

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined

## Walls that tell stories



INTREPID, MOTIVATING OR CONTENTIOUS?

SUPPRESSION PASSED OFF AS VANDALISM

STREET ART IN INDIA IS A WORLD APART

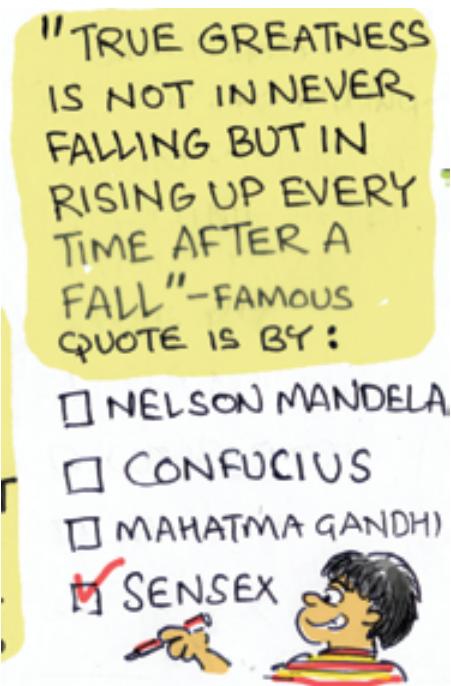
**Know India Better**

DHAROHAR

A SLICE OF RAJASTHANI HERITAGE

**Face to Face**

NILESH DESHMUKH





# CONTENTS

OCTOBER 2022

Vol. 25/02

THEME:

## ART



### Morparia's Page

Intrepid, motivating or contentious?  
*Gajanan Khergamker*

Suppression passed off as vandalism  
*Gajanan Khergamker*

Street Art in India is a world apart  
*Gajanan Khergamker*

Art as a soothing balm  
*Anushka Singh*

Tool of holistic development  
*Nandini Rao*

Art as bone of contention  
*Vedika Jain*

Art and tales from History  
*Ritika Seth*

### Know India Better

Dharohar  
A slice of Rajasthani heritage  
*Masarrath Ali Khan*

### Face to Face

Nilesh Deshmukh  
*A. Radhakrishnan*

### Features

Recreating the Ismat Chughtai mystique  
*Shoma A. Chatterji*

"Attend to basic conservation tasks"  
*Bharat Dogra*

### Great Indians



PINGALI VENKAYYA



HAVILDAR BACHITTAR  
SINGH, ASHOK CHAKRA



PRADEEP BHIDE



**Managing Editor**  
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

**Editor**  
Anuradha Dhareshwar

**Design**  
Ananta Art Services

**OIOP Clubs**  
Nagesh Banger

Printed & Published by  
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for  
**One India One People Foundation,**  
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,  
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,  
Mumbai - 400 026  
Tel: 022-2353 4400  
Fax: 022-2351 7544  
e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com  
oiopsub@fouressindia.com

visit us at:

**www.oneindiaonepeople.com**  
www.facebook.com/oneindiaonepeoplefoundation

## Intrepid, motivating or contentious?

*What makes Street Art is its ability to steer clear of political influence and economic compulsions. What binds Street Art and its proponents across the world is the 'unauthorised' nature of its existence and perpetration derived from swimming against the current. Says **Gajanan Khergamker** that in the post-protest phase, it's the Street Art in the form of graffiti that stands tall as a testament.*



**James Colomina's installation above the railway tracks in Berlin**



**James Colomina's installation of Vladimir Putin in New York City's Central Park**

**S**treet Art has origins from a time we are yet to fathom and, in time, discover. Limited as we are by man-made language, nomenclature, and terminology besides the means so simplistic and apparent like paper and other media, like say walls, Art, in particular, Street Art, is an extension of what can be generated on medium but transgresses to public spaces.

On the European front, skewedly propagated as a world platform, it was in the French Revolution's iconoclasm era, when rebels defaced high-end art to protest French society's toxic hierarchy creating a niche called graffiti that became synonymous with vandalism. It was the waves of political and economic turbulence that triggered the rise of street art around the world: The Berlin Wall's one-sided graffiti being projected as a fight of colourful expression on one side versus the stark totalitarianism of bland emptiness on the other being a rather simplistic definition.

So, French street artist James Colomina's installation of Vladimir Putin in Central Park in early August 2022, five months after the Ukraine war started, was predictably bold in both its content and process. The artist who does not reveal himself because most of his installations "are unauthorised," is "already facing problems with the authorities." Ironically the installation, bold as it was, appeared in New York City of the United States of America where, according to a recent Data USA study, 85.4 per cent of archivists, curators, and museum technicians were White and the next most common ethnicity (Hispanic White) clocked in at a mere five per cent.

The statistics conveniently exclude those who do not "fit in" with them. Technically, and those valued, artists are predominantly White men, with 85.4 per cent of works in all major US museums belonging to White artists, 87.4 per cent by



men. The diversity is not much greater for museums that specialise in modern art. At the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, for example, only 11 per cent of the artists in the collection are female, 10 per cent are Asian, and two per cent are black or African-American. At the *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art*, 18 per cent of the artists are female, seven per cent Asian, and two per cent black or African-American.

## Wealthy patrons decide merit of art

It is the acute dearth of public funding owing to which museums and galleries are forced to rely on the wealthy patrons sitting on their executive boards to influence what art is “worthy” for public display. In October 2019, a *New York Times* analysis revealed that 40 per cent of museum trustees are Wall Street tycoons revealing that control on high-end art world isn't merely determined by if a trustee is wealthy, but also where they derive their wealth from.

Street Art is different. And what makes Street Art this way is its ability to steer clear of political influence and economic compulsions. What binds Street Art and its proponents across the world is the 'unauthorised' nature of its existence and perpetration derived from swimming against the current. James Colomina's installations are a case in point. And, James is clear with his *modus operandi*. "I'm not really afraid of the authorities. It's a bit of a cat-and-mouse game. You must not get caught otherwise the installation is ruined," he says gleefully.

James' last installation in Berlin where he installed a little girl going over the wall and another sculpture above the railway caused quite a flurry. The authorities had to close the tracks for two hours to remove the sculpture.

"Why, even train-drivers slowed down as they approached the sculpture. They thought she was a real child," he says. Another facet of Street Art is that it must not always be liked or be popular. "A lot of people don't like me, but that's okay. It's even so much the better it would bother me to please everyone. I try to tell the truth with my sculptures and sometimes it hurts," he says.

## Art can be politically incorrect, and hurt too

Much on the lines of James' installation in New York City's Central Park, a thousand odd miles away in South Minneapolis, the Cup Foods convenience store, where a 911 call led to George Floyd's police killing, today stands decorated with memorial art. This one, as opposed to Putin's, for sure, is not as popular.

Local illustrator, muralist and teacher Melodee Strong created 'Mama' after George Floyd's dying plea, depicting grieving black mothers, against a backdrop of the US flag. "I am a mother, and when George cried out for his 'mama' as he was taking his last breaths, I also cried," felt strong adding, "That's what we do when we are in trouble or scared, we cry out for God or our mothers. My son has been harassed and mistreated by the police. I have witnessed numerous times how the people I love have been abused by police. The anguish we feel from the fear and the experiences of those too many incidences is what I feel in the faces I painted... Even though this piece is about George Floyd, it's more a dedication to all the mothers who have lost their child to police violence."

Predictably, following *Black Lives Matter* protests erupt-

ing in cities, large corporations all around the country responded by nailing plywood across their doors and massive windows. Political graffiti, as critical intervention in urban space, is faced with legislative opposition as municipalities and police attempt to shut down the streets and the protests therein. Yet, even after protests disperse, it's the Street Art in the form of graffiti that stands tall as a testament to the protestors' collective voice. It is, today through social media that belongs to the masses instead of selective and controlled fora, documented and becoming a part of history.

## Calling Macron's bluff, through art

Like the time when French President Macron was elected, he made loud proclamations that there would be no more homeless people but, as usual, it was far from being true. "It was even worse, so I put him in a tent with homeless people," says Colomina. "Why, the homeless were delighted with the move. The site stands on the edge of the Saint-Martin canal in Paris. At first, I asked some homeless people if they would welcome President Macron with them in a tent. They told me they were delighted; So for his birthday, I put him in a tent to shed some light on the homeless," he added. "My intention was also to put the one who is at the very top of the pyramid, at the very bottom."

It was in the 1970s, that graffiti artists in America successfully unionised for the first time. Between 1974 and 1980, over 20,000 artists and arts support staff secured full-time employment through CETA – making it the largest federally-funded arts project since the Works Progress Administration (WPA) created during the Great Depression, putting more than 8.5 million people to work. In New York City, the Cultural Council Foundation (CCF) launched the CETA Artists Project in 1978, with a budget of \$4.5 million a year to fund the work of 300 artists, paying them \$10,000 year plus benefits (nearly \$46,000 today) to work directly with community organisations, on project teams, with performing companies, or on a wide array of public works.

## Showcasing only a few for High-End World

Then, the wealthy responded by carefully choosing only certain graffiti artists to amplify and opened up the high-end art world selectively, incentivising street art for the sole purpose of earning money within the curated spaces set up by the elite. As a result, and inevitably, there was infighting and resentment that led to the unions eroding.

Today, the present-day continuation of excluding non-male and non-White artists from museums and the wealth associated with high-end art is no coincidence. The statistics highlight the high-brow art world as another example of the White and Wealthy very conveniently excluding those who do not “fit in” with them.



Gajanan Khergamker is an independent Editor, Solicitor and Film-maker. He is the founder of the International Think Tank DraftCraft.

