. According to Hindu calendar, monsoons arrive in the holy month of Shravan and it's during this time when many fairs and festivals are celebrated that welcome the rains and all good things associated with it.

Myriad fairs and festivals

It's no secret that festivals in India are celebrated with

lots of singing, dancing, events, feasting and fun. Also, the thousands of festivals celebrated across India celebrate not only gods and goddesses but also all the elements of nature including animals, birds, wind, rain, trees, fire, earth, water, etc.

The rains are an important part of life in the country as not only India is still primarily an agrarian economy but also agriculture is hugely dependent on the monsoon rains for irrigation and harvesting. So, it's only obvious that many festivals will be observed during this period. Also, many mythological events are celebrated during the monsoons.

So, during the wet season, festivals such as Kanwarias, Janmashtami, Barsha Mongol Ramadan, Ganga Dussera, Onam, Rath Yatras, Ganeshutsav, etc., are some of the important festivals celebrated during this time of the year.

The rainy season in India begins in June and goes on till September even October as a result of the retreating monsoon winds. The monsoon rains bring with them hope, happiness, cooler temperatures and most importantly plenty of water that not only nurtures biodiversity but also replenishes underground water bodies, rivers, springs, etc. for the dryer days to come. In many arid zones, monsoons bring relief from the sweltering summer temperatures which in turn presents a great opportunity to celebrate festivals and fairs.

Festivals celebrating harvest

Some of the happiest people during monsoons are the farmers who wait for months for a good spell of rain for their crops. If monsoon fails or becomes weak, it poses a big problem for the farmers who then stare at a future described by failed crops and little or no harvest and consequentially financial losses.

One of the most important festivals celebrated in India during monsoon is the Onam Festival. A very big days for the people of Kerala, Onam is a harvest festival that is celebrated every year in Kerala in the months of August-September. The festival marks the event of a good harvest or crop as a result of monsoon rains. The ancient festival of Kerala celebrates rice harvest.

For Onam, Kerala-origin people from all parts of the world converge to their state or celebrate the occasion at their homes, across the world. It's a very important family event and people mark their calendars well in advance to be available or get together with families for the celebrations.

Onam is also the official festival of the state of Kerala. It is marked by traditional dance and cultural performances, rituals at homes and in temples, carnivals and games. A diverse range of celebrations include boat races, sports competitions, martial arts, dance events, floral rangoli, prayers, feasts, shopping, etc.

Grand celebrations and events

Men and women don traditional attire to mark the festival and the Kerala saree also known as the Kasavu is particularly worn by the women during Onam. The second day of Onam, known as Thiruvonam, involves a sumptuous feast of 21 mouth-watering dishes and desserts and a buttermilk drink. All this, served on a banana leaf!

Another interesting activity during Onam is the world-famous boat race, also known as Vallam Kali. It's a canoe race and a traditional event in Kerala celebrated as part of the Onam festivities. The Nehru Trophy Boat race held in Punnamada Lake near Alappuzha in Kerala is very famous and now integral to Kerala's culture.

Hareli is a harvest festival celebrated during monsoons in Chhattisgarh. It falls on the new moon day of the month or the Shravan amavasya. Similar to Onam, Hareli is a festival of crops where farmers pray for a good harvest and worship their cows and farming equipment.

Monsoon and mythology

Although most Hindu festivals derive their origin from mythology, some important festivals celebrated during monsoons have similar origins. Even Onam, for that matter, commemorates King Mahabali and Vamana from mythology. Another legend tied to the origin of Onam relates to Parshuram - an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who created the Western Ghats from the southern tip

of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and up to Maharashtra.

Monsoons in India are incomplete without the popular festival of Janmashtami. Celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna, Janmashtami falls in the month of August, and is one of the most vibrant festivals of India. In Mathura and Vrindavan the celebrations reach unimaginable fervour owing to the significance of the places in Lord Krishna's life.

In some parts of the country including Maharashtra, Janmashtami is marked by the Dahi-Handi event that draws from Krishna's favourite activity of stealing butter. During dahi-handi, devotees make human pyramids to reach a pot of butter tied at top. The festival is marked by music, dance, games and great food.

Another festival that is mainly celebrated by the fishe men folk of Maharashtra and Daman & Diu is Nariyal Poornima, observed on a full moon day in the Shravan month of Hindu calendar. The fishermen community celebrate this festival with great zeal and fervour.

Any mention of festivals in India is incomplete without Ganeshutsav. Also known as Vinayak Chaturthi, Ganeshutsav is clearly one of the most popular festivals in India. Celebrated for nine days, the festival concludes with the immersion of the idols of Lord Ganesha in the sea or a water body. Grand processions with music and dance make the festival special and memorable. In Mumbai specially, Ganeshutsav is celebrated by individual families and as a social event also.

Monsoon festivals across India

The Rath Yatra that is taken out in Odisha is a festival celebrated in Puri in the 12 th century shrine of Lord Jagannath or Lord Vishnu. It is celebrated on the second day of the Ashadha month of the Hindu calendar that mostly falls in the months of June-July. The Jagannath temple is one of the four main temples of India and during the procession, Lord Jagannath's idol, accompanied by that of his sister Balbhadra and brother Balram, is carried in a chariot drawn by thousands of devotees.

The Hemis festival in Ladakh is celebrated annually in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery on the 10th day of the lunar month of the Tibetan Calendar. The festival marks the birth anniversary of Lord Padmasambhava (Guru Rimpoche) and symbolises victory of good over evil.

The Adiperukku festival in Tamil Nadu celebrates water. Water is life and as rains replenish rivers and other water sources, this festival is very important. A holy monsoon festival and also mainly a female oriented festival, in Adiperukku women pray to the life-sustaining properties of water and rivers, ponds, etc.

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

Indian Monsoon

Time to tickle your palates

As the skies pour their bounty, one thing that any Mumbaikar worth his salt eagerly awaits is to pamper his gastronomy. Manu Shrivastava paints a colourful picture of the metropolis ready to indulge in a variety of street food that starts with the humble but ubiquitous bhuttas in all nooks and corners to the mouth-watering kebabs, bhajias and assorted items served in almost all lanes.



Kebabs on skewers getting ready for customers

f there's one thing about the monsoons that the quintessential Mumbaikar looks out for, it's the cuisine that comes associated. It's a regular sight: *Kebabs* on skewers being readied for customers huddled in groups below umbrellas at corners of lanes or ready-to-binge on bright-yellow *bhuttas* lines up on wooden planks; amidst marketplaces even on the pavement.

Nagpada and all along Mohammad Ali Road are known for roadside vendors making brilliant *kebabs* that come meaty and so soft that they almost melt in the mouth. The *boti kebabs* garnished with onions, chopped tomatoes and fresh mint leaves are simply too good to be avoided.

And then, there are the usual *sheesh kebabs* which turn out to be the best bets for meals. *Sheesh kebabs* permit one to use any combination of meats, seafood, fruits and/or vegetables to please any palate, making it the most preferred choice. *Kebab* buffs swear by the multiple uses of the food item.

The mouth-watering world of kebabs

Kebabs can be prepared well in advance as opposed to most other foods that need to be cooked and served fresh. It's the best thing to make when you want to indulge in a social gettogether without having to stay in the kitchen for long hours.

For the uninitiated, it may be news to note that *Reshmi Kebab's* origins can be traced back to the Moghul era. The name is derived from the succulence of the meat after prolonged marinating and light braising. While usually, chicken, beef or lamb meat is used, sometimes prawns or scallops are good substitutes too.

And, the monsoons associated with *kebabs* aren't restricted to benefit non-vegetarians only, there're the luscious *Hara Bhara Kebabs* that are 'hot favourites' among vegetarians.



People enjoying corn bhuttas on the road

Made with a mildly-spiced mix of various greens according the name 'hara bhara', the kebab's mix is precooked and comes in the form of patties. They're so simple to make even at home.

Whenever one's ready to serve, all that's needed to do is deep-fry the kebabs in hot oil. One could serve with sweet and spicy jelly dip. All it takes is less than five minutes to prepare.

Corny ways of cooking corn

After a wet-to-the-bones bath in the monsoon rains, one craves for a cup of hot *adrak chai* (ginger-tea) and a delicious hot *bhutta* (corn). The monsoon experience is incomplete without a nice sumptuous corn binge. And, that's not all...there are umpteen ways in which one can prepare corn, to satisfy one's 'snacky' craving.

Here goes a rundown of a few corn recipes you must try at home itself now in the monsoons:

Corn Bhel

Ingredients: 300 gm boiled corn, three onions, three tomatoes, three boiled potatoes, one capsicum, 100 gm paneer, 50 gm sev, some chat masala, chilli powder, coriander and salt to taste.

Method: First, finely chop all the above-mentioned vegetables. Then, mix the boiled corn with the vegetables in a bowl. Add salt, chilli powder and chat masala to taste. Don't forget the garnishing: sev and corriander!

Fried Corn

Ingredients: 200 gm corn, one tomato, one onion, oil, paneer slices and coriander leaves for garnishing.





Bhajias, vada pav and samosa are the favourite snacks enjoyed with tea on a rainy day

Method: First, fry the finely chopped onions in a pan till they turn golden brown. Then, add the tomato and after a couple of minutes, mix the corn. While you let the mixture fry, add chilly powder, paneer slices and salt to taste. And, the fried corn is ready!

Makai Masaledar

Ingredients: 200 gm corn, three potatoes, three onion, some green or red chillies, garlic paste, sugar, lime juice, oil, jeera powder, coconut, coriander and salt to taste.

Method: To start with, boil the makai and finely chopped potatoes. Then, take a bowl and mix the oil, garlic paste, jeera powder, lime juice and chillies. Once that is done, all you have to do is add the corn, potatoes, chopped tomatoes and onions to the mixture. Now, garnish it with some coriander leaves and freshly grated coconut...you're ready to serve!

Cheese Corn

Ingredients: 300 gm corn, ten cheese cubes, three onions, two tomatoes, two potatoes, oil, green chillies, garam masala, lemon, jeera powder, coriander and salt to taste.

Method: Crush the boiled corn and add finely chopped boiled potatoes, tomatoes and onions to it. Later add it to a pan in which you've heated chillies and jeera. After frying the mixture for about a minute, add coriander, *garam masala* (mixture of powdered spices) and salt. Follow this with a lavish sprinkling of finely grated cheese cubes and then, lemon juice and coriander leaves.

Chatpata Corn

Ingredients: 300 gms corn, three potatoes, two onions, one spoon mustard seed, oil, green chillies, coriander leaves (optional), lemon juice, water, asafoetida (hing) and salt to taste.

Method: You need to soak the corn kernels in water for about six hours and then boil it. After that heat some oil in a pan and add mustard seed, green chilli, lemon juice and some salt. Then, chop the boiled potatoes and fry it. Serve the cooked corn and fried potatoes in a plate. If you wish, you could garnish with coriander leaves.