# Suppression passed off as vandalism

*Generally, street art is summarily dismissed as 'vandalism' and an illegal activity when not in private galleries or sponsored by non-profits. Those opposing street art keep telling artists they should resort to "legal" methods of art in the privacy of their homes, while starkly ignoring the glaring fact that the high-end art world is discriminatory, believes **Gajanan Khergamker**.*



**A 40 ft long and 8 ft high structure with crocheted yarn was installed in one of the homeless shelters in New Delhi in 2015 by New York – based Polish street artist Agata Oleksiak along with local volunteers as a part of 'Rain Basera' project to raise awareness about the lives of those living in the shelters**

Activists like California-based Nancypili Hernandez use Street Art as a crucial tool in telling suppressed stories. Creating and directing many different murals, working in San Francisco's Latinx community to "document people's history that isn't told in the history books," it's her work in the Mission District that highlights the struggles of the Latinx residents, amplifying the stories of a native community passed over by San Francisco's tour guides.

In 2015, Polish street artist based in New York Agata Oleksiak aka Olek arrived in New Delhi in 2015 to work on a massive project and used the technique of crocheting to give expression to everyday occurrences and inspirations; her artwork often examines sexuality, feminist ideas and the evolution of communication. She visually transformed one of the 184 homeless shelters in New Delhi, to raise awareness about the lives of

the desperate people who live in them. Covering the entire 40 feet long and 8 feet high structure with crocheted yarn with a team of local volunteers, she worked for seven days to put together the entire installation that was part of the 'Rain Basera' project.

## Dressing up a charging bull, at night

Why, on Christmas Eve, she even cloaked the iconic "Charging Bull" statue on Wall Street - from horn to hoof - with a pink, camouflage-patterned cover that she crocheted herself. It took her miles of yarn to create the fabric over 'Six seasons of Lost as she puts it. While she kept waiting for the police to stop her, they didn't. "They were human and understood that I didn't want to harm the statue," but the installation lasted for merely two hours as 'a grumpy city workers tore it down'.



Generally, street art is quickly dismissed as 'vandalism' and an illegal activity when not in private galleries or sponsored by non-profits. Those opposing street art keep telling artists they should resort to "legal" methods of art in the privacy of their homes, while starkly ignoring the glaring fact that the high-end art world is discriminatory.

## Opponents say 'stay legal, display in private'

*Keep America Beautiful* (KAB), a large non-profit with corporate sponsors like H&M, PepsiCo, and McDonalds, began a programme in 2007 called *Graffiti Hurts*. They even offer grants upwards of \$2,000 to local governments and police departments for fighting street art. Their slogan? "We keep America beautiful so Americans can do beautiful things." Now, the non-profit is conveniently silent on which Americans are given the right to create those "beautiful things?" And at whose expense?

KAB maintains that while graffiti vandals believe their actions harm no one, "graffiti hurts everyone—homeowners, communities, businesses, schools, and you." They maintain, those who practice it risk personal injury, violence, and arrest. The prime difference between Graffiti and Art is...Permission.

Over the summer of 2020, a portrait recurred on city walls across the world: an image of the black American George Floyd, who was brutally suffocated to death by police officer David Chauvin on 25 May 2020. Most of these portraits were based on Floyd's 2016 selfie, taken from his own Facebook account; many referred to the torment of his killing, and his final words.

## Support to Floyd From Pakistan, India

Thousands of miles from the US protests, numerous graffiti tributes to Floyd appeared in European cities and in Asia, Africa and Australia. In what transcended borders, even bridged differences between two sworn enemies was Karachi-based truck artist Haider Ali's portrait of Floyd inscribed with English tags ('#blacklivesmatter') and song lyrics 'Goron ki na Kalon ki, Duniya Hai Dilwalon ki' meaning the World does not belong to the Whites or Blacks but to those with hearts. Interestingly the Pakistani artist has used lyrics from a film song whose lyrics were penned by Indian lyricist Anjaan for a 1982 film *Disco Dancer* and sung by Suresh Wadkar and Usha Mangeshkar.

The truck artist's brilliant blending of George Floyd's portrait tackling the issue of colour and hate in the USA with neighbouring India's legendary love-hate with Pakistan was amazing.

The very public horror of Floyd's killing (captured on videocam) lingers in recent memory but his isn't a case in isolation. Memorials also say the names of generations of innocent black US victims: among them, Breonna Taylor (killed by the police in her own home, 13 March, 2020); 12-year-old Tamir Rice (fatally shot by the police, 22 November, 2014); 14-year-old Emmett Till (lynched by racists, 28 August, 1955) and more.

## Testament to protestors' collective voice

Through graffiti, evidently unauthorised, illegal and without permission, brings to focus, international artists find their own resonance like accusations of police brutality in Kenya. Political graffiti is a critical intervention in urban space, particularly so as municipalities and police attempt to shut down the streets and the sounds of protests. For long, even after protests have dispersed, graffiti stands as a testament to the protestors' collec-

tive voice.

That the Black Lives Matter movement has transgressed beyond borders is evident in the works of contemporary artists who continue to embody its energy. The works of London-based Ghanaian Street Artist and educator Dreph (aka Neequaye Dsane) appearing around the world, including residencies in Brazil and Cape Verde, says, "We are bombarded with negative imagery all day long; what do we do with that energy? It's got to be moulded into something positive... I want to constantly make authentic, inspiring, meaningful, thought-provoking work, regardless of the context."

In Britain, his street-portrait series includes *Migrations*, a celebration of multi-cultural local heroes – especially resonant around the Windrush scandal, where hundreds of Britons of Caribbean descent were wrongly threatened with deportation and refused vital services through the UK government's "hostile environment" policy.

Dreph sums it up when he says, he can go pretty much to any country in the world and meet a local within minutes because of the graffiti movement. It's a network.

Born in 1961 in Larache, a harbour town in northern Morocco, Dreph's father emigrated to England in the 60s, so he spent his formative years with his mother, auntie, grandma and sisters.

He moved to North London in 1973 when he was 12 to join his father. He recalls it as being a tough time, where he was unable to speak English and was immersed in a new culture, in a time where London wasn't as cosmopolitan as it is today.

## Free art elbows compulsions of commerce

In Brixton, a sizeable chunk of the 30-foot-tall Michelle Obama mural remains painted over as Dorrell Place becomes the place for graffiti artists/taggers/scrawlers to showcase their works of art.

The homage to the former First Lady of the United States that first appeared on the side of the Marks & Spencer store in October 2018 was the creation of Dreph who made the advert in collaboration with Penguin Random House to promote the publication of Obama's autobiography 'Becoming,' released on 13 November, 2018.

Yet, by February 2021 the bottom half was painted over, and in the last couple of years the rest of the mural has dwindled to naught, almost symbolising the triumph of free art over commerce.

One of Dreph's latest murals depicts Hassan Hajjaj who joined the burgeoning west London immigrant community. He felt very much a foreigner and many of the people he befriended were people who had had a similar journey and shared experiences of being the outsider. In this period, he made a lot of friends, many from the Caribbean, India and Pakistan, and says that they stuck together and looked after one another.



Gajanan Khergamker is an independent Editor, Solicitor and Film-maker. He is the founder of the International Think Tank DraftCraft.

# Street Art in India is a world apart

*The street art that has begun making pleasant appearances across Mumbai's streets has been facilitated by the civic authorities and overseen by local politicians. With all permissions in place and authorisations, even financial support provided through non-profits involved in the venture, Mumbai's Street art completely overlooks issues of strife and sensitivity that dot the public walls in most other cities, observes **Gajanan Khergamker**.*



**Mumbai's Sassoon Dock Art Project in 2017 featured an exhibition of structures and images of workers at India's first wet dock in Colaba (Pic- Manu Shrivastava)**

**S**trife is perhaps the most significant commonality in Street Art; and, it's this strife that is symbolical of the processes even the resistance to populist trends and capitalist markets. In India, the street art scenario in India's financial capital Mumbai, in the absence of creative spunk even controlled by political entities and 'permitted' more often than growing organically as in the rest of the world, fails to impress.

The two-month long 'Start Urban Art Festival' for Mumbai's Sassoon Dock Art Project kickstarted on 11 November 2017 and ran until 30 December 2017 featuring an exhibition of structures and images of workers at India's first wet dock and the oldest in Mumbai, situated in Colaba. Pitched as having remained "a forgotten space of Mumbai, only home to the native *Kolis* living in a world of their own making," the paintings depicted *Kolis* a community that has grown organically even before the formation of Mumbai and live and work in the sea on the 'other side' of Colaba at Machchimmar Nagar.

## Glossing over details to fact, flavour

Sassoon Docks instead, is a commercial venture with docks where fish are cleaned, packed and exported to markets across the world. The Sassoon Docks provides livelihood to a range of communities from across India apart from *Kolis* who, at best, buy the fish locally for sale in local markets in suburban Mumbai. The depiction seemed way off the mark and the local flavour and details, in fact, were amiss.

In the same year, under an initiative of St+Art Foundation, Asian Paints and Western Railway, a mural depicting Mahatma Gandhi exiting a train was created by Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra at South Mumbai's Churchgate Railway Station. A structural audit of the façade, even declared it fit during an



inspection in 2018. A part of the cladding of the 81 ft x 54 ft mural of Gandhi broke loose during a cyclone and fell on a 62-year-old pedestrian killing him. The entire façade including the painting was ultimately brought down by the Western Railways.

“I love to showcase the lives and works of my people – the *Agris* – wherever I paint in the city,” says self-taught street artist Sapna Patil who has been involved with painting real-life thematic images across the city. Sapna is known for her painting of a seemingly-real train across a wall at Budhwar Park connecting South Mumbai’s Fourth Pasta Lane to the Machchimar Nagar on the other side of the zone and passing through a Railway Colony.

Her depiction of the train, complete with windows, bars, steps and handles is exquisite. “I wish I get more opportunities to paint issues that affect people too,” she says. Sapna Patil’s works are an integral part of the Changing Colours of Colaba where walls are given make-overs through strategic paintings depicting the zone’s architecture and life.

## A film industry splashed on public walls

The walls adjoining the streets of Mumbai’s Western suburb Bandra are strewn with art works depicting old Hindi films, graffiti and the works, converting the zone into a virtual art-lovers paradise. The wall-paintings are impressively colossal in size, strategically placed and sure to leave an indelible mark in public memory.

The street art that has begun making pleasant appearances across Mumbai’s streets has been facilitated by the civic authorities and overseen by local politicians. With all permissions in place and authorisations, even financial support provided through non-profits involved in the venture, Mumbai’s Street art completely overlooks issues of strife and sensitivity that dot the public walls in most other cities.

Unlike French street artist James Colomina, who literally lives underground and refuses to even identify himself or his family for fear of reprise, the artists working across Mumbai’s streets feature without fear across media. Why, most of them are commercial artists some even out-of-work poster artists who have been provided livelihood by the surge in street art across India’s financial capital.

There is simply no element of conflict in the street art of Mumbai. There’s a slim chance of an artwork being politically incorrect or harming populist sentiments when all of it has to go through the fine comb of a local politician before being vetted thoroughly by the authorities before seeing the light of the day.

And, that, is the difference in street art in India. Not that it isn’t good or lacks punch. It’s just that it’s different. Positively different and effective.

## Figures on walls to lead the way

Look at Swaero Artist’s For Empowerment of Society (SAFE), an alumna of artists who studied in state-run social welfare schools and colleges who feel, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”; “Swearo Bano-Hero Bano”; “If not now, when? If not we, then who?”

A tiny Dalit colony in Kollapadakal village of Maheshwaram that lies an hour away from Hyderabad registers the inspirational lines on a colourful mural that has become

all-too-familiar to locals.

In different colours on the walls of homes, over 30 murals, featuring prominent world leaders, are popular selfie points in the area. The street art walls were inaugurated by senior IPS officer RS Praveen Kumar Swaero, the secretary of the Telangana Social & Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society in 2020.

Interestingly, several murals of contemporary student achievers that include mountaineer Malavat Poorna, Kamatam Madhuri, *Nemali Siddharth Darshanala Sushma*, Praveen Kumar IPS and Dalit billionaire Pagidipati Devaiah were also painted on the walls. And because, as the SAFE president feels “painting local figures will make students think to become one of them.”

## India holds distinction of housing oldest art

It is pedestrian to trace the roots of Street Art to the 1st Century BCE when Roman citizens scribbled messages to each other on dry brick walls. India’s approach to Street Art has been legendarily descriptive and narrative rather than confrontational as is the wont of the nation itself.

For the record, cave paintings dating back to approximately 30,000 years in rock shelter home to humans, millennia ago, make Bhimbetka the oldest existing public art available. And, that lies barely 28 miles (45 km) south of Bhopal, in west-central Madhya Pradesh state in India.

Discovered only recently in 1957, the complex consists of some 700 shelters making it one of the largest repositories of prehistoric art in India. The Bhimbetka rock shelters form a canvas for some of the oldest paintings in India. Most of these are done in red and white on cave walls depicting themes and scenes like singing, dancing, hunting and other common activities of the people staying there. The oldest of the cave paintings in Bhimbetka is believed to be about 12,000 years ago i.e., 8,000 BCE.

The paintings have been divided into various periods like Upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Chalcolithic, Early History and Medieval history and are present in 500 caves out of the total of 750.

Bhimbetka is named after Bhim, among the Pandava brothers in the Mahabharata. Legend says that he used to sit outside these caves and on top of the hills to interact with the people in the area. The caves derive their name from this legend and translate literally into ‘Bhim’s Resting Place’.

Cave paintings show themes such as animals, early evidence of dance and hunting from the Stone Age as well as of warriors on horseback from a later time (perhaps the Bronze Age). The Bhimbetka site is one of the largest prehistoric complexes and has the oldest-known rock art in India.

The term ‘street’ itself is derived from ‘strata’, a short form of the Latin ‘via strata’, a road spread with paving stones. Why, the birth of Latin, as language itself, took place around 700 BC.

In Bhimbetka, Street Art existed in 8,000 BCE, way before it came to be defined and known as such.

(With inputs from Manu Shrivastava)



Gajanan Khergamker is an independent Editor, Solicitor and Film-maker. He is the founder of the International Think Tank DraftCraft.

## Art as a soothing balm

*Dwelling on the ability of Art as therapy, **Anushka Singh** asserts that by helping people express more freely, it has proved to be very effective in improving mental health of patients that, in turn, leads to improvement in behavioural patterns and bettering interpersonal relationships, adding, it is deeply rooted in culture.*



**A 'Kolam' by Jayashree Venkateshwaran inspired by popular Kolam artists like mrsandmrkolam**

**F**or ages, man has used art, as a medium of self-expression, to express emotions, thoughts, personal loss, struggles and achievements. Creativity itself, as a form of self-expression, is very liberating and therapeutic.

There is nothing more fulfilling and calming than being able to express freely, openly and without being judged. And, art is that medium that allows expression in the most beautiful way. For some, art is a hobby and for others it is a vocation, even profession. There are many out there, however, who use art as therapy, to heal one's inner being, as a shield to prevent triggers even to deal with trauma.

Art therapy is used to treat mental illnesses and enhancing the quality of life as it helps in controlling behavioural patterns related to psychosocially challenging behaviours even helps in slowing down deteriorating cognitive state of a person.

By helping people express more freely, art therapy has proved to be very effective in improving mental health of patients that, in turn, leads to improvement in behavioural patterns and



**Mandala art by Bangalore-based Sumita Sanjay. This ancient art form helps develop concentration, reduce stress and anxiety**

bettering interpersonal relationships.

An effective tool for mental health rehabilitation, art therapy is based on the idea that individuals can recover and heal by way of artistic expression of their inner self.

## The mental health burden

Mental and behavioural problems form a 12 per cent share of the disease burden worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the mental health burden in India is 2,443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per one lakh population, with a 21.1 age-adjusted suicide rate per one lakh population.

The mental health numbers draw a grim picture. Recently, mental health has been identified as a serious public health concern. There is a need for more attention, experts, treatment facilities and more importantly, need to shun the taboo associated with mental health disorders.

Statistics reveal that worldwide, two out of three



people diagnosed with psychosis do not receive the specialist mental health care that is needed. Another WHO report, the World Health Report 2001 stated that of the 45 million people who suffer from mental and behavioural problems, a 'very small proportion' is cared for appropriately.

Among the many mental health disorders, depression is one of the most common and significantly contributes to the global mental health burden. About five per cent of adults worldwide suffer from depression and women are more prone to be affected by depression than men.

Depression can lead to suicide. Major depressive disorders affect the overall quality of life and physical well-being as they may manifest into physical and mental side effects. Unfortunately, only half of individuals with depression get assistance needed.

Today, art therapy has become an important component of the therapeutic healthcare segment and is used extensively for improvement and treatment of mental health problems. Art therapy is a generic term comprising the whole array of treatments – painting, drawing, crafts, music therapy, dance, etc.

Using art therapy techniques for treatment of mental illnesses is gaining popularity gradually owing to the many benefits it offers. Art therapy replaces the need of verbal expression that is often a hurdle in healthcare of this nature. It offers a holistic approach to treatment that focuses on the individual and the recovery process at a very subtle level.

It has proved to be extremely useful for children who face difficulties in expressing their thoughts and emotions. Art opens a new channel of communication, a non-verbal form of communication that helps therapists find the source of trauma in affected children.

Experts believe when children use colours and drawings as they speak about their traumatic experiences, it reduces the feeling of anxiety, fear and anger.

When art therapy is used with children, their mental state is assessed through the choice of colours, pressure applied in the strokes, the pattern, etc. A common method used with children is the House-Tree-Person method where a child is asked to draw a house, a tree and a person and is asked questions about each picture the child has drawn.

## Art to explore inner self

In August 2022, the residents of Liverpool in the United Kingdom woke up, one morning, to a beautifully-drawn 'Mandala' art installation, the size of one and half football field.

The piece of land art called 'The Knowsley Mandala' is made of natural elements and is rooted in Hinduism and Buddhism. It is believed that when one enters the mandala creation and moves towards the centre, there is a spiritual transformation and one moves from suffering to joy.

Mandala art comprises patterns in a complex abstract design that are usually circular in form. The centuries-old motifs depict the cosmos and have been used by artists all over the world who have given the art their unique touch.

Originating in India, Mandala patterns were first seen in the Vedas, the ancient Hindu scriptures. It was the Buddhist

preachers who took this artwork outside India along the Silk Route to China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Indonesia.

In Hindu philosophy, a mandala creation is a square-shaped motif with a circle at the centre while the Buddhists the mandala is a circular pattern that is created to discover one's true self. Interestingly, even Native American people, the indigenous people of the American subcontinent, have used this art to represent the cosmos.

Mandala art is also used for art therapy and has been incorporated in psychotherapy by experts in many countries. The ancient art form helps instil a sense of balance, develop concentration, reduce stress and anxiety and promotes peace and tranquillity.