Fried all the way

The monsoon experience is incomplete without a plateful of mouth-watering pakoras or bhajias (as known in Mumbai) and a cup of hot adrak (ginger) tea. Pakoras or bhajias can range from onion pakora or kanda bhajji, potato pakora or batata bhajji, cauliflower pakora, bell pepper pakora, paneer pakora or as assortment of pakoras called mix bhajias or bhajji

(as Maharashtrians call it). For those looking for that extra tinge of taste, a serving of imli or tamarind chutney or mint chutney does it all.

The mere mention of Samosa triggers all kinds of gastric senses and more so during the monsoons. And, samosas too have graduated from just a potato-filled samosa to veg samosa, pasta samosa, paneer samosa, kheema samosa, and so on and forth.

And, last but not the least, kachoris too have come a long way in becoming a permanent feature of the fried items stall in markets, tourist places, etc. A *dal kachori* or a onion *kachori* are the perfect answer for that snacky craving of the monsoon evening. And, just like samosa and *pakora*, a cup of hot ginger tea will be the best accompaniment to go with hot *kachoris*.

Despite all the inconveniences they cause, monsoon rains are the most beautiful in Mumbai and are the perfect reason to binge on Mumbai's staple food, the vada pav. It tastes even better when served with a red chutney powder or green chilli or coriander chutney.

Monsoon food cravings

Monsoon is the best time to visit India, especially for the foodies. If you enjoy eating street food, the many monsoon special food items are just what you're looking for. Each state in India offers a different speciality of monsoon food.

In West Bengal, for example, aloo chops (a fried dish stuffed with mashed potato) and egg rolls (similar to spring rolls) are a favourite during the monsoon season. The stuffing used for the popular aloo chops dish is made of mashed potato, flavoured with tomato slices, green peas, ginger paste, spices, etc.

People from the northeast states like Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, etc., are fond of momos, more so during the rains. Served hot, this dish offers an unforgettable experience to

the food lovers during monsoons.

In Gujarat, monsoon is a snacky affair where Methu na gota, made of chickpea batter mixed with dried fenugreeks and fried golden brown. Hot dal vadas are also extremely popular during monsoons on the streets of cities in Gujarat. Dal vadas are served with raw onion slices and fried chillies.

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Indian Monsoon

When the Nature beckons

Kriti Kalra says there is something about the rains that pumps adrenaline into people – to enjoy their bliss and soak in its cool climes. The weather is just right to enjoy travel, jaunts, excursions and what have you with nature at its heavenly best. There are some downsides, of course, but the positives far outweigh them. It is a time to let hair down and bask in nature's glory.



Meghalaya in the North East is one of the best destinations to travel during monsoon

hen the first few rain drops of the monsoon season touch the water-parched land, it almost instantly transforms it into something magical. As clichéd as it may sound but rains do have a 'magical' effect on places as much as they do on people as they offer a pristine experience, and the best of it all, of a place.

Monsoons in India are very special as after the unbearable, scorching tropical summer season, the land as much as its people are only thirsty for water. So, as soon as the monsoon winds make their first landfall, in the south-western end of the country, the rest of the country is already breathing a sigh of relief.

When the monsoon rains bring down land temperatures, they basically are cooling off people too and serve as an automatic call for a time out, a break - from the rigmaroles of life and the dreariness of things in general.

Monsoon typically starts in the first week of June in Kerala, then travels up towards the land mass of the country and continues to move till about September. The best way to enjoy monsoon is to travel to destinations that offer nothing less than a once-in-a-lifetime memorable experience.

Nature in abundance

Monsoon is one of the best times of the year to experience the beauty of nature. The magical monsoon touch makes everything beautiful and green. The trees become greener than green, the sparkling water becomes bluer and brighter, the hills and mountains don an endless green cover and almost every corner of earth seems to be taken over by nature.

Meghalaya's Shillong also known as the 'Scotland of the East' is considered to be one of the best destinations for travel during monsoon. During the monsoon season, misty clouds seem to envelope the town. The best things to do here include taking road trips around the hills, enjoying panoramic views of the lush green mountains engulfed in clouds, enjoying the many waterfalls in the area and sipping on hot tea and snacks in cozy hotels.

Ranikhet located in Almora district in Uttarakhand is also one of the favourite tourist destinations during the rainy season. The zone offers a scintillating view of the Himalayas as the town is located at a height of 6,000 feet above sea level amid the gorgeous Kumaon hills. Travelers can experience the beautiful Rani Jheel or the many fruit orchards including that of apples, peaches, apricots, etc.

Another destination that is extremely popular among tourists during the monsoon is Darjeeling. One can never get bored of the charm of this hill station. The Queen of Hills, as it's popularly known, located at the foothills of the Himalayas, attracts tourists to its tea plantations, lush green hills and the toy train ride. The nearest rail station is New Jalpaiguri that connects Darjeeling to major cities of India such as Kolkata, Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Cochin.

A very romantic destination, more so during the rains, is Coorg in Karnataka. The dense forests in the zone are home to a variety of flora and fauna. Coorg is also rich in huge coffee plantations, scenic waterfalls and breath-taking views of the hills that add a romantic charm to the place. The town is also popular among trekkers and bird watchers who come in huge numbers during the rainy season.

Experiencing wildlife

Every element of nature, including birds and animals, the wildlife, are teeming with life when monsoon arrives. There are several travel destinations in India that offer the best of wildlife experiences during the monsoons.

The Okhla Bird Sanctuary, situated within the short distance of 15 kilometres from Delhi, is a place that transforms during the rainy season. A bird sanctuary at the Okhla barrage over Yamuna River, it is roughly four square kilometres in size and is situated at the entrance of Noida in Gautam Budh Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh. The Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary is the most unusual place where you would get a memorable bird-watching experience. One of Gurugram's (Haryana) most popular tourist spots, the place welcomes several species of birds. The birds here can be easily spotted wading, swimming or flying. Every year, 90 migratory bird species arrive in search of feeding grounds and to spend the winter.

The Periyar National Park is a protected area, an elephant reserve and a tiger reserve, located in the districts of Idukki and Pathanamthitta in Kerala. The park is home to rare, endemic and endangered flora and fauna and forms the major watershed of two important rivers of Kerala, the Periyar and the Pamba.

One of India's most prominent and popular wildlife sanctuaries, the Ranthambore National Park, a wildlife reserve near the town of Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan, is also a must-visit destination during monsoons. Spread over 1,334 sq km, the reserve is known for its population of tigers and the magnificent forts in the vicinity.

Maharashtra's Tadoba National Park is also one of the best tiger-spotting regions in India. The reserve is known for frequent spotting of tigers, panthers, hyenas, sambars, etc.



Misty clouds over Araku Valley

The wildlife sanctuaries in Goa are some of the best places to visit during monsoon. Unlike most other similar places, the reserves in Goa are open throughout the year. It's imperative to experience one during the rains. The wildlife sanctuaries in Goa are Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhagwan Mahavir Sanctuary, Mollem National Park and Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary.

Keeping home safe during travel

During any kind of travel, it's important to keep oneself safe and secure. Similarly, when embarking upon any trip during the monsoon, it's equally important to ensure that the house that you are leaving behind is in good shape and safe from the rains. While the rains wreak havoc on the roads and infrastructure in cities like Mumbai, the walls of your homes aren't safe either. They take the worst bashing even while you stay safe.

Buildings suffer from leakages for a host of reasons with faulty construction, sub-standard materials and age being among the regular culprits. Some causes such as leaking drains and faulty water supply pipes located on the exterior walls of the building need to be repaired in time to prevent seepage.

You know that the exterior walls of your society need to be waterproofed when during the monsoons, cracks and wet stains appear on the interior walls of your home.

If it's the rains that are causing the problem, the only solution one can avail is timely waterproofing of exterior walls that can only be done before the following year's monsoon. Waterproofing should be carried out on the exterior walls plus common and private terraces.

However, if your building has recently been water-proofed and you notice wet stains on the wall beneath your window, it could well be due to improperly sealed windows where the frame of the window has deteriorated and is allowing the rainwater to seep into the walls. To fix this, you will need to have a mason reinstall the window frame correctly or install a new window frame.

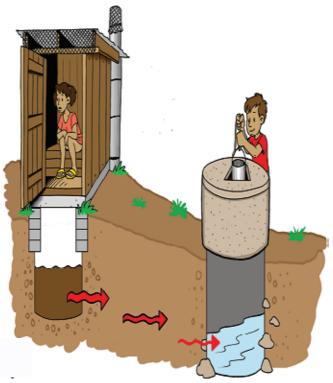
Salvaging one's home, its walls and exteriors from the rains is an equally-important task to make sure your trip is enjoyable and stress-free and you return to a dry, clean home.

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.

Indian Monsoon

The flip side of monsoon

While rains bring relief and pleasure, they also become triggers for related infections and diseases. **Anushka Singh** says these maladies are manageable with regulation precautionary measures and timely intervention as preventive measures. Maintaining hygiene, early diagnosis and few steps can go a long way in staying safe and healthy during the monsoons.



Drastic temperature changes during monsoon make the body prone to bacterial and viral infections

s the monsoon winds make their way into the Indian subcontinent landmass, the discussions on 'heavy rains', 'disruptions' and 'diseases' make their way into the social circles and in newspapers. In India, the monsoon begins in June and continues till September at the latest. As soon as the rains begin, the numbers of individuals, partic larly children, getting diseases increase.

Unfortunately, the onset of monsoons is marked by bacterial and viral infections. And, as usual, it's the children and the elderly and those with immunity disorders, auto-immune diseases or other underlying health conditions and comorbidities who are at an increased risk of falling sick.

The good news is, small precautionary measures and timely intervention can prevent one from one of these diseases. Maintaining hygiene, early diagnosis and few preventive steps can go a long way in staying safe and healthy during the monsoons.

It's in the air

During monsoons, temperature fluctuations are very common. Such drastic temperature changes make the body prone to bacterial and viral infections. That's why one of the



Air-borne infections result in cough, cold, flu, sore throat and other diseases

most common conditions during monsoons is cold and flu. The best way to protect oneself during the rainy season is by strengthening one's immunity and avoiding triggers and agents causing these diseases.

In the rains, air-borne infections transmitted by disease-causing viruses result in cold and flu, sore throat, common flu, viral fever, cough, etc. These conditions are not serious but for those at a disadvantage such as those with weakened immunity or senior citizens, these conditions may soon develop into something more serious.

The best way to prevent air-borne diseases during monsoons is by maintaining a high level of hygiene. Air-borne diseases are most easily transmitted from person-to-person. So, drinking warm water regularly, covering mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing, ensuring proper ventilation in closed (indoor) spaces go a long way in preventing transmitting of these diseases

The transmitting agents

Like most other diseases, diseases prevalent during the monsoon are also transmitted by water, mosquitoes, air and

contaminated food. In fact, one's risk of being exposed to viruses, bacteria and other agents of infection is two times higher during the monsoon than in any other season.