## Art therapy rooted in culture

Art therapy is not generic in nature but customised for every individual where art therapists carefully plan to achieve therapeutic goals. This is done by choosing the right material, exercise and intervention for the patient. Throughout history, painting, dancing, chanting, storytelling have been used as healing rituals.

Broadly speaking, art therapy benefits as it reduces stress levels, increase cognitive abilities, increase insight and memory, heal trauma and helps an individual feel fulfilled. Art leads to creation which is what helps individuals boost their self-esteem. Creating art, in itself, is a fulfilling and inspiring process through which one can develop a talent. The process entails planning and execution which grants an individual a sense of accomplishment.

The creative process of generating an artwork helps people to cope with stress, anxiety and despair. In the long run, art-based activities help alleviate the burden of chronic mental illnesses. Art therapy helps in dealing with emotional traumas by enhancing self-awareness and transforming one's way of thinking. Many cultures believe that artistic expression significantly helps in the healing process.

In ancient cultures, art has been integral to daily life and existence. Indigenous groups acknowledge and respect the complexities of natural art that also inspires indigenous art that are based on impermanence, gratitude, meaningful existence, etc. Native art strives to establish and strengthen connection with self and with nature to promote a holistic sense of well-being.

In India, traditional art such as kolam (rice flour drawings) of South India, rangoli of North India, paintings in tribal settlements, etc. are commonplace. In most traditional homes, even today, a kolam or rangoli is drawn every day at the entrance of the house or in the courtyard. Then there are festivals and rituals that allow grand celebrations of these traditional artworks.

**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.**

## Tool of holistic development

*One of the most significant and undeniable benefits of engaging children in art at an early age is developing 'creativity'. To succeed in any profession or vocation, creativity is an essential attribute to have and art boosts that. Children, who engage in art or similar activities, learn faster and perform better in other fields and disciplines, says **Nandini Rao**.*



**A significant benefit of engaging children in art at an early age is developing creativity. Here Anuradha Khare of Talentila Art Foundation teaching children how to make art objects from waste material (Inset : The bottles after being painted pic courtesy – Talentila Foundation)**

**A**rt is an excellent medium for self-expression. It is also widely used by individuals for expression who, owing to circumstances or a physical or mental condition, are unable to communicate through other commonly-used modes such as writing or talking.

The one segment of society that is hugely benefitted by art is children. We have all heard time and again and told by our teachers and parents that art and related creative activities are very important for a child's holistic and healthy development. And, rightly so, as it helps a child express himself and utilise several abilities of the brain.

Children respond very well to creative works and creative mediums of self-expression. They say, there is an artist in every human and children are the best example of that. Every

child is amazingly creative and courageous to give a physical, tangible form to his/her imagination.

## Art and development

In fact, the ability of a child to be imaginative and to create something inspired from or as a result of his experiences, feelings, etc. is a reflection of the mental and emotional health of the child and, at the same time, a great way to nurture it. So, art plays a very important role in children's developmental exercises.

What a child draws or paints, is a strong indicator of what the child feels and how he or she perceives things. The Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (JAIST) researchers Lan Yu and Yukari Nagai developed and tested a



digital analysis process that is used to digitise and analyse children's paintings.

The process enables thorough analysis of the artwork based on several variables. So, basically, the process quantifies and calculates several factors in a painting such as patterns, scale of objects, relationship between objects, etc. that leads to an analysis that humans can understand.

There are certain cognitive abilities that are associated with art such as detailing, realism, etc. Children take time to develop these abilities, so the younger a painter, the lesser developed cognitive abilities he or she will have and demonstrate.

This means, a young child's painting will lack details of objects and scenes. This also means that proper guidance to children about painting specific objects will encourage them to observe their surroundings more and enhance awareness of the same, thus aiding the development process.

## Children, born ingenious

Creatives play a very important role in overall development of children and are very engaging for those with mental disabilities. The brain is primarily divided into two parts of which the left hemisphere is used for logical and analytical thinking and the right one for creativity, intuitions, etc.

In most educational systems, creative learning and creativity in general is neglected and academics are given preference over art, so to speak. It's important to mention here that for the overall development of a child into a balanced, healthy individual, both parts of the brain have to work together and, in tandem.

Many education institutes are now understanding the importance of and emphasising on activities that involve creativity and self-expression. Art is more than just a fun activity and can be extremely beneficial for children.

In 2018, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools in Kerala and Lakshadweep announced they will 'promote art, culture and creativity among students and help them showcase their talent'. The focus of the exercise was to develop a robust education system that allows academic improvement and holistic development of children.

Co-curricular activities supplement and complement the curricular or main syllabi activities and these are very important to develop the students' personality as well as to strengthen classroom learning.

The Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), which has been set up under the aegis of Ministry of Culture, Government of India initiated networking with several education institutes to fulfil its mandate of promoting 'cognitive, social and emotional learning' and, at the same time, inculcate among children an appreciation for the diversity and richness of arts in India.

Broadly speaking, art and similar creative pursuits help children by giving them a tool or a medium, beyond words, to express their thoughts. Also, it is a great way to build a skill set at a young age. Art also aids bonding and nurtures creativity and innovation.

## Benefits of art for children

One of the most significant and undeniable benefits of engaging children in art at an early age is developing 'creativity'. To succeed in any profession or vocation, creativity is an essential attribute to have and art boosts that. Children, who engage in art or similar activities, learn faster and perform better in other

fields and disciplines. They are also better at creative problem-solving and are more likely to imbibe lateral thinking abilities.

Experimenting and creative problem-solving go hand in hand. Art delivers the ability to imagine and makes a person a flexible thinker. It offers plenty of opportunities to keep making decisions but still be flexible, prepared for uncertainties and constantly analyse results.

Developing art as a skill is beneficial because it helps a child develop his fine motor skills. Creating art work requires adeptness and dexterity. Engaging in painting, drawing, sculpting, etc. help a child develop his or her coordination and visual-spatial skills.

As young children begin to scribble or draw, they develop higher control of their hand movements on paper. So, art enhances and expedites learning to write alphabets at a young age.

Any creative activity like art stimulates synapses or neural connections in the brain which is good for mental health. Engaging in art helps enhance one's cognitive skills. It also helps an individual deploy multiple mental skills that are superior and essential for success. These include remembering details, focusing, multi-tasking, planning and organising

A very important reason why children must be exposed to art at an early age is it boosts self-esteem. The simple process of creating something is a fulfilling one. Activities related to art like any group activity further healthy socialisation. Children learn to share with and interact with others.

## A mode of communication

Art not only helps children to visualise better, it also aids in self-expression, something that is essential for the healthy development of a human being. Often, inadequate or underdeveloped communication abilities prevent children from expressing themselves, their ideas and emotions. If a child is struggling with speech, language, comprehension, etc. art offers a creative and powerful outlet to them.

A child's mind is like sponge, absorbing anything that comes its way. It's amazing how much information a child can absorb and process. Art is a great way for children to develop abilities to process new information, in a safe manner and a protective environment.

Art also allows one to explore feelings and deal with them in a proper manner. Sometimes, what cannot be expressed in words is expressed beautifully through art. Art also gives children hundreds of new ways to express themselves. There are no set boundaries and no structure.

Numerous studies undertaken to understand benefits of art for children reveal that art not just boosts creativity in children, it also helps them in other aspects of academics. Engaging in art improves children's mathematical abilities, reading, communication, etc. and is essential for holistic development.

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.

## Art as bone of contention

*Bring to fore the flip side of Art that often throws up unseemly controversies, **Vedika Jain** argues that art has often upset a group of people or hurt religious sentiments of another. Being a visual medium, the impact of a painting or artwork is immense and so is the magnitude of hurt or hatred. Controversial artwork across the world has caused unrest, violence, rioting even acts of terror.*



**Protests at MS University, Vadodara over 'objectionable' artwork at fine arts faculty exhibition**



**M.F. Hussain and Leena Manimekalai who have courted controversies with their art**

In July 2022, an FIR was registered against documentary film-maker Leena Manimekalai, accused of hurting religious sentiments with the 'highly objectionable' poster of her film that depicted a woman dressed as Goddess Kaali and smoking a cigarette. A Delhi-based lawyer Vineet Jindal had registered a complaint against Leena over the controversial poster that was shared by her on 2 July 2022.

At the time, communal tensions were already simmering in India owing to the Udaipur killing. The poster released by the film-maker sent netizens into a posting spree, many of whom considered the poster an insult to Hinduism. There were others who demanded legal action against the film-maker too. The controversy soon took a political turn when politicians called for strict action against Leena.

Amid building pressure, the Uttar Pradesh Police filed an FIR against the film-maker for 'criminal conspiracy, offence in a place of worship, deliberately hurting religious sentiments, and intention to provoke breach of peace.' Additionally, a complaint was filed with the Delhi Police too for 'hurting the sentiments of

the Hindu community.'

Controversies like these are commonplace today and are often seen gaining momentum just before the release of the film in question. But, besides films, other creatives and artworks especially paintings have created controversies time and again. There have been several instances where an artist's 'creative liberty' has landed him or her in trouble.

## Art, controversy and attacks

Since time immemorial, art has upset a group of people or hurt religious sentiments of another. Being a visual medium, the impact of a painting or artwork is immense and so is the magnitude of hurt or hatred. Controversial artwork across the world has caused unrest, violence, rioting even acts of terror.

On 7 January 2015, two French Muslim terrorists and brothers, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, stormed into the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo's office in Paris and killed 12



people injuring many others. Several other attacks followed in the region soon after, killing more people. In 2011, the magazine's offices were firebombed following the publication of a caricature of Muhammed on the magazine cover.

Charlie Hebdo is a publication that has always been in the eye of the storm owing to its satirical attacks on political and religious leaders. In 2012, the magazine published cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed that forced France to temporarily close embassies and schools in more than 20 countries fearing attacks.

The Charlie Hebdo killings were an eye-opener, a reminder that in today's hypersensitive and volatile world, 'insensitive' and callously-created artwork can lead to very serious consequences.

## Controversial art in India

India epitomises unity in diversity. The cultural, religious and ethnic vibrancy is what lends India its unique character. The diversity is also the reason why, sometimes, controversies are stirred in the name of a community or religious group.

One of the highest paid artists of India who has made a name for himself the world over, M F Husain was known to create art that triggered unrest and controversy in the country. And, he did so on more than one occasion.

Maqbool Fida Hussain, a self-taught artist, was born on 17 September 1915 in Pandharpur in Maharashtra and initially supported himself by painting cinema hoardings in Mumbai. He often landed in a soup for his paintings on Hindu deities.

His controversial paintings on goddesses Durga and Saraswati who were depicted inappropriately, invited the wrath of Hindu groups. As a result of this, in 1998 the painter's house was attacked and his art work was vandalized.

In one of his paintings, he depicted a naked Goddess Saraswati. He made a painting on Bharat Mata where he depicted a nude Mother India hurting the sentiments of many Indians. In 2006, M F Hussain was charged with hurting the sentiments of people because of his nude portraits of Hindu gods and goddesses.

## Walking a thin line

A few years ago, national general secretary of a social organisation Shivsena Hindustan Rajinder Singh Raja had filed a complaint against a publication in which he stated that in the April 2013 edition of a magazine, cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni was portrayed as Lord Vishnu bearing the title 'God of Big Deals' even as he held several commercial products including a shoe in his hand.

The complainant said Dhoni's photograph has hurt his religious sentiments and of Hindus as the published image is an insult to Lord Vishnu and concurrently to Hindu religion.

In another incident, at a fest organised at Indian Institute of Technology - Bombay (IIT-B) in 2016, an art mural was presented that projected Lord Hanuman in a modern avatar, wearing modern-day clothes and gadgets. The artwork was protested by members of the Shiv Sena who said it was a mockery of the Hindu deity and it was eventually covered with a sheet.

In 2017, celebrity hairstylist Jawed Habib was at the receiving end of public ire for offending people with his ad showing Goddess Durga having a spa day.

The ad was put out in his company's name for the then-upcoming Durga Puja festival. The print ad depicted Goddess Durga, along with children Kartik, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Ganesh, having a relaxed day at Habib's beauty parlour. The tagline of the advertisement read 'Gods too visit JH salon.'

The depicting offended a few people who said that the sight of the goddesses and gods putting on make-up and counting money hurt their religious sentiments. The hairstylist had later apologised for the advertisement.

## Sensitisation needed

Most recently, in May 2022, a controversy erupted when a student of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Vadodara's MSU (The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda) for creating a controversial artwork.

As a result, there were protests by a group on the campus. The MSU Syndicate Wednesday unanimously decided to rusticate the student. Vice-chancellor of the university said that the Syndicate has also decided to issue show-cause notices to faculty members, among others, involved with the incident.

The first-year post graduate student belonged to the Sculpture Department and the action was taken after a nine-member fact-finding committee tabled its report before the Syndicate. The Syndicate also decided to form two committees to ensure that faculty members adhere to a "code of conduct".

The student had created an artwork where he created photos of Hindu gods and goddesses and for that he used newspapers cuttings of crimes against women across India such as rape, etc. The incident led to an FIR against the student for hurting religious sentiments. He has been booked under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code, including Section 295A (Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs).

Art is an expression of one's creativity but one's right to freedom of expression must not infringe upon another person's right. Article 19(a) of the Constitution of India guarantees fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression to all citizens but these rights come with reasonable restrictions.

Vedika Jain is a legal researcher with [www.thewomansurvivor.com](http://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.

## Art and tales from History

*Art has the uncanny knack of packing in aesthetic punch in the story narration. **Ritika Seth** points out that throughout history, across the world, free thinkers have always found a way to express themselves. Sometimes to raise awareness on a social cause, other times to stir up public sentiments. Sand art during the Ganesh festival has often found expression in the cause.*



**Indian sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik from Odisha created world's tallest sandcastle at Puri beach. In 2014, the Indian government honoured him with Padma Shri**

**A**rt has time and again been used to narrate stories inspired from the history of a region and its people. More recently, street art and its various forms have been narrating stories that are synonymous with the place and its time in history, the struggles and successes.

India is an ancient land and a melting pot of cultures and influences. India is home to many ancient cities that are a testimony to how far back the history of the land goes. To name a few - Varanasi, Madurai, Ayodhya, Ujjain, Hampi, Patna, Gwalior, Kannauj, Dwarka, Puri and many more.

Cities this old have a lot to offer in terms of stories, anecdotes, legends, experiences, leaders, local heroes, history, etc. Throughout history, across the world, free thinkers have always found a way to express themselves. Sometimes to raise awareness on a social cause, other times to stir up public sentiments, to unite them even to make them remember their heroes and leaders.

Before street art came into vogue as a medium of expression, there were other media such as sculpting, painting, poetry, folklore, songs, dance, drama, etc. Today, cities across India have been witnessing a thriving trend comprising street art and graffiti and it's only getting bigger. In India, street art, in its various forms, has come a long way marking walls and public spaces with tales of a zone's past, its legends, history and its very existence.

### Commemorating history through sand art

On every occasion of national and historic significance in India, one name has been a common feature across news channels and news portals, renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik of Odisha, who has never failed to wow his followers with beautiful sand art symbolising important days and people of Indian history.

(Continued on page 30)





## DHAROHAR

### *A slice of Rajasthani heritage*

*‘Dharohar’, the heritage show comprising folk dances curated from all regions of Rajasthan is a veritable feast showcasing the essence and ethos of Rajasthani culture. The visual treat comes alive from a wide spectrum of folk arts and music from ignited minds of the organisers who have made it a tourist’s delight. The festivity which has enjoyed a pride of place in the hearts of eminent artists and heritage lovers, has fallen on tough times and needs funds for its revival.*

*Text and photos : Masarrath Ali Khan*



**Bagore ki Haveli at Neem Chowk gets ready for the show**

**E**venings are a busy time at 'Bagore Ki Haveli', an imposing mansion located at Gangour ghat on the banks of the famous Lake Pichola in Udaipur, Rajasthan, one of India's most popular tourist destinations. As an orange twilight envelops the heritage palace, the contours of balconies in its Neem Chowk, an open-air rectangular courtyard on the first floor of the Haveli come alive in prismatic colours, all under a star-lit sky. The musicians and singers are seated on a small platform along with a harmonium, *dholak* and other musical instruments. The audience is comfortably seated in the Chowk, and given a warm welcome to the beat of drums, blowing of a *shankh* (conch shell) and the song *Kesariya Balam Padharo Mhare Des*. A young lady anchor takes stage to give a brief introduction about the show in both English and Hindi. Female dancers clad in traditional costumes --- bright coloured ghagras (long skirts with embroidered mirror work) and cholis (blouse) – saunter in whirling and twirling in sync, dancing to the beats of the live music. Slowly, Neem Chowk turns into a dazzling stage, as the audience soak themselves in the aesthetically rich and visually appealing live performances. The dance, the music and the entire stage settings are spectacular taking one's breath away.

This is 'Dharohar', the heritage show comprising folk dances curated from all regions of Rajasthan, organised in association with the West Zone Cultural Centre (WZCC), headquartered at Bagore ki Haveli. The Haveli was built by Amar

Chand Badwa, who was the prime minister of Mewar from 1751 AD – 1778 during the reigns of four Maharanas (Maharana Pratap Singh-II, Raj Singh, Ari Singh and Hamir Singh). Dharohar is today, one of the prime attractions for tourists visiting Udaipur.

## The beginning of Dharohar

Two decades ago, tourists after spending a day at Udaipur's palaces, gardens and lakes used to travel to neighbouring destinations overnight. Though extremely rich in folk arts and music, Udaipur had no musical entertainment for tourists that could lure them to spend an extra night in the lake city.

Deepak Dixit a former actor and theatre artist felt that there was a lot more that city could do to promote tourism and conceptualized 'Dharohar' to showcase the art, culture and heritage of Rajasthan. Born in Udaipur, Deepak had a deep inclination towards art and music since childhood. He regularly participated in the Youth Festival at his college and later worked briefly at Disha a theatre group founded by the legendary theatre artist Qaiyyum Ali Bohra. He has also acted in several Bollywood films – *Love`86*, *Panaah* (1992), *Zid* (1992), *Khiladi* (1992), *Bedardi* (1993), *Kyun Ki Hum Deewane Hain* (2001), besides television serials *Dhola Maru* (1995), *Sanjog* (1995) and *Bhor*





**Puppets displayed at Bagore ki Haveli museum**

*Ko Aana Hi Hoga.* A multifaceted personality, Deepak has also penned short stories, essays on art and articles on environment. His official musical video song '*Kabhi chirag jal gaye, Kabhi chirag bujh gaye*', directed by his kin Chinmay Dixit and composed during the lockdown period is popular among music lovers.

The West Zone Cultural Centre (WZCC) established in Udaipur in 1986 had been doing its bit to promote Rajasthan culture. The then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi organised a national event *Apna Utsav* to promote folk art and artists from all over the country. Deepak Dixit and his team performed at *Apna Utsav* in New Delhi. Aditi Mehta, the then Director of WZCC, Udaipur was highly impressed with his performance and invited him to join the Centre. It was during his association with WZCC as a Programme Officer for six years that idea of Dharohar took birth.