Basically, it's the high content of moisture or humidity in the air that enables these microbial transmitting agents to flourish. As a result, they remain active longer and are responsible for transmitting diseases faster.

Mosquito-borne diseases are those that are transmitted through the various species of mosquitoes. A menace in all seasons, mosquitoes become more dangerous when they become carriers of diseases such as malaria, chikungunya, dengue, etc.

Monsoons are the breeding season for mosquitoes and, as a result, mosquito-borne diseases. Looking at global numbers, India contributes at least 34 per cent of all dengue cases around the world and 11 per cent of all malaria cases across the globe.

Mosquito menace

Malaria spreads a lot during monsoons. They say, malaria and monsoon go hand in hand. So, when it rains, in many areas owing to poor sanitation or construction, water gets clogged in pockets of land, puddles, recklessly-lying containers, empty plots of land, open drains, etc. This is where mosquitoes breed and spread malaria.

Malaria is caused by a single-celled parasite called Plasmodium that is carried by the mosquito Anopheles minimus - a host to this malaria-causing parasite. Malaria, if not treated properly or in time, can cause a lot of harm to the patient.

The first symptoms of malaria include fever, headache and chills – usually appear $10{\text -}15$ days after the infective mosquito bite and may be mild and difficult to recognise as malaria. If not treated in time, P. falciparum malaria can progress to severe illness and death within a period of 24 hours.

Another mosquito, Aedes aegypti that also breeds in stagnant water causes the deadly disease, dengue - a viral infection transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes. The onset of dengue is marked by fever and fatigue and may later on develop more complications too.

Dengue should be suspected when a high fever (40 degree Celsius / 104 degree Fahrenheit) is accompanied by the following symptoms during the febrile phase (two to seven days) -severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains, nausea, vomiting, swollen glands and rash.

Chikungunya is also transmitted by a mosquito, Aedes albopictus in this case. This mosquito also breeds in stagnant water and can bite during day and night both. Chikungunya patients may develop arthritic symptoms that include pain in the joints and bones and stiffness.

The best way to prevent falling sick with one of these diseases is by ensuring mosquitoes are kept away. Use of mosquito nets, repellents, etc. when leaving the house or while sleeping, not allowing water to stagnate inside or outside homes and maintaining a hygiene level go a long way.

Water woes

Water-borne diseases are highly prevalent in India

during the monsoons and cause a lot of harm in patients especially in children. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), more than 3.4 million people are affected by water-borne diseases in India.

Some of the common water-borne diseases that spread during monsoons include typhoid, leptospirosis, jaundice, hepatitis, cholera, etc. Poor hygiene and improper eating habits are the major cause of the spread of these diseases.

Jaundice, for example, spreads through the consumption of contaminated food or water and also poor sanitation. It is a serious ailment that may lead to liver dysfunction. Some of the common symptoms include fatigue, yellowing of eyes and urine, vomiting, etc.

Similarly, viral infection Hepatitis A also spreads through contaminated food and water. This condition may lead to inflammation of the liver that, if left untreated, may damage the liver further and create life-threatening situation for the patient. The symptoms include fever, fatigue, tenderness in the stomach, yellow eyes, dark-coloured urine and a sudden loss in appetite.

Common symptoms of serious diseases

Another very common infection during the rainy season is Typhoid which is caused by Salmonella typhi bacteria. It is also a water-borne disease that spreads because of poor sanitation. Some of the common symptoms of typhoid include headache, fever, joint pain and sore throat and spreads because of eating or drinking contaminated food or water. The symptoms are often mistaken for that of other common illnesses and general malaise.

Cholera, another water-borne disease, is also caused due to poor sanitation and consumption of contaminated food. Some of the common symptoms of cholera include diarrhoea or loose motions and weakness.

Gastro-intestinal disorders and infections such as diarrhoea, vomiting and gastroenteritis are also very common during the monsoons. Again, these infections are primarily caused by ingestion of uncovered or contaminated food and water. That is why it is always advisable to drink boiled water and freshly-cooked food as that reduces the chances of infection

It's very common to get in contact with dirty water or mud during the monsoons. The moment one steps out, it's almost impossible to avoid muck and that is the major cause of Leptospirosis, also known as Weil's Syndrome. Again, this condition has common symptoms that include headache, fever, muscle pain and shivers. One must particularly be careful in stepping out during the monsoons if one has cuts or bruises as that increases the chances of contracting Leptospirosis.

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.

Indian Monsoon

An upgrade for the agrarian economy

India has always relied on a monsoon-dependent economy. The unpredictability of the scenario is slowly becoming a thing of the past what with modernisation of agriculture. Explaining the phenomena with relevant facts and figures, **Nandini Rao** says the budget focusing on modernisation of agriculture is a good augury.



Kharif crops are sown at the beginning of the first rains and harvested at the end of monsoon season

n mid- April, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) gave a forecast of a 'normal and fairly well-distributed monsoon rains' for most parts of the country in the months from June till September. And, the department revised its 'rainfall normal' for the four-month monsoon season from 88 cm to 87 cm

This was IMD's first Long Range Forecast (LFR) that read that the rainfall this year will be normal or above normal in most parts of the country, except the North-East, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. The officials also said that the onset of the southwest monsoon, which accounts for about 75 per cent of the country's annual rainfall, over Kerala remains the same as 1 June.

India's agrarian economy is hugely dependent on the monsoon. However, this has changed over the years with the modernisation of agriculture. India's agriculture being primarily rain-fed, the southwest monsoons are extremely important for a good harvest of the kharif crop.

About 75 per cent of the annual rainfall that India receives - occurs during the monsoon months of June till September. Of these, July and August remain the wettest months of the year - accounting for 70 per cent of the season's total rainfall. And, June and September account for 15 per cent each of the rainfall amount.

Kharif crops need abundant water

Also known as the monsoon crops or autumn crops, kharif crops comprise plants cultivated during the Indian subcontinent's monsoon season. These include rice, maize, jowar, millet, cotton, etc., which require good rainfall for a good harvest.

In India, the season generally starts in June and ends in October. Kharif crops are usually sown at the beginning of the first rains during the advancement of the south-west monsoon season and they are harvested at the end of monsoon season (October to November).

The kharif crops are sown in the months depending on the region starting from May onwards. In Maharashtra, for example, that lies on the west coast of India, the kharip crops are sown in May, June and July – mostly with the beginnings of the first monsoon rains. Kharif crops are dependent on the quantity of rainwater and the timing as well.

Overall, about 78 per cent of India's gross cropped area is supported by the monsoon rains. Other than agriculture, certain other key economic sectors also are dependent on monsoons and they include transport, aviation, power, etc.

The monsoon forecasts

Every year, in the months preceding the monsoon months, people especially those whose livelihoods are dependent on agriculture or related activities, directly or indirectly, look out for the IMD forecasts to know how good or bad the rains will be that year.

This year was the fourth consecutive year when the IMD predicted 'normal rainfall'. The seasonal rainfall is considered normal when it is 96-104 per cent of the LPA i.e the average of the last 50 years.

Till 2021, the average of the period between 1961 and 2011 was taken as the LPA. This year, i.e. in 2022, as part of the routine revision that is done every ten years, the LPA baseline has been changed to the period from 1971 till 2020.

As a result, the 'rainfall normal' has changed from 88 cm to 87 cm. This change translates as follows – During the period from 1971 till 2020, India received an average rainfall of 87 cm every year during the four-month monsoon season between June and September.

Also, the all-India annual rainfall, which includes rainfall received in the entire year, and not just during the monsoon months, has decreased from 117 cm to 116 cm. The practice to verify the seasonal rainfall once every ten years is an international practice.

'The decrease in the seasonal rainfall is due to the natural multi-decadal epochal variability of wet and dry epochs of India's rainfall. From the rainfall data obtained from 4,132 rain gauges across the country for the 1971-2020 period, it has been observed that the seasonal rainfall has reduced from 88 cm to 87 cm,' as per the IMD forecast report.

Reducing dependence on monsoons

The government has taken several initiatives to modernise agriculture to meet the country's food demands and to reduce dependence on agriculture. Although, even today, Indian agriculture is primarily dependent on monsoon-fed water supply, it is now on its way to eliminate such needs.

Role of agriculture in the country's economic growth is crucial. With changing environments and new challenges, the role of agriculture too needs to be relooked and revised. Today, the agriculture sector is facing some of the greatest challenges that include nutrition and food security, climate change and sustainable use of renewable and non-renewable resources.

The latest budget declared by the government has several features to boost modernisation of agriculture. In February 2022, the Prime Minister said that agricultural loans for farmers have been increased by 2.5 times in the last seven years and that the latest union budget will give a big boost to 'modernise agricul-



ture and promote natural farming with a special focus on agri-waste management.' The aim of the government is to increase the income of the farmers, connect the farmers in a reasonable and sustainable way to the markets and to reduce the farming costs. He has time and again called out to the corporate sector, tech sector and the financial sector to come up with initiatives and ideas to help modernise agriculture.

Climate change is real

The effect of climate change on agriculture is immense and it's only going to get worse in the future. For that very reason, it's important to reduce the dependence of agriculture on seasonal factors such as monsoons for water requirement.

The impact of climate change on Indian agriculture was studied under National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA). Rain-fed rice yields in India are projected to reduce marginally (<2.5 per cent) in 2050 and 2080 and irrigated rice yields by seven per cent in 2050 and ten per cent in 2080 scenarios.

Because of climate change, there will be a significant rise in overall mean temperatures and an increased frequency of extreme rainfall events and that has already happened in the last three decades.

As a result of climate change, the fluctuating seasons and other variables have caused and will further impact the production of major crops in India, like in the rest of the world.

Climate change has serious implications on agriculture in India because of its impact on soils, crops, livestock, water content, mean temperatures, etc. A change in the atmospheric carbon dioxide has an effect on crops with C3 photosynthetic pathway that promotes the plant's growth and productivity.

An increase in temperature can affect the photosynthesis process and change the productivity of the plant and other processes. Climate change also impacts other variables such as soil erosion, energy availability, change in seasonal droughts and floods, change in organic matter of the soil, etc. These factors have a huge impact on agriculture and in the years to come, climate change mitigation will be a major part of agricultural reforms.

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.

Indian Monsoon

Flirting with the monsoon

Rains and romance go together and Bollywood has exploited this equation to the hilt. Ruchi Verma traces the film industry's fascination for rains through films where rain itself is a character in the storyline and concludes that the rains are there for a reason and often mark a 'twist' in the storyline or highlight an interesting or an important event in the narrative.