Deepak decided to offer a culturally rich, lively and immersive experience to the tourists by enveloping them in brilliant performances of folk dances, enthralling music of Rajasthan, and an entertaining puppet show – all under one roof.



**Chari dance performance by Tara Kamad, the youngest member of Dharohar**





**Foreign visitors to Udaipur watching Chari dance performance at Neem Chowk, the courtyard at Bagore ki Haveli**

Dixit's concept of establishing evening tourism at Bagore ki Haveli, by organising a folk-dance show performed by original village artists took shape with support of Dr. Vishwas Mehta, the then Director of West Zone Cultural Centre (WZCC). Professional folk artists residing in rural areas were *pooled up for the show*. The two collaborated and the first show of Dharohar was held at the Haveli on 28 October 2000. It was well received and since then there was no looking back.

Dharohar has a dozen male artists, ten female artists and four back-end staff. The artists belong to different age groups and educational backgrounds, the youngest of them being Tara Kamad (19).

Says Deepak: "I founded Dharohar, but it is my wife Kirti Dixit (Co-founder & Director) who has been immensely contributing to its success for two decades. She is the invisible woman behind the stage who coordinates with the artists and their families and plays an important role in smooth flow of the event. She has an aesthetic eye for colours, ornaments and costumes. Besides designing costumes for the artistes, she ensures that tourists coming to Udaipur experience Dharohar and take back with them a slice of its cultural heritage".

## Dharohar's repertoire

Dharohar's repertoire includes six folk dances of the state, generally performed in the order given below:

**Chari dance:** It is a symbolic dance of ethnic Gujjar community from Northern Rajasthan. The costume of the dancers comprises ghagra – choli, both very colourful worn with a lot of traditional jewellery like *hansli*, *timniya*, *mogri*, *panchi*, *bangdi*, *gajra*, *armlets*, *karli* etc.

The Chari or Charu refers to a water pot made of metal. Often the Chari is set on fire with cotton seeds dipped in oil. The dancer balances these flaming pots on their head, without touching it, while performing a well-choreographed dance to the accompaniment of rustic music that comes from musical instruments like *bankia*, *dhol*, *dholak*, *nagada* and harmonium.

**Gorband:** The paraphernalia used in decoration of animals, particularly camels is called Gorband. The Gorband dance shows how women prepare a colorful Gorband for their domestic pet camel. It is a fun-filled dance performed by female dancers whirling around very fast to the rhythms of beats and music.





***Veiled women performing Ghoomar, a traditional folk dance of Rajasthan***

**Gavri:** A fusion of act and dance, it is always performed by male artists hailing from original Bhil tribe of Rajasthan. A vigorous fight between Goddess Amba and Demon Bhiawwal shows the conquest of good over evil. Though original Gavri is performed in villages, it is enacted in its dramatic form, only at Dharohar and perhaps nowhere else in Rajasthan.

**Ghoomar:** Ghoomar is a traditional dance form of Rajasthani royal families. Generally veiled women, wearing colorful *ghagras*, perform this dance. Traditionally, this dance was not performed in the presence of men. The costumes are adorned with *Kundan*, mirror and silver pieces of jewellery. The dancers rhythmically circle around a flock of dancers and pirouette while moving in and out of a wide circle. The pace of the music goes on increasing and with it the pace of the dance, till it reaches a crescendo and leaves everyone mesmerised.

**Terah Taal:** Generally, members of Kamad community perform Terah Taal during the nine days of the Navratri Festival, along with *bhajans* accompanied by music of the *tanpura*, *dholak* and *manjira* (brass cymbals) at temples. Terah means 13. In the Terah Taal, 13 *manjiras* are tied with rope on the bodies – on the legs, feet, hands and are played in 13 different ways.



***Tera Taal dance performance***





**Puppet show conducted by the late Veni Lal**

**Puppet Show:** The puppet show is one of the highlights of Dharohar and very popular with children. It used to be performed by the famous puppeteer Veni Lal Bhat since its inception until his death in 2020. His son Vrijesh Bhat now holds the puppet strings. Children from the audience are encouraged to take part in the show.

**Bhavai:** The Bhavai dance form has its origin in the western part of Rajasthan. The arid land suffers from extreme shortage of water and women have to walk miles in search of water; balancing four or five metallic vessels on their heads to fetch water from the wells. The joy of fetching water makes them forget the pain of carrying the weight over their heads. Rajasthani women often express their happiness in the form of Bhavai.

Women performing Bhavai are dressed in vibrant *ghagras* and short sleeved *cholis*, embellished with *gota patti* (appliqué / embroidery of Rajasthan) and mirror work, while colorful tassels hang around the sleeves. A *dupatta* draped along the head hangs down in a casual and graceful way. The short-sleeved *choli* leaves room for more adornment – the rest of the arm is covered with ornaments like bangles or armlets, at least a dozen of them on every arm!



**Gavri dance**





***Bhavai dance being performed by the late Jaishree Rao (file pic)***

The artist steps onto the stage with three giant brass vessels. She picks up items from the floor with her mouth, while skillfully balancing the vessels on her head she dances on the edge of a metallic food plate and over the sharp cut pieces of glass. She goes on adding the vessels one by one till they become 10 in number.

On festive occasions, other dances like the Peacock dance, Vishnu Chakr, Dang and Kalbelia are also performed by the regular artists of Dharohar as well as guest artists.

## **The Dharohar family**

Deepak and Kirti have dedicated their life to crafting the show and making every single individual a flawless performer at Dharohar. Here, the emphasis is on the overall development of the individual. The institution has trained and propelled the artists to a brighter future in their life's journey.

Himani Joshi and Mohita Joshi – during their long association with Dharohar were trained as anchors. Now they are

renowned anchors presenting many programmes for the Government of India. Shubhi Sharma (anchor at Dharohar from March 2009 - May 2013 is now Bank Manager at ICICI, Udaipur), Kavya (renowned RJ at 94.3 MY FM Udaipur), Yojana Pandya, Chinmay Dixit, Yashu Dixit, Khushi, Sangeeta, Vimmy Rajpurohit and Nischay Soni are others members of the team who were trained at Dharohar and made it popular with their passion and hard work.

Ritu Sharma is a prominent anchor who joined Dharohar in 2009 and trained by Kirti is all praise for the platform which has shaped her career: "I joined Dharohar when I was studying in Class X. I was groomed by Kirti Madam. Dharohar is a one-hour live show which fills our lives with happiness every day. The team members feel a sense of pride in presenting and promoting the rich art and culture of our country through this show. We are a closely knit family and share our joys and sorrows. Be it a festival, or the anniversary of Dharohar or any other occasion, we celebrate every moment at Dharohar together", she says.





*Bagore Ki Haveli Museum*

## Journey down memory lane...

Dharohar has always enjoyed a pride of place in the hearts of eminent artists and heritage lovers. There is not a single day when Neem Chowk is not packed with tourists – a testimony to Deepak Dixit's vision. Film and television actors, delegation of Indian Army, art lovers, dignitaries and celebrities, et al have witnessed the show over the last two decades and showered their blessings on Dharohar.

Deepak Dixit recalls how Bollywood Director Shekhar Kapoor fell in love with Dharohar and took one of their senior most artist, 73-year-old Jaishree Rao to perform at Jag Mandir, The Lake Palace Hotel. Puppets made by Dharohar were used in the Salman Khan-Sonam Kapoor starrer *Prem Ratan Dhan Paayo* (2015). Dharohar's artists have presented shows on foreign soil and won accolades in places as far as Scotland (2005), Kazakhstan (2016), Brazil, France, Australia, Paris and United States of America as well.



*TV actor Maninder Singh with Dharohar family (file pic)  
(pic courtesy-Dharohar)*





*Kirti Dixit, wife of Deepak Dixit, who curates Dharohar show*



*Anchors Himani Joshi and Khushi*

## A rough road ahead for Dharohar

“It has been an eventful journey of 22 years” says Deepak with a sense of nostalgia. “Since we started in October 2000, we have performed a full show even for a single tourist. There were instances when tourists after watching our show came to us with tears of joy, feeling proud of our culture. Thus far we have hosted more than 7500 shows and still counting. We are looking forward to providing more platforms to our artists, so that more and more people get to witness our traditional folk dances”.

Dharohar has had its share of ups and downs in its eventful journey. Their famous puppeteer Veni Lal Bhat died in June 2020, leaving a big vacuum. Veni Lal was a master puppeteer who had perfect control on traditional marionettes (string puppets). Every puppet - whether it was the dancer (*Anarkali*), snake charmer, *Sukli Julahi* or *Bengal Ka Jadoogar* - would come alive in his hands and his puppetry show was a major attraction of Dharohar. Now the institution is grooming and supporting his young son Vrijesh Bhat and helping him hone his skills to replace his father.



*Deepak Dixit founder of Dharohar*

*(all pix on this page courtesy Dharohar)*



**Gangaur Ghat**

Jaishree Rao was Dharohar's star performer. She had learnt dance from Padmashri Devi Lal Samar (Founder-director of a folk-theatre museum Bharatiya Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur) and was an exponent of Bhavai. After spending almost two decades with Dharohar, she had quit to spend some peaceful time in her hometown in Tamil Nadu. It was a sad moment for Dharohar, when they received the news of her passing away 10-months ago.

The corona pandemic has badly hit tourism in Udaipur, and Dharohar as well. The show remained closed for 10 months from March 2020 to January 2021. It was re-launched in January 2021, again closed in mid-March 2021 and reopened in the last week of October 2021. Since then the show is running with limited accommodation and a lukewarm response from the tourists.

Says Deepak: "The only source of income for Dharohar is the revenue generated from the sale of tickets. Whatever marginal savings we had made over the years, were exhausted during the lockdown and we are facing a serious fund crunch.

Today, Dharohar's future hangs in the balance. The two big questions staring at us are: Where do we go from here in these times of crisis? And... how to maintain the pool of artists who have remained loyal to us for over two decades? We are hoping to see good times again and looking for maximum occupancy for every show to sustain Dharohar". As Dharohar completes 22 years on 28 October this year, Deepak derives inspiration from the popular saying: "The show must go on."



**Md. Masarrath Ali Khan**

**The writer is a freelance travel writer.**

## Our Last Six Issues

**Call: 022-23534400 / E-mail: [oiopfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:oiopfoundation@gmail.com) / Web: [www.oneindiaonepeople.com](http://www.oneindiaonepeople.com)**

**September 2022**



**August 2022**



**July 2022**



**June 2022**



**May 2022**



**April 2022**





## *“India needs more practicing CAs”*

Pune based **Nilesh U. Deshmukh** is a partner in a C.A firm, singer, cricketer and a voracious reader. In a free-wheeling interview with **A. Radhakrishnan**, he tells why he loves to plan the financials for clients and how important it is for this profession to grow.

### What made you choose C.A as a career?

Economics, Book keeping and Accounts were my favourite subjects in college. I scored well in accounts in my 12th class, and decided to follow my uncle, a successful C.A. professional.

I love to plan the financials. I update myself regularly with laws relating to finance and advise clients on their tax matters. As one who detests routine and monotonous work, I find C.A practice a challenge and continuous learning.

### What is your area of specialisation and what are your strengths?

For a decade, I handled Income Tax and Audit. However, from 2017 onwards, I switched to GST and Statutory Audits as a partner in my proprietary firm. I update myself learning new topics, experimenting with new concepts and implementing it for my clients.

### Has C.A profession come of age in India?

India is an emerging economy and good chartered accountants are in demand. Unfortunately, many don't enter into practice. The previous generation is ageing and the new generation is interested in making quick money. The gestation period for setting up a good practice is very long and the younger generation is impatient. At present C.As earn a tidy amount at an early age but their job is challenging. People see C.As as service providers. Playing the roles of a professional as well as services provider to the satisfaction of the client is getting difficult. Government compliances too are increasing which demands not only fair and reasonable information, but correct data. It can be extremely stressful at times.

### What are the common misconceptions about your profession?

A major misconception is C.As fudge figures and help people to evade taxes. C.As can only suggest remedies beneficial to the taxpayer within the framework of law.



Nilesh Deshmukh

### What qualities should an ideal C.A possess?

Chartered Accountants are basically financial doctors and responsible professionals. They constantly need to upgrade, de-learn and re-learn on a regular basis.

However, they need to have a practical approach towards the changing business scenario and meeting the expectations of the clients as well as the government. They should diversify by collaborations. They should not be mere compliance partners to the clients, but focus more on business requirements and forecasting. They should adopt new technologies, irrespective of their age and financial capacity.

Normally mid-sized and small sized firms lack in maintaining full proof documentation of audits, advices, and mail communication trails. The C.As opinion here is very important. I feel every professional should have a professional indemnity insurance cover, though most C.As are not serious about this.

### How do you ensure giving accurate financial advice to clients?

Actually, there is no thumb rule for any financial advice. It always depends upon some variables like, age, financial requirements, risk bearing capacity, change in laws and the needs of business.

The compliances under Companies Act, Income Tax Act, FEMA, GST Act or various other laws need to be closely monitored and corrected wherever necessary. Just as for watering a tree one has to know the type planted, C.As too should understand the requirement of a client, his/her business needs, the geographical and political scenario etc. and advice accordingly.

### What are the common mistakes in accounting? How does one identify fraudulent entries?

Normally in India, business accounting is income tax-centric. However, accounting should not be seen as an activity done for any government body, but for an individual to know his/her net



**After winning the Nashik Cricket Tournament Trophy**

worth. Financial health planning and assessment are equally important for financial growth of the client.

It is commonly believed that accounting is done for compliance only. As auditors, we normally focus on the substance of the transaction. However, the propriety aspect and intention of the transactions should be found out at the time of audit, which can reveal discrepancies or inaccuracies, if any.

The bottom line is a C.A should help his client in legal tax planning and not tax evasion.

**What is the biggest challenge Accounting is facing these days?**

As I mentioned earlier, very few chartered accountants enter into practice. Secondly, a sizeable capital investment is required for resources and infrastructure for a C.A to start on his own. Further, it is difficult for the freshly minted C.As to compete with established firms.

So they work with small clients, with inexperienced staff, which hampers the overall quality of work.

**What accounting ethics should a C.A practice?**

A C.A. should work objectively without getting involved emotionally in a client's business. If there are loopholes that benefit the client and cannot be legally challenged, then he should be given the benefit of doubt within the purview of law. But C.As should avoid any activity or decisions which are unethical. This profession is a noble profession and C.As should strive to keep its dignity intact and act with utmost responsibility.

**What's the worth of a Chartered Accountant for a Business?**

As the financial doctor of the business, I feel, the C.A should be involved in every business decision-making of his client and guide him/her throughout. The time that the CA invests in giving



**Nilesh at a blood donation camp**

consultancy over phone or across the table should be compensated suitably.

**What are your hobbies and interests?**

I am deeply interested in music. Apart from being the first C.A from my Tehsil, I have completed four *Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Music Examinations* i.e. *Madhyama* and also won prizes in singing competitions.

I also love cricket and have received the Best Batsman award in tournaments conducted by the Pune Branch of our CA Institute. I





*Nilesh with daughter Pauravee participating in a marathon*

love to read books on various topics like mythology, autobiographies, novels and ideological books. I am also on the Advisory Board of a Charitable Institute, working in the field of environment--- managing e-waste, green consultancy and composting.

**What advice would you give someone wanting to break into this career?**

With the Indian economy on an upswing there are many new opportunities for students who can take guidance from learned faculties and people in our profession. They can study international taxation, various share market products, foreign collaborations, etc.

A student should not merely focus on passing C.A exam which itself is tough. They should avoid pursuing dummy articleships. Instead, they should train under good, established C.As for a flourishing career.



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



Most recently, the acclaimed sand artist created a spectacular sand sculpture of Lord Ganesha on Puri beach, on the auspicious occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi. The festival holds tremendous religious and historical significance in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The sand art created by Pattnaik was made by using 3,425 sand laddoos and flowers on the popular beach in Odisha.

However, Ganeshotsav is now celebrated in several other parts of India and has garnered national attention in the recent years. One of the most resplendent and grand festivals celebrated in India, Ganeshotsav has a link to history and India's independence movement.

Freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak who is also known as 'The Father of Indian Unrest', as described by the British, was the man behind turning a private, household Ganesh Chaturthi celebration to a huge public event. Ganeshotsav is more than a festival of revelry. It holds great significance in Indian history and has deep roots in the country's tradition and heritage.

Owing to Lokmanya Tilak's efforts, Ganeshotsav at that became a big mass movement of independence, especially in Maharashtra. The British were terrified of these public celebrations during Ganeshotsav. Later, the Rowlatt Committee report also raised concerns about the festival stating that in Ganeshotsav youth protested against the British on the streets.

## History in sand

Sand artist Pattnaik has, for years, used his art to commemorate landmark events of Indian history. For example, when Draupadi Murmu scripted history by becoming the first tribal President of India, Pattnaik created a magnificent sand art on Puri beach to commemorate her and her achievement. Such efforts are a great way of educating masses and spreading awareness.

Earlier this year, Sudarshan paid a rich tribute to former Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe by creating a huge sand portrait of the late leader at Puri beach. He wrote a heartfelt note remembering Abe as a great friend of India.

Last year, the famous sand artist created an eight foot by 13-foot sculpture with seven tonnes of sand on World Environment Day to give a message to the people that people can lead a healthy life in a safe environment. At the time, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) praised the sand art made by Sudarsan Pattnaik on Odisha's Puri beach to celebrate World Environment Day.

Sudarsan Pattnaik was born in a poor family in Marchikote Lane in Odisha's Puri district in 1977. In February 2017, he broke the Guinness world record for making the world's largest sand castle located on Puri Beach, Odisha. He became the first Indian to win the Italian Sand Art Award 2019 at the International Scorrano Sand Nativity event held in Lecce, Italy. He was awarded the Fourth Highest Civilian Award, the Padma Shri by Government of India in 2014 for his contribution in sand arts.

## Etching a mark in time

Like Sudarshan, several other artists in India have been using different mediums to depict events from history and to commemorate local heroes and leaders. Among the more recent events in history, it's India's freedom struggle that people can relate to today. The fight for independence that lasted for almost a century continues to be demonstrated by artists across India.



**A painting at Ajanta Cave**

This year holds significance being the 75th year of independence and artists have not left any opportunity to make the most of it. The story of India's freedom struggle and of the unsung freedom fighters and revolutionaries has been told time and again through art.

This year, as part of the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, the 'hidden' and 'less familiar' aspects of India's freedom movement, in addition to the well-documented and well-known events shall be on display at an exhibition at The Indian Museum in Kolkata.

The 'ground-breaking' initiative is not just intended to be a revision of history but a showcase of how various artists conceive and visualise the nation and its Independence. India's journey from being a British colony to a global power is not ordinary and the curators intend to capture that through art.