A romantic song or a tragic scene is incomplete without Mumbai's thundering showers

B ollywood's connection with the rains is legendary. A romantic song or a tragic scene is incomplete without Mumbai's thundering showers. If there's one thing that the monsoons bring with them for sure, it's the romance in the air. And the film industry in India has managed to capitalise on it in the best ways possible.

The monsoons have become an integral part of films in India and there is no way that romantic tale will end anytime soon. Since the beginning of filmmaking in India, filmmakers have tried to capture the beauty of the rains and the effect it has on human emotions. Rains are as integral to a film as are the characters, music, costumes, etc.

One of the most memorable songs of Indian cinema, 'Pyar hua ikraar hua hai' starring Raj Kapoor and Nargis from the film Shree 420 epitomises the significance of rains in Indian films. The song is a timeless classic that, even today, transports one to a different world of romance.

'Aaj rapat jaye to' with Amitabh Bachchan and Smita Patil in the hit film Namak Halal; 'Kate nahi kat te yeh din ye raat' where a sensuous Sri Devi in a blue saree serenades an invisible Mr India; Kajol grooving to the song 'Mere khwabon mein jo aaye' in the film Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge; Dil To Pagal Hai's song 'Koi Ladki Hai' with Madhuri Dixit and Shah Rukh Khan dancing in the rain with children; are some of the endless number of songs shot in the rains and became huge hits

'Rimjhim gire sawan'

The mere thought of monsoons triggers a string of memories and emotions. One of the most iconic songs shot during Mumbai rains is 'Rimjhim gire sawan' from the movie Manzil – a 1979 Indian Bollywood romantic drama film directed by Basu Chatterjee and was loosely inspired by the Bengali film Akash Kusum (1965). The film Manzil had Amitabh Bach-(Continue on page 28)

Know India Better

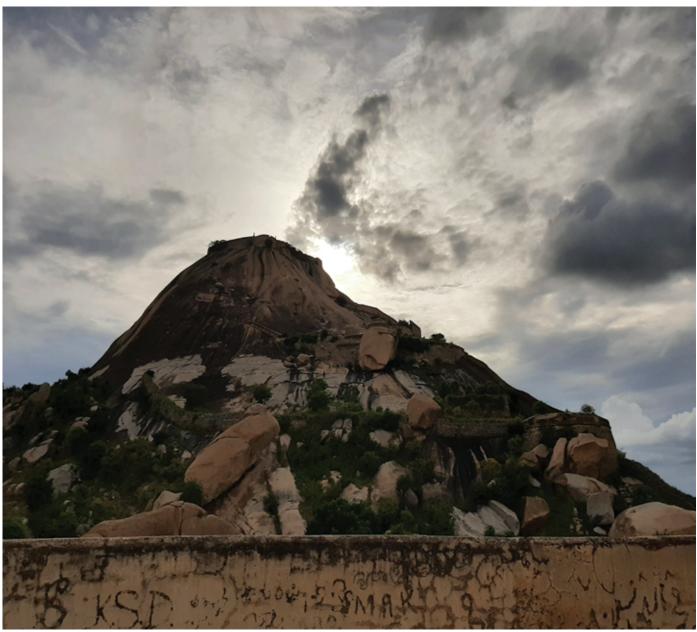


MADHUGIRI

A Trekker's Paradise!

As one of the largest monoliths of Asia, Madhugiri has a humongous sense of history to it but its grandeur is evident only in its physical existence and there is precious little information that educates people about it. Usha Hariprasad says it is thanks to ample literature, folk songs, archaeological sources and foreign travellers that the majestic hillock gets its preternatural status. It is a challenge that has to be experienced to understand just how tough it is to trek this rock nestled close to Tumkur in Karnataka.

Text & photos : Usha Hariprasad



Madhugiri -This monolithic rock is 3935 feet in height and surrounded by many hill ranges

adhugiri is one of the largest monoliths of Asia. But there is no banner or signboard in this area to proclaim this. A short blue ASI board at Madhugiri foothills is the only introduction you get to this mighty hillock. Trekking up the hill with its granite outcrops, sturdy lime stone fortifications, temples, zig-zag boulders you get a feel of its grandeur. And perhaps of its ancient past. But no brochures, guide books, audio guides or signage exists either to trek up this hill or give some kind of information on its past.

However there is plenty of literature on Madhugiri. There are also books written by court poets, folk songs and by Kannada writers like Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, Dodda Ranga Gowda on Madhugiri. There are archaeological sources like inscriptions too that talk about the dynasties gone by. Foreign travellers have commented about Madhugiri in their journals.

The hill fortress

Madhugiri is just 37 kilometres from Tumkur. This monolithic rock is 3935 feet high and sees many tourists -- especially trekkers and adventure groups in season. The granite outcrop stands majestically and can be sighted from far. Madhugiri is surrounded by plenty of hill ranges-

Devarayanadurga, Kortagere, Siddarabetta, and Chennarayanadurga to name a few. In fact a traveller Buchanan says about this hillock, "the view of Maddagiri hill on approaching from East is much finer than that of any hill fort I have seen."

Perhaps it is these hill ranges that made Madhugiri, a giridurga or a hill fortress. On the east of Madhugiri there is Penugonda hill, on west there is Sira,in north there is Nidugal and in south there is Kortagere. So Madhugiri is ideal as a hill fortress. The rivers Jaya, Mangala, Kumudwathi flow here and are responsible for its lush landscape.

Many dynasties ruled here if the inscriptions discovered are anything to go by. Madhugiri occurs in various inscriptions of Gangas, Nolambas and Cholas. It comes across as a battle ground for the various battles that were fought between Gangas and Cholas and Gangas and Nolambas. Memorial stones have also been found there. During Chola period, the kings built temples like Choleshwara and constructed tanks like Cholarayanakere. Inscriptions of Hoysala dynasty especially related to King Vishnuvardhana and Ballala III also mention about Madhugiri. Many land grants were given in Madhugiri region by Hoysalas to vassal chiefs for services rendered.



The granite outcrop stands majestically and can be sighted from far

History of Madhugiri

South of India was dominated by the Vijayanagara Empire from 14 th century onwards. The empire was founded by Sangam brothers and then ruled by various dynasties like Saluva, Tuluva and Aravidu. There were hundreds of chieftains reporting to Vijayanagara Empire from various corners of South India. Madhugiri too was one of them.

After the battle of Talikota in 1565 that dealt a death blow to Vijayanagara Empire, many regions like Gingee, Tanjore, Keladi, Madurai in the south became independent. However Madhugiri continued to remain loyal to Vijayanagara till the downfall of Aravidu dynasty.

Madhugiri was the third capital of Madhugiri chieftains. Earlier it was known as Maddagiri. During the reign of Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, it functioned as an administrative centre.



What used to be a granary at one time



The entrance to Madhugiri fort

Madhugiri chieftains

Madhugiri chieftains go by various names like Nada Prabhugalu, Gowdaru or Palegararu. The Midigeshi Kaifiyat gives some details about the Madhugiri chieftains. According to it, there were seven brothers who were in services of a saint named Karmayogi Sida Rameshwara. The eldest of the brothers was Veerapagowda. Pleased with their services, the saint blessed and ordered them to proceed to Vijayanagara Kingdom. This they did so. They joined the cavalry of unit of the Vijayanagaras under Sangam dynasty. When Delhi under Mallakhan attacked Vijayanagara the brothers fought with courage and won.

The Vijayanagara king, pleased with their valour made them feudatories of Madhugiri region. The brothers founded various settlements. The eldest Veerapagowda founded the village Nonambasagara and built a temple Nonambeshwara. The other brothers founded different settlements at Kora, Tereyuru, Gubbihosahalli, Ennegere, Cheluru and Bidare of Tumkur district.

In 1321, the descendant of Veerapagowda, Hiriya Veerapagowda founded the capital Mumadipatna. This was the first capital. As this region was called Mahanadu, rulers henceforth began to be called as Mahanada Prabhu. The town of Mumadipatna was fortified and temples were built.



The many stone gateways that you need to pass before starting the rocky climb



Hanumandone, a water tank in the fort premises built by one of the Madhugiri chieftans

Dodagowda, the successor expanded the capital and constructed many temples. However the town was destroyed by the Bahmani army. It was again reconstructed during the reign of Hire Chikapagowda, the son of Dodagowda.

Hire Chikapagowda was responsible for building the second capital at Bijavara. A strange story is related to setting up of the second capital. It is said that the goddess Bijamahadevi came in his dreams urging the chieftain to construct a village.

The chieftain on the orders of the goddess, rode on his horseback searching for a suitable place for his capital. In one of his rounds he saw a hare chasing dogs and recognised the place suitable for his capital. In 1526 he constructed the capital at this place and named it as Bijavara. He also constructed a fort, water body and temple.

Madhugiri chieftains or Mahanada Prabhus were loyal to Vijayanagara Kingdom throughout their reign. After the fall of Vijayanagara kingdom, the Aravidu dynasty revived the kingdom at Penugonda. The Madhugiri chieftains were loyal to Aravidu kings, helping them in their battles.

Another worthy successor of Madhugiri Nadaprabhus was Immadi Chikabhupala who built Siddapura village, fort and the Gopalkrishna temple in Madhugiri region. In 1646, the capital was changed again to Maddagiri. Tanks like Hanumandone, a granary and ammunition dump were also built

for Maddagiri.

Mummadi Chikapagowda was the younger son of Chikabhupala. He built the temples of Malleshwara and Venkatramana in Madhugiri. He had three sons. One of his son Kala Chikapagowda ruled Midigesi. Kala Chikapagowda's two sons Ramapagowda and Timegowda were not on good terms with Mysore king Chikadevaraya Wodeyar. So the Mysore king sent his dalvayi, Devaraja to deal with the brothers. This incident happened in 1678. A seize was laid, the brothers were defeated and put in prison and Madhugiri went into the hands of the Mysore king. The brothers were however later released and were given the estate Midigeshi to rule.

Madhugiri was important for the Mysore king Chikadevaraya. It served as the northern frontier for Mysore kingdom. Sira located close by was the foothold of Nawab and so it was important for the Mysore king to strengthen the defences of Madhugiri. In 1690 Chikadevaraya Wodeyar chose to stay with his wife in Madhugiri for some time. He expanded the temples of Malleshwara and Venkatramana and also built a granary. He also built an agrahara-settlement for Brahmins.

When Hyder Ali became the de-facto ruler of Mysore, he too focussed on Madhugiri. He expanded the fortification, contributing arches, watchtowers and granaries to the place. In the 1763 battle with Bidnur he sent the queen of Bidnur to Madhugiri, as a prisoner. She was in prison until 1767 when the



The climb to the fort is steep and challenging

Madhugiri fort was captured by Marathas. Maratha chief under Madhava Rao ruled this place for seven years after which it came into the hands of Tipu Sultan, son of Hyder Ali and the sultan of Mysore. Tipu Sultan renamed the place as Fattehabad -- the city of victory and made it the headquarters of the surrounding district.

In 1792 with the third Anglo-Mysore war the rule of Mysore on Madhugiri ended. Tipu Sultan who was the sultan of Mysore tried to get back his kingdom from the British but was not successful.

After Tipu's death and the coming of British, Madhugiri got included as part of the new Mysore territory. In 1927 Maddagiri was renamed as Madhugiri by Masti Venkatesha lyengar who was the deputy commissioner of Tumkur district. Today Madhugiri is the taluk headquarters of Tumkur district.



Motifs on the fortified walls



Steps carved on rocks and railings at a few places are your only guide on the trek

Madhugiri trek trail

Madhugiri is strongly fortified and makes for a challenging trek. It has several gates (called baigilu in local language) that lead you to the top like Antarada bagilu, Diddi bagilu and Mysore (bagilu). You also come across several springs such as Bhima done, Chandra done, Navilu done etc., in Madhugiri.

Madhugiri trek looks easy. But it isn't. The ascent is gradual, steep in sections, stone steps to help you here and there, railings in few places and in few sections you are on your own. The trek makes you walk, hike, crawl, leap and scramble. You use your brain and your body to trek this gigantic hill. The trek challenges you, brings your fears to the forefront.

There are many sections before you reach the top. The first 30 minutes is easy. At the foothills there is a temple of Lord Vishnu. You start the trek from here. The vistas that greets you here are boulders, ramparts of hill fort, bastions and watch towers. Grassy mounds, native trees and bushes dot the landscape. A stone tiled pathway takes you to the first passageway.

A couple of steps help you ascend further up. From here there are stone stairs to take you to towards the first rampart sections of Madhugri fort. Here and there you will see few secular buildings and lime mortar walls. The structure is beautiful but is sadly defaced with crude writings.

Further upwards you reach the rampart sections of the fort. The doorway here is simple. Pass through this and you next reach a doorway- plain stone structure, roofless, supported by stone pillars with a small carving of lotus at its lintel. The vista here is different. It is a small section, grassy in places and dotted with a few empty shrines.

The huge fortification of next rampart greets you and you pass the second entrance gateway. You can pause for a few seconds here, sip a few drops of water and rest. The roofed structure is a welcome break from the hot sun.

As you make your way up, huffing and puffing, you encounter monkeys easily leaping through the fortified walls as if it were child's play. For a second you might even wish to trade places.

Next visible landmark is a pond. A few stone steps take you to the bottom of pond. There are fine imprints of Hanuman, Ganesh on the walls of the pond. Nearby there is a stone bastion as well. You can trek up this bastion.

Hiking upwards from the pond there is a grassy section next. It has a small shrine of Hanuman on its left. Spend a few minutes here if you wish. You next sight is a doorway; cross that and then the next section begins.



A trek that makes you walk, hike, crawl, leap and scramble

Steps carved on rocks and railings are your only guide for the next two hours. Most of this part has railings, but at a few places you just have the bare face of the rocky hill to climb. However wedges on the rocks prop you up. There are faint arrow marks in white to help you. Look out for that. It is easy to get confused as there are divergent paths to take you atop. Huge boulders of rocks, open vistas of nearby hills, downtown village are recurring scenery here.

The tricky part in this section is a steep trail that has no ropes or railings. However there are steps etched on the boulders. Place one step at a time, maintain your balance and go ahead. You could also perch on the rock and scramble up.

After this tricky part it is a comparatively easy climb for the next 20 minutes. Look out for the fortifications here with its Mughal style motifs. There are a variety of mountain flowers in various hues not to mention the colourful lantana shrubs. The panoramic view here gives you a glimpse of the open country side, the Madhugiri town and the various ghats surrounding it.

Though there are no supportive railings, the climb is not steep. Keep on the lookout for faint arrow marks that guide you on the route. After 20 minutes or so you reach the last gateway that takes you towards the fort. Here the climb is a bit steep so one has to be careful. After crossing the last gateway the final

section is just 10 minutes climb that takes you to the Madhugiri fort.

At the top of the hill there are the ruins of Gopalakrishna temple, granaries of finger millet or ragi and also a treasury. Thereare also storage structures called *kanajas* to store ghee and oil

Madhugiri excursions

There are a couple of popular spots near Madhugiri that can also be included in your itinerary.

There are temples of Dandina Maramma - the village deity and Dravidian styled temples of Venkatramana and Malleshwara Swamy. The temples were built during the time period of Chikappa Gowda. There is also an 800-year-old Mallinatha basadi- a shrine for the 19 th Jain Tirthankara in Madhugiri. Other excursions to plan are:

Devarayanadurga

It is known by various names including Karigiri and Jadakanadurga. It got the name Devarayanadurga after the Mysore King Chikadevaraja Wodeyar captured it in 1696 from the chief Jadaka. The hillock boasts of temples of Narasimha , scared ponds like pada-teertha, cave temple of Rama. Namada Chilume, a popular natural spring is located closeby.



One of the many temples at Madhugiri

Chennarayanadurga

This hillock at an altitude of 3734 feet has a 17 th century fort built by chief of Madhugiri Channapa Gauda. The fort changed hands several times under Marathas and Mysore rulers. Apart from the fort, there are 18 th century inscriptions, cave temple of saint Murariswami and also samadhis/tombs of his disciples.

Blackbuck reserve

Jayamangali Blackbuck Reserve is a reserved forest, 22 kilometres from Madhugiri. It is the haunt of Black Bucks and is a must visit for any wild life lover. You can spot a variety of birds

and deer as well.

Siddara Betta and Goravanhalli Mahalakshmi temple are other popular excursions.

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

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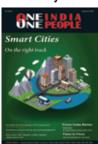
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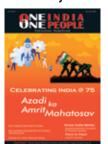
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Cricket gets a top billing but...



Clayton Murzello

Trace your career.

I started off selling books at The Marine Sports shop in 1985, the day after my SSC exams. In May 1988, I wrote my first article in Mid-Day. It was about a less fancied team, St Mary's ICSE, beating giants Shardarshram Vidyamandir for whom a certain Sachin Tendulkar played for. One reason why I followed St Mary's progress that year was because I sold cricket equipment to them.

I then started compiling cricket statistics for MiD-DAY with one eye on local sports, while keeping my job at the bookshop till 1991. I skipped my TYBA exams because I was offered an assignment to provide statistics after every match of the 1992 World Cup held in Australia and New Zealand. Joining it as a trainee, I could not however get a full-time job because I was an under-graduate.

Leaving with a heavy heart and a hot head, I worked briefly for an investment company, but continued as a freelancer for MiD-DAY and in June 1994, they roped me in full-time. In 2001, I became the Sports Editor and in 2006, was elevated as Group Sports Editor.

Who has influenced you?

My (late) father, a non-mainstream journalist, ran his critical eye over the introductions to my published statistical pieces and suggested changes. He brought home a cricket magazine in 1978 and the World Cup Illustrated Weekly of India issue in 1979, which attracted my interest. One Diwali morning when I wanted to play with fireworks, he instead bought me a copy of Sportsweek. I had no problems with that trade-off of sorts and was not so mad about crackers after that.

My (late) mother too influenced me. In 1984, she surprised me by buying an Australian magazine titled Cricket Lifestyle, costing ₹ 35/-. While I couldn't stop reading it, the only price I had to pay was running all errands for a good part of the year.

Humble, soft spoken, much respected, extremely well read in Cricket, **Clayton Murzello** (54), is Group Sports Editor, of India's largest selling tabloid MID-DAY, Mumbai. He has covered the Cricket World Cups of 1996 and 2003, apart from a host of international events.

Here he talks to **A.Radhakrishnan** about his passion and work.

Many helped, but it was my friend Austin Coutinho, a former fast bowler and a master caricaturist who took me to various roadside bookshops in the 1980s and showed me how important books were in one's life. He also regaled me with stories from his club cricket days. All this put me on the right path.

What makes an ideal sports editor?

A good sports editor must love and feel for all sportspersons especially at the grassroots level. Our young achievers even at school level should be given their share of space. It's not always easy to do with perennial space crunches, but it is so very satisfying when done well. Criticising performances is easy, but this is sport and mistakes do happen. Practitioners are not robots, but try their best and that's why not everyone can win medals.

How important is Sports? Have you played any game?

Sports is a way of life. How would you would feel if you walk a mile without seeing any sporting activity taking place? Or how good would you feel if you noticed it every 800 steps? Amidst all the big ticket events, there is the joy of watching sport being played purely for pleasure and not the score line. Cricket and badminton at a very, very elementary level. A cricket influencer in my building, I used to beg my friends to join in for a game.

How would you rate your writing skills?

Over the years I have learned that going out of your way to impress people with your writing is a recipe for disaster. I keep it simple, convey whatever I have to, and if a few lines turn out to be good, I feel happy about it. That doesn't mean you close the door on acquiring new skills.

How do you find new and unique sports story ideas?

Your mind keeps ticking. When immersed in your job, ideation is



Taking notes at a pre-match media briefing conducted by Australia captain Steve Waugh at Kochi in 1998

not difficult. The key is to be open to ideas your mind throws up, be honest about them, look at the negatives, ask the 'how does it matter to the reader' question. In a team environment, encourage ideas.

How do you assign topics, events and stories to individual writers or reporters for coverage?

You look at resources, at strengths. One writer may come up with good copy but may lack a good professional relationship with the subject. Another one wouldn't have the writing skills but can converse well with the subject. I'd opt for the latter. The former I will utilize for a feature.

What is the most memorable story you've reported on?

Meeting former West Indies fast bowler Winston Davis who was paralysed waist down, at his UK residence in 2011 was a hard emotional story to do. And interviewing Sachin Tendulkar in his car (on his return from England in 1996) going on record to say that he was ready to take over as Captain of India.

What is your experience in reading, evaluating and editing manuscripts?

I have evaluated manuscripts only once or twice. But there are at least 25 books which have my name in the Acknowledgments section including a few editions of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack.

How do you balance cooperation with others and independent thinking? Describe a typical day at work?

I encourage team suggestions and views even if they do not align with mine. But I take a call finally, as Editor, on what is best for the sports section.

My working day starts with my waking up. While the main course is the print edition, one has also to think about the website and other digital deliverables. The second half of the day is spent in office. Headlining, play for certain stories, page planning; they are all part of the job. The edition goes to bed at night but journalists working on that go to bed more than a couple of hours later.

Your management style? Are you a team player? Do you work well under pressure?

I believe a good senior has to be straight with people. I have a

no-games playing policy in my soul. Of course, I'd like to think that I am a team player but everybody else believes so. I'm no different. Tight deadlines are a challenge we face day after day. The challenge changes as you get older but the enjoyment will be a constant if you happen to love your job.

What does quality work mean to you? Have your ethics been tested?.

Quality work is job done with sincerity and sensitivity. Ethics should be at the heart of every effort. I vehemently detest plagiarism in the profession. Honesty starts at the top and if you display that quality in good measure, it generally rubs off on your team. Exceptions are when using someone's quote in your copy, you attribute it to that person as well as the publication in which it appeared.

What is your favorite sport to cover? Are you biased towards it?

My favourite sport is cricket but no, I don't indulge in any favouritism when it comes to what goes on the page. Yes, you can get a judgment call wrong but it's unpardonable to let something else get priority on purpose. I have utmost respect for sporting skills which come into the mix no matter what sport or what level of sport you report on or publish.

Isn't cricket overhyped and its players obscenely paid? When will other sports get equal importance?

I will not use the word hyped but yes, cricket does get more space and has mass popularity (read readers). It will always dominate the sports pages, but other sports get their due too, I dare say. Cricket administrators, however arrogant they are or have been, have promoted their sport well and the results show. I would like to see the other sports administrators perform similarly.

Any books?

I have edited Khalid AH Ansari's book 'Sachin: Born to Bat' and also penned the title 'Caught and Told', with former Indian batsman Sandeep Patil.

Is government budget for sports adequate?

It can never be enough. I hope to see more funds being allocated for sports so that one day we can call India a true sporting nation.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to enter the profession?

Enter it to do justice to your passion and work assiduously. Let money not be the bottom line. Beware of the pitfalls. There will be temptations to take the sinister route, but remember not only will you be caught out eventually; you also won't be able to face your inner self with pride.

Also, don't take criticism personally. Look at the positives. Someone is telling you where you are going wrong. Pardon the cliché, but don't give up. When you have weathered the storms, walked the tightrope and reached a fair distance, you will feel proud that you didn't give up.

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

(Continued from page 16)

Bachchan and Moushumi Chatterjee in main roles and the song was a chartbuster. The initial lines of the song read as follows: Rim jhim gire sawan, sulag sulag jaaye mann ...Bheege aaj iss mausam mein, lagi kaisi ye agan...

In the song, the lead couple Amitabh and Moushumi walk, hand in hand, through the Gateway of India promenade, Marine Drive and other iconic zones of South Mumbai. The song became the quintessential rain song of Hindi language cinema. It best captures the romance of the rains expressed through the expressions of the characters.

Films and monsoons

There are several films where rain itself is a character in the storyline, so to speak. The rains are there for a reason and often mark a 'twist' in the storyline or highlight an interesting or an important event in the narrative.

Thousands of films, Hindi language and those in other languages, have featured monsoon rains in creative and aesthetic ways. Even the sound of the first few drops of rains on a thirsty land

Talented filmmaker, Anurag Basu, has aptly used rains in many of his films. The most important being the film 'Life In A Metro' which is about life in a metropolis like Mumbai. The film showcases parallel storylines about people from different walks of life in the bustling city of Mumbai. Any film that is featuring life in Mumbai is incomplete without the monsoon rains.

Shahid Kapoor's film 'Kaminey' where it starts to rain when the actor's character has to make a decision, choose between stealing a packet of cocaine and running away. The heavy downpour that marks almost the entire length of the film is a symbolisation is itself. Because of the rains, most of the frames of the film are duller, sketchy and look washed out – similar to the lives of the characters depicted in the film.

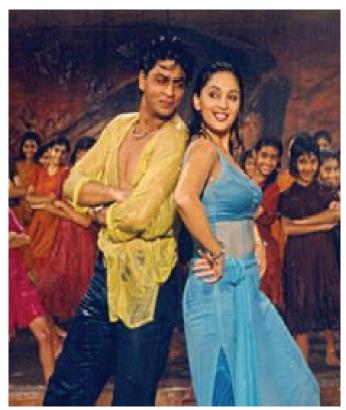
'Barsaat Ki Ek Raat' which translates to 'one rainy night' - a 1981 Bollywood thriller starring Amitabh Bachchan, Raakhee, Amjad Khan and Utpal Dutt and directed by Shakti Samanta was an adaptation from the novel Anushandhan by Shaktipada Rajguru. The film is about how the life of the protagonist Abhijeet (played by Amitabh Bachchan) changes overnight after his chance encounter with Kaaliram (played by actor Amjad Khan).

Abhijeet meets and falls in love with Rajni (Raakhee) who is blind. On one rainy night, Kaaliram attempts to molest Rajni but is rescued by Abhijeet, a police officer, who throws Kaaliram in jail. And, their lives change after that.

Rains and romance

One of the biggest hits of its time, Karan Johar's 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai' was not just a classic film but had a few iconic scenes shot in the rain. In fact, rains were an important part of the two major twists in the film's story. In the first instance, Anjali (played by Kajol) realises that she is love with Rahul (played by Shah Rukh Khan) and makes up her mind to tell him about how she feels towards him, her best friend. When she decides to approach him, at the same time he too runs towards her but to profess his love for another woman (Rani Mukherjee). Her first love is over even before it could begin. It starts to rain and she cries inconsolably through the song 'Tujhe yaad na meri aayi'.

The second time, the same two friends meet after many years. There is a moment of romance between the two when they get close and do a slow, romantic dance. The iconic scene in



Koi Ladka hai from Dil to Pagal Hai

which a wet, sensuous Kajol, clad in a saree, reminisces her first love, is shot in the rains.

Another romantic flick, Aashiqui 2 starring Aditya Roy Kapoor and Shraddha Kapoor in lead roles has an iconic scene shot in the rains. In fact, the poster shot of the film is part of this scene. The coming together of the two characters is sealed when it starts to rain, marking the beginning of their romance as well.

Who can forget the sensuous duet in the song 'Tip tip barsa pani' from the 1994 film 'Mohra' starring Akshay Kumar and Raveena Tandon. The song — not just the music but the dance of the gyrating couple — is one of the most popular songs of all times. The song was such a huge hit that in Rohit Shetty's 2021 film 'Sooryavanshi' starring Akshay Kumar, the song was recreated with Katrina Kaif dancing to the popular song.

Rains are not the best time for weddings especially not in India where wedding ceremonies are lavish, go on for days with hundreds of people in attendance. However, the 2001 Indian comedy-drama film directed by Mira Nair 'Monsoon Wedding', with an interesting plot, again highlighted the significance of rains in Indian films, and crossover films as well.

In this film, the central theme is the organisation of a big, fat Indian wedding due to take place in a modern Indian family in Delhi. Lalit Verma (played by Naseeruddin Shah) and wife Pimmi (played by Lillete Dubey) have 'arranged' a wedding for their daughter, Aditi, to a boy who lives in the US. The story takes many turns and finally Aditi gets married and her cousin, Ria Verma (played by Shefali Shah) who is facing emotional turmoil also finds love, climaxing with the monsoon rains.

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.

Cinema

A sensitive perspective on rape

Aparna Sen's award winning "The Rapist" is an eloquent commentary on the algorithm that defines caste, anger, power assertion, toxic masculinity and low self-esteem, all of which play on the rapist's psyche to culminate in crimes like rape. Without being judgmental, the film makes one ponder whether a rapist is born or made. **Shoma A. Chatterji** reviews.



Aparna Sen's film The Rapist was premiered at the 27 th Kolkata International Film Festival last month.

n the Indian context rape usually gets bandied about as stigma. But the book "Why Men Rape" by Tara Kaushal delves deeper into the malaise through critical investigations into nine case studies – of men inclined to commit acts of sexual violence.

The men interviewed belong to all strata: a doctor raping his twelve-year-old patient; an unemployed youth deciding to kill his former lover; a youth in gang-rape and a serial gang rapist among them. The author gives insights from myriad survivors; world-famous experts and a jail inmate who observe and provide us with a commentary on the worldview of rape convicts inside a prison. Filmmaker Aparna Sen appears to be on the cue.

Her 17 th film, *The Rapist*, in Hindi was declared the joint winner of the Kim Jiseok Award at the 26th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF). Starring Konkona Sen Sharma, it was premiered at the festival's 'A *Window on Asian Cinema*' section on October 7, 2021. The film drew packed audience at the International Film Festival of Kerala followed by its premiere at the 27 th Kolkata International Film Festival last month.

Rape is not just about irrepressible libidos. It is an expression of men's need to control women. Their portrayal as rapists in films as psychopaths is misplaced as most of them are "normal" by existing mores. Aparna Sen shuns the issue for

commercial element or mere titillation. Rather, she debates whether a rapist is 'created' from a combination of heredity and environment or has that genetic tendency. She leaves it for the audience to decide.

The protagonist Naina, (Konkona Sen) is a criminal psychology professor sexually assaulted in a slum she visits to help the daughter of a school custodian embroiled in a case of domestic violence and infanticide. Upon surviving the attack that leaves her colleague Mallika (Anindita Basu) dead, Naina fights social prejudices and testifies, leading to the rapist- murderer's death sentence. Naina later finds she is pregnant and tries to cope with the trauma in her own way.

The outrage reduces Naina's identity to just a 'rape victim' but Sen effectively yet subtly introduces issues of caste. (Naina is married to a Muslim - Aftab). Two senior women cops comment on Naina's 'shamelessness' and female infanticide which Naina goes to investigate in a slum and the issue whether a 'rape child' should be delivered or accepted. Paralelly, it also cogitates about peripheral issues through a series of interviews between Naina and her sentenced-to-death rapist Prasad (Tanmay Dhanania) -- the dilemma faced by a couple that opposes death penalty.

The camera doesn't pan in on rape per se but focuses on the ordeal it brings in its aftermath. Naina grapples with legal



The director with her cast- daughter Konkona Sen Sharma and Arjun Ramphal

entanglements, police probe and a painful medical treatment and gives up her job as college professor. Her trauma resonates as the very first question the police inspector asks Naina through her scarred and bandaged face is "are you a hooker?"

Most footage centres on Naina's life, action and night-mares while her husband Aftab (Arjun Rampal) discerns her trials and tribulations. The soundtrack echoes her post traumatic stress disorder without dramatising it. The tincture of surrealism as Naina's deceased friend Mallika comes to speak to her in her lonely moments, lends an emotional caress. The interactions between Naina and Prasad are rationalised by the law permitting psychologists, doctors and social workers meeting death convicts. They show Prasad reduced to a mere ghost from his earlier brash swag that drives him to rape and murder. He is shown as unbathed, dirty, scraggly in half pants and a banyan, while looking with fear and suspicion at the woman he raped.

The film, apart from its technicalities and sub-plots, is held together by a powerhouse performance by Konkona and Arjun Rampal. Both including director Sen have won National Awards for their work. Neel Dutt's music complements the visuals. The subdued performance by other characters is remarkable when the story can tempt a melodramatic portrayal.

The cinematography is particularly brilliant on the night of the rape -- an empty street with dimming street lights the only sign of life around. The camera is vigorously mobile but doesn't go for graphic details. Just the comment by one of the rapists who says, "My my! She wears lace panties" is evocative enough. The interview chain in the death cell is equally intense. There is an

The film poster

abundant use of blues, greys and shades in between which invests the film with the understatement it demands. That includes the hospital scenes when Naina is being "repaired" back to life.

For the larger part, Naina is unable to discern whether a rapist is born or made. With the world view that rape results from a patriarchal mindset, it can tantalise any mainstream film maker to use it as a political ploy to provoke audience-voyeurism. The Rapist refuses to make a spectacle Naina's body. Without pontificating, the film succeeds in demonstrating that rape is triggered by the power a rapist thinks he has and the vulnerability of the victim who gets blamed for "inciting" the rapist because she belongs to the "wrong" sex.

A powerful film indeed.



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.



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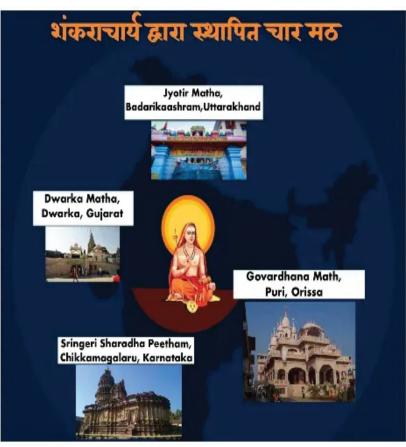
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Religion

Correct the historic wrong!

Dattatreya .**G**. **Bhatt** argues that the claim of European and India's Left-leaning historians on the birth era of Adi Shankaracharya is patently wrong and quotes verses from the scriptures to make out a case that he was born Before Christ.





Shankaracharya Peeth

he controversy over the birth era of the great Indian philosopher Adi Shankaracharya continues. May 6, 2022 marked the 1234th birth anniversary of Adi Shankaralalso known as Jagatguru Shankaracharya. European historians and many left-leaning Indian historians wrongly proclaimed the 38th Shankaracharya of the Kanchi Peetha i.e. Abhinava Shankara of 8 th CE (Common Era) as the first Adi Shankara. By doing so, they erased about 1000 years from the first Shankaracharya who was born in the 5 th century BCE (before common era) only to imply that Christ preceded Shankara. This is unpardonable distortion of history which needs to be corrected.

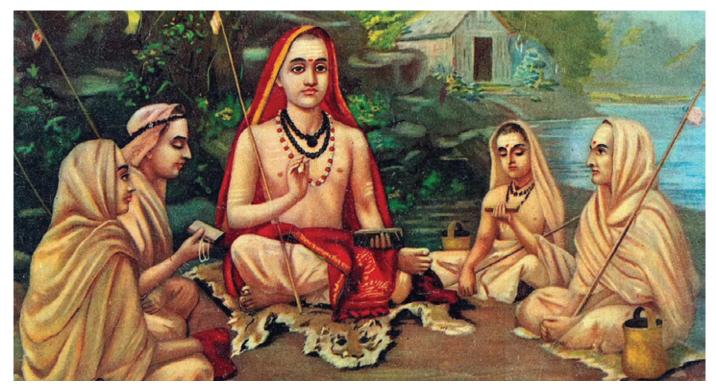
There is enough proof that Adi Shankara lived in 5 th century BCE, and there is evidence to show that Abhinava Shankara lived in 8 th century CE.

Adi Shankara lived before Christ

Below, I quote an extract from a Kannada book written by Sri. Sachchidanendra Saraswathi Swamiji titled 'Sri Shankara Bhagavatpadavruthantha Saara Sarwaswa' (Adhyathmaprakasha Karyalaya Holenarasipura 573211 year 1963). This is a comprehensive work covering the life and works of Adi Shankara, his travels throughout the country, the people he met, and the *mathas* he founded. Swamiji has referred to various texts depicting the traditions and history of *mathas* like Gururatnamalika, Punya Shloka Manjari and Shankara Digvijayas depicting the life and works of Shankara. Swamiji has referred to Jainism books and books about Shankara in various languages like Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Marathi and English. His interpretations and judgments with regard to critical issues are very mature, well thought out, bold and convincing.

The following verse in Sanskrit (page 18 of the above book) is an extract from Pracheena Shankara Vijaya: "2593 years after the beginning of Kali Yuga (Kaliyuga started in 3102 BCE) in Nandananama Samvatsara, Vaishakha Shuddha Panchami and in Punarvasu Nakshatra, Shankara was born to Shivaguru who named his son Shankara." This date matches exactly with 509 BCE.

From Brihad Shankar Vijaya the time of attainment of Siddhi by Shankara can be summed up. The following Shloka (page 20) substantiates the same. In Yudhishtira Shake 2663 (corresponding to 477 BCE) after a life of 32 years and after receiving royal patronage from King Rajasena, Shankarendra



The Kanchi Peetha founded by Adi Shankaracharya in 482 BCE has an unbroken lineage of succeeding pontiffs

finally attained Shivathwam."

There are some more Sanskrit verses in the book to support the fact that Adi Shankara lived in BC era. The author has extensively quoted scholars like Prof. T.S Narayana Shastri, Prof. K.S.Ramaswami and Prof N. K.Venkatesha Pantulu to support this claim.

When did Shankara live and work?

Prof. P.N. Oak in his article that appeared in Deccan Herald in 1966 titled 'When did Shankara Live and Work' says: "Shankara lived only for 32 years. Which 32 years? Did he live from 788 to 820 CE as advocated by western scholars? Or from 509 BCE to 477 BCE as held by Indian scholars?

According to Indian scholars, the Kanchi Peetha, where Shankara settled down after a monastic career was founded by him in 482 BCE. Ever since, it has an unbroken lineage of succeeding pontiffs. From 482 BCE the Dwaraka Peetha has an unbroken line of succession of nearly 70 pontiffs, the Puri over 140 acharyas and the Kanchi 68 acharyas. All this supports the claim that Shankara lived in 5 th century BCE."

Further, there is a copper plate inscription of King Sudhanva addressed to Shankara himself. It is reproduced on page 20 of a work written by a head of Dwaraka Peetha in the year 1966. The inscription is dated 2663 of the Yudhishtira era corresponding to 478 – 477 BCE. Shankara visited Nepal during the reign of Vrishadeva Verma between 2609 - 2664 Kali eras. This too supports the claim by Hindu scholars that Shankara lived in 5 th century BCE.

Evidence from other sources

' History of Kashmira' by Brig Rathan Kaul (Gyan Publishers, New Delhi, 2014.) upholds the BCE date of Shankara. Prof. Swaminathan concurs with the date of 5 th century BCE for Shankara based on the evidence in Tamil literature. (https://www.sanskritimagazine.com/indian-religions/hinduism/mysterious-sundara-pandya-adi-shankra/)

A case of mistaken identity

Swami Tapasyananda in the preface of his translation of the work 'Shankaradigvijya by Madhava Vidyaranya'-) into English mentions that Shankara lived in 5 th century BCE and describes how Abhinava Shankara is mistaken for Adi Shankara.

There are several commonalities between the lives of the two philosophers but also some differences. Abhinava Shankara was the 38 th Acharya of the Kanchi Peetha. He too travelled extensively in India. Adi Shankara was born in Kalady Kerala whereas Abhinava Shankara in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu. Adi Shankara attained Shivattvam in the Himalayas while Abhinava Shankara in Kanchi. Adi Shankara lived for only 32 years whereas Abhinava Shankar lived up to a ripe age of 85 years as stated by himself in Daivaparadhana Kshamapana Sthotra. (Tapasyananda, 2008).

Both Adi Shankara and Abhinava Shankara were exceptionally great scholars. India's misfortune it is it that it enabled western historians to paint Abhinava Shankara as Adi Shankara.

Conclusion

Wikipedia mentions two dates in BCE and two in CE for Adi Shankara. Unfortunately, historians without referring to the controversy regarding the birth era of Shankara, stick to the 8 th century CE date. None of the mathas accept this. There was and is only one Adi Shankara, and his birth era is BC or Before Christ.



After working at HMT, Bangalore, the author taught at Management institutes in Bangalore. He is deeply interested in Sanskrit language, Vaidik dharma, Sanatana literature, History and Political Affairs.

Environment

From the frying pan into the fire

Bharat Dogra says that with the summers getting more and more brutal as a consequence of climate change, the farmer- worker class in the country is condemned to suffer. He says working for long hours in the grueling heat without water and nutrition ultimately forces them to migrate to far off cities where they meet a worse fate.



Construction workers and farmers are forced to work in challenging conditions in the summer

n important aspect of climate change that clearly affects many Asian and African countries more is that a large part of their working population toil in open spaces. In India where over two-thirds of the population is rural and a significant section of its rural and urban workforce like farmers and construction workers work in harsh summer, there are adverse impacts of rising temperatures and heat wave on the health of the workers and farmers.

The 2015 summer in India and neighbouring Pakistan was so intense that nearly 2500 people died in India and 1100 in Pakistan. Deeply worrying as these statistics are, those familiar with actual work conditions believe that the figures could be even more.

On a scorching afternoon, I travelled in Bundelkhand region of Central India, talking to workers toiling at rural employment guarantee scheme sites. Some appeared too weak to work in the heat and were almost on the verge of collapse. Yet, in

similar conditions, when I travelled to Ajmer district of Rajasthan, which is closer to the desert, the employment scheme workers were coping much better. The reason being they had negotiated their working hours with their bosses. The workers start work early in morning and leave by noon when the sun is overhead. They return to the sites in the evening to complete the pending work.

Over centuries villagers have devised ways of coping with the scorching summer heat. Farmers who cultivate their own land are able to do so more effectively as they can choose their working hours unlike the landless farm workers, who have to perforce follow their employer's dictates. They are the most vulnerable as they do not have access to even clean and cool drinking water.

Working in intense heat for long hours without water and nutrition can lead to dehydration and weakness. Lakhs of workers are resigned to this fate. With climate change and the summers getting hotter, even farmers who are landowners, are unable to work for longer hours. It affects their productivity and subsequently income and they are forced to migrate for alternate source of income.

In cities they usually end up as construction workers. In Delhi, many live in resettlement colonies and hut hamlets in the city's outskirts. During a recent visit, they were seen reeling under increasing heat, reduced employment and poor living conditions.

Jairam, a migrant from Bundelkhand said, "Growing heat is no doubt a serious problem but if we have stable income then we can at least eat healthy, but in times of low employment and income, nutrition levels also go down."

Subhash Bhatnagar, a senior social activist who has struggled for decades and fought long legal cases in the Supreme Court of India as well for better rights and social security of construction workers, says, "In time to come, climate change is going to increase problems of construction workers. We need better facilities for them like shade to rest, drinking water, child-care and most important overall social security.

Jairam adds, "earlier we lived in the city, closer to where we could find work. If we were unwell we could come home to rest for a few hours. Now after slum demolition we have been re- located so far away that this is no longer possible."

For women, who are employed as domestic help, the challenges are even more. Kamla Devi says, "In addition to the heat, commuting long distances using crowded public transport every day can be extremely stressful. After toiling in several households, we have to come home and cook for our family and also do our housework. We don't even get a good night's sleep in a hot, congested, poorly ventilated room."

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



N C KELKAR (1872-1947)

True blue litterateur if there was one!

arasimha Chintaman Kelkar, was a great literary mind of 20th-century Maharashtra. A lawyer, dramatist, novelist, short story writer, poet, essayist, biographer, critic, historian, philosophical and political theme writer, editor, and a nationalist politician, he was a trusted, but moderate lieutenant of Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Born in Modnimb near Miraj in a Chitpavan Brahmin family, he completed his B.A., LLB. After

practising law in Satara he came to Pune in 1895 and became editor of the newspaper

Mahratta, co-founded by Tilak.

For almost five decades, Kelkar carved a niche for himself in the political and cultural life of Maharashtrians. In 1912 and 1918, he was respectively the Vice President and the President of Pune Municipality and Mayor for six years of the 25 years he

was its member.

1918. In he was of Indian Secretary the delegation to the United Kingdom for the Indian National Congress and the All India Home Rule League. In 1919, while in the UK, he edited the British India Congress Committee's newsletter. Later, he was the Chairman of the Joint Provincial Council of both the Congress and the Home Rule League in Solapur in 1920.

After Tilak's death in 1920, he became one of the foremost leaders of the Tilak faction in the Congress party and joined Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and was a member of the Congress executive. Elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1923, he served it until 1929. He was president of Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha twice at Jabalpur in 1928 and Delhi at 1932.

In 1932, Kelkar served as a member of the London Round Table Conference with the British go vernment to discuss India's Independence. But after Gandhi withdrew his movement, Kelkar joined the Swarajya Party, formed with the aim of implementing reforms and entering the legislature to fight British politics.

Popularly known in Maharashtra as Sahitya Samrat (king of literature) Tatyasaheb Kelkar, he made Marathi readers and writers, truly fond of literature. He covered literary questions like: the relationship between humour and

poetry; the cause for laughter; what a metaphor decisively meant; the nature of the interrelationship between prose and verse and how it affects the classification of poetry; the nature of dramatic verses; how literary criticism is fed by memories; what is the role of legends, etc.

His interests included history, philosophy, political science, pedagogy, sociology, court cases, philosophy and politics. His body of work numbers around

> 15,000. The Kelkar Literary Series, consisting of 12 volumes, released in 1938, was followed by the Kelkar Essay Series (Sahyadri Volume). He wrote plays, novels, short stories, poems, essays, travelogues, biographies, memoirs, and literary reviews. His literary works include 10 plays, eight

> > novels, two collections of poems, two collections of short stories, eight biographies, and 30 -40

critical treatises.

Associated with Shikshana Prasarak Mandali, Pune, established in 1904, he was the President of the Akhil Marathi Sahitya Bharatiya Sammelan held in Baroda in 1921 and it's Secretary in Pune in 1927. He was Chairman of the first session of the Baroda Literary Council (1931) and the President of the Central Indian Poetry Conference held in Ujjain in 1931.

As Trustee of Tilak's daily newspaper Kesari, established in 1881, he was the editor twice when Tilak was imprisoned in 1897 and 1908. He edited the magazine Sahyadri from 1935 to 1947.

Lokmanya Tilak Yanche Charitra, was his biography of Tilak; and Gatagoshti (1939) his autobiographical book. His notable plays were Totayache Band (1913) and Krishnarjuna Yuddha (1915). Among his critical works are Subhashit aani Vinod (1908), Marathe va Ingrej (1918), Rajyashastra (1932), Bharatiya Tattvajyan (1934), and Hasyavinodamimansa (1937).

At 65, Kelkar retired from public life for literary pursuits. He passed away aged 75, in Pune, barely two hours after after composing two poems on death.

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

Great Indians

DILIP KUMAR (1922-2022)

The one and only!

he name Mohammed Yusuf Khan Peshawari may not ring a bell with many but Dilip Kumar does - not just as one of the trinity along with Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand but also as one of the greatest actors on the Indian celluloid. Born on 11 December 1922, the first Khan of Indian cinema went on to earn the sobriquet of 'Tragedy

King' in a career that lasted more than 75 vears.

last.

There are not enough words that can encapsulate Dilip Kumar and his work succinctly. His career, stuff folklores are made of, can be broadly divided into two parts where in the first he essentially essayed tragic roles through Andaaz, Mela, Deedar, Jogan, Aarzoo, Babul, Tarana, Footpath, Devdas, Daag and Shikast to name a few and then went on to shift seamlessly into playing lighter and comic roles in Aazad, Kohinoor Naya Daur, Ram aur Shyam. He was equally consummate in other genres like Aan, Urankhatola, Mughal-e-Azam, Madhumati, Gunga Jamuna, Gopi and Sagina. Nothing was beyond his ken whether he played the lead or character role. His signature style of mumbling his dialogues while giving myriad expressions and meanings to lines that his characters uttered made him Dilip Kumar first and

Coming from a large, joint family, his father ran a wholesale fruit shop to feed so many mouths and a young Dilip Kumar was expected to keep that legacy but destiny had something else in store. The journey from Peshawar to the shores of Mumbai before the Partition took a turn with Jwarbhata, his maiden venture in 1944. Shaheed and Jugnu (1946 & 1948) stamped his authority in the craft. It was Devika Rani who christened him Dilip Kumar.

With a string of tragic roles that he did with earnestness, he himself lapsed into depression and to shake it off, he was advised lighter roles. The first to win Filmfare Best Actor Award for Daag, he won it seven times again, paired with almost all leading actresses of his time. Most of his films in the 1950s were high grossers and Dilip Kumar commanded the fees that he fancied. Among his many firsts, in 1961, he produced, wrote and starred in Ganga Jamuna. It won

accolades at Boston Film Festival and Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. Legend has it that he was also offered the lead role in Lawrence of Arabia, a role that went to Peter O' Toole.

> He was the Angry Old Man much before his self-proclaimed admirer Amitabh Bachchan started as the Angry Young Man. Confident of his craft, he did not hesitate to rub shoulders with his

> > Dev Anand, Raj Kumar and Amitabh Bachchan. However, while he projected himself as an understated but careful actor, he tended to get melodramatic after the 1970s.

illustrious counterparts like Raj Kapoor,

With a vast repertoire - not to forget his duet with Lata Mangeshkar (Musafir-1957) and films -with almost every leading lady -- it was only natural that the got Lifetime Achievement Award, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan and the Dadasaheb Phalke Award. Made the Sheriff of Bombay, his home soil (in Pakistan) conferred its highest civilian award of Nishan-e-Imtiaz.

He briefly dabbled in politics and served as Rajya Sabha member. A linguist of sorts, his diction and articulation was impeccable. personal life was no less eventful. After he married his smitten fan Saira Banu, then 22 years younger than him, he courted controversy by marrying "Asma". Even hardened fans believed

this was a transgression but Dilip Kumar managed to extricate himself from the unseemly row and the marriage. Besides, there were many who found him overbearing as he was accused of interfering in the director's work.

A popularity unmatched in the subcontinent, he was awarded the "Greatest Actor of All Time Award" and the Guinness for receiving highest number of awards. His house in Peshawar is now a national heritage. He was buried with full state honours. President Ramnath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid him rich tributes.

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

Great Indians

GROUP CAPT VARUN SINGH SC (1982—2021)

Born to rule the skies

arun Singh hailed from a family of armymen in Deoria district in Uttar Pradesh. His father, K.P Singh retired as a Colonel from the Indian Army. His brother, Lieutenant Commander Tanuj Singh served in the Indian Navy. He studied at the Army Public School, Chandigarh. His mother, Mrs Uma Singh was a teacher in the primary section of the school. Inspired by his father, Varun was passionate about aeronautics at school. He was quick to

identify that he was doing something he liked helped him to excel.

Vice-Principal Vijay Laxmi, who taught Varun Singh English in classes XI and XII, remembers him as well-mannered and cheerful.

disciplined behaviour made him a prefect in the school. He cleared the entrance test to the National Defence Academy (NDA) in his

first attempt. He showed less interest in extra-curricular activities and till then, lacked confidence. He felt so as he believed he was meant to be average and there was little point trying to excel.

He graduated from the NDA 2003. He in was commissioned as a fighter pilot in 2004 and mainly flew Jaguars and Tejas. He was also an experimental test pilot. His career flourished once he became Flight Lieutenant and a flying instructor. He completed an eleven-month course

after that of Experimental Test Pilot.

In 2020, he was posted with a Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) squadron. On 12 October 2020, he was flying a sortie in the LCA when an emergency developed due to the failure of cockpit pressurisation at high altitude. He skilfully landed the fighter aircraft going beyond the call of duty and taking calculated risks. This allowed an accurate analysis of the fault on the indigenously designed fighter and further institution of preventive measures against recurrence. He was conferred Shaurya Chakra, India's third-highest peacetime gallantry award, for exceptional gallantry as a Wing Commander.

In a letter, penned by him after he was awarded the Shaurya Chakra, he shared his thoughts on his own life to help and inspire young Indians, especially those who feel they are "meant to be mediocre in this hyper-competitive world". By his own admission, an average student who barely scored first division in XIIth and average in sports and co-curricular

On 8 December 2021, Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife and members of his staff were amongst 10 passengers and four crew members aboard an Indian Air Force Mil Mi-17 helicopter flight en route from the Sulur Air Force Base to the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington, where Rawat was to deliver a lecture. Around 12:10 pm the aircraft crashed on the outskirts of the hamlet of Nanjappachatiram,

panchayat, Bandishola in Katteri-Nanchappanchathram area of Nilgiris district. Group Captain Varun Singh

was the only survivor.

After the crash, Gp. Capt Singh, who was the Directing Staff at the DSSC, was taken to the Military Hospital, Wellington, and later moved to the Command Hospital, Bengaluru, where his medical condition remained critical. He had sustained severe burns and remained unconscious. He succumbed early 15th December after a tough fight with death.

pall of descended on Army Public School, Chandimandir, as news of Group Captain Varun Singh's demise broke. Students and teachers of the school had been praying for his recovery. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

His parents are settled in Bhopal, MP.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said an institution or a building would be named after him in consultation with his family. Paying tributes to Group Capt. Singh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on social media, "Group Captain Varun Singh served the nation with pride, valour and utmost professionalism. I am extremely anguished by his passing away. His rich service to the nation will never be forgotten. Condolences to his family and friends, Om Shanti."

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)