The exhibition 'March to Freedom' will feature '160 artworks and historical artefacts' including unknown works by Indian artists, art work by renowned modern artists, unseen photographs, cinema posters, collectible figures, etc.

The artwork in 'March to Freedom' is intended to present independent India's history across eight themes and not in chronological order, as is the case mostly. The themes include Battles for Freedom, The Traffic for Trade, See India, Reclaiming the Past, Exhibit India, From Colonial to National, Shaping the National and Independence.

In India, the practice of painting in public spaces is an old one. Culturally rich country like India has been a fertile bed for many artists and creators who have reciprocated by using art to draw untold stories and legends from history.

It's a common practice to relive important events in history through art, folklore, etc. Even today, as part of tradition, many tribal community members paint the walls of their homes. Warli artwork is one such form which can be seen across Adivasi homes in Maharashtra's tribal belt.

The murals in the Buddhist caves in Ajanta in Maharashtra are evidence of how art was used to depict instances and events from history. The caves were accidentally discovered in 1819 and date back to the second century BC. Ajanta murals, like many other found across India, have been inspiring artists for centuries. These works are an integral part of Indian history and culture.

**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.**





**WORLD CLASS  
QUALITY MEDICINES  
AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

**BLUE CROSS LABORATORIES PVT LTD.**

PENINSULA CHAMBERS, LOWER PAREL, MUMBAI - 400 013,  
INDIA.

## Recreating the Ismat Chughtai mystique

*Padatik, a theatre group in tandem with the Fatehpuria Theatre explored and evocatively brought out the celebrated feminist writer's six short stories through 'Kaagaz Ke Gubbare'. Shoma A. Chatterji says the experience went beyond the accepted realms of literature and theatre.*



**A scene from the play 'Kaagaz ke Gubbare'**

Ismat Chughtai -- for those who have read her works, directly or through word-of-mouth or stories -- elicits respect as a radical and talented writer of Urdu fiction. Though she would never have liked to be bracketed as a "woman" writer, she really was one. Her writings have a universal flavour and her women are timeless.

Chughtai wrote in her memoir "flowers can be made to bloom among rocks. The only condition is that one has to water the plant with one's heart's blood." She wanted to show to her readers a world clothed in hypocrisy but which was navigable by force of will -- not the world she aspired to belong to.

In an innovative venture, Padatik, a theatre group along with Fatehpuria Theatre, that mostly stage plays in Hindi, Urdu and English, recently presented an unusual performance called *Kaagaz ke Gubbare* directed by Anubha Fatehpuria based on six short stories by Ismat Chughtai.

It turned out to transcend the confines of literature and also theatre to evolve into a mesmerising performance. The actors changed roles and the stories seamlessly flowed one into the

other. If you have read Chughtai in translation, you can recognise the stories through the extremely inspired performances by veteran actors from Kolkata's Hindi-English theatre with their tongue-in-cheek, acidic and caustic lines dotted with a *thumri* here and a *qawwali* there with great mastery and finesse that can find place on an international stage.

If you have not read Chughtai, this is a brilliant introduction to this strong feminist writer who, though born in 1915, reads as if she had written the stories yesterday! Fatehpuria who has directed the performance, has taken on the role of Chughtai herself, writing and reading out what she has written, other actors also step into the role of the author as and when need be, reading out from what they have written.

"Ismat Chughtai used her pen as a weapon to question male authority and hierarchical power structure in patriarchy. Most of her works deal with themes directly related to women and their status and role in Indian society. She portrays the struggle of women against oppressive social institutions of her time and her deep understanding and perception of the female psyche are clearly reflected in her writings", writes Megha





**Another scene from 'Kaagaz ke Gubbare'**

Katoria in *Women and Sexuality – Gender-Class Interface in Selected Short Stories of Ismat Chughtai* (The Criterion: An International Journal in English, Vol.II, Issue IV, December 2011).

The stories picked from the writer's wonderful oeuvre are – *Kunwari*, *Ek Shauhar Ke Khatir*, *Chhui Mui*, *Gharwali*, *Pesha* and *Ghoonghat*. Each one presents a distinct pointer to women raising their voice, either through speech, or through behaviour, or through their seductive body language, in articulation of their sexual desire in deprivation (*Ghoonghat*), or, a prostitute who functions at two levels – a virtuous woman by day and a sex worker by night (*Pesha*). Lajjo, the protagonist of *Gharwali* who is a woman of precise pleasures.

*Pesha* is narrated from the perspective of a woman who views courtesans with inexplicable hatred and disdain. Priding herself as belonging to the noble profession of teaching, she professes and practices conventional morality and chastity before marriage. But she is hurled into an identity crisis when a group of *tawaifs* move into the neighbourhood and try to forge a friendship with her. The story posits the sharp binaries of 'ideal' femininity and corrupted womanhood as well as of 'good' professions like teaching and "evil ones" like prostitution. The performances are enriched by the electrically charged acting and singing and dancing across the very narrow proscenium space used optimally by the actors.

Chughtai, through her writing, strongly suggested that the sex worker should not give up her profession for the sake of 'respectability'. She considered sex work to be a legitimate profession – a rather radical and modern element of feminist debates – and stressed more on gaining financial independence and empowerment over conformity to social and moral prescriptions. This is brought across beautifully in *Pesha* and in *Gharwali*.

The title of the performance is inspired from the title of Chughtai's autobiography, *Kaagazi Hai Parirahan* meaning – *Garments are of Paper* which Fatehpuria successfully translates through the bodies of the female characters draped in milk-white, translucent and starched saris with the plaits just so, without restricting the movement of the actors in any way and yet evolving into an integral part of the play.

Fatehpuria explained the costume design lucidly.



**Ismat Chughtai**

"Though an attire serves the purpose of covering and protecting at the same time, the paper balloons or the sky lanterns seemed to me to have the same vulnerability because the material being paper, once lit, could rise and fly high - this connected to women in a Sufi way of finding the Self (herself) and her fire within, coming into her own, realising her full potential hence the name Kaagaz ke Gubbare - and therefore also the white Kota sarees which to me gives a papery feeling ; the blouses' colours are borrowed from the flame that is lit in the paper lanterns which causes them to come alive and fly high" she explained.

She added that in the series she has conceived titled 'Writers on Stage' she chose Ismat because she is still relevant, is not so much read by many, she has very strong things to say about women and also to women (not only to men and society). "I found it strong that she is asking women to take charge of their lives and stop complaining about what society has done to them besides the fact that her writing is fabulous, humouristic and packs in a punch," she adds.

She has chosen her cast and crew with great care and the team generated a magical impact on the mesmerised audience, spilling over with people seated on the floor of the small Padatik Theatre watching in spell-binding silence.

Among them are - Ashok Singh, Kalpana Jha, Palash Chaturvedi, working with Padatik for some time. Adding to their power are Karuna Thakur (of Rangakarmee) and Titas Dutta. Sukrit Sen (the musician) was introduced by Palash. "I did not have the songs in mind in the beginning - I only felt Ismat has musicality in her writings, which motivated me to have these songs and also the emotions and humour I wanted to explore through percussion and not just through performance - hence Sukrit was there to try these out," she sums up.



**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.**

## “Attend to basic conservation tasks”

*Without mincing words, **Bharat Dogra** lists all the measures that need to be taken for better conservation of forests and environment and suggests that the experience of local communities should be harnessed in the process.*



***Planting of more broad leaf species like the Oak in the Himalyan forest areas and villages will contribute to restore mixed species and also improve soil and water conservation significantly***

**P**erhaps the most important conservation task today is to protect whatever remains of our natural forests and resources. Where forests have been degraded badly, conducive conditions for regeneration need to be created so that forests can be regenerated very similarly to natural forests. In forests where water sources are depleting due to complex factors, water and moisture conservation work should be taken up to maintain the green cover and ensure that wildlife flourishes.

Whether inside or outside forests, tree cutting should be minimised. In projects involving unavoidable deforestation, reforestation work should be given as much importance as the project itself, with proper budget, responsibility, accountability and details worked out well in advance.

Where indigenous forest species mix has been badly tinkered with, attempts should be made to restore. In many Himalayan Forest areas and villages, planting of more broad leaf species like the Oak will contribute to restore the mixed species as well as to improve soil and water conservation significantly.

Strong steps should be taken to discourage poaching and trafficking/smuggling of animals/birds /insects and body parts.

Beyond forest areas, villages should follow eco-friendly agricultural practices which avoid poisonous agro-chemicals, particularly pesticides. Rural as well as urban areas should avoid use of such hazardous chemicals while giving priority to increasing green cover bases on mixed local tree species, taking special care to protect natural pollinators.

Similarly, conservation of grasslands, water bodies, wetlands, floodplains and other important habitats will also be very helpful. Significant reduction of water pollution is of course important, as also taking care to ensure that construction projects on rivers and water bodies do not endanger aquatic life.

Local people including adivasis, fisherfolk, and other villagers living in or near forests, should be involved to obtain best results based on their traditional knowledge. In the process,





***Adivasis, fisherfolk, and other villagers living in or near forests should be involved in conservation efforts for best results ( Pic courtesy : Sarayu Kamat, VP Climate Change Initiatives, Raah Foundation)***

their livelihoods should be enhanced without displacement. If some of their livelihoods pose threats to environment, they can be replaced by those based on conservation efforts. The overall result should be to provide them sustainable livelihoods. To systematically encourage and implement this at the national level, a proper budget allocation should be made.

Conservation efforts in India need to be well thought out. Lakhs have been either displaced or victimised. What is described as success in official documents has often brought distress to people. Imbalances in species due to faulty conservation practices have led to frequent and extensive harm of cultivated fields.

Also, elite tourism-centric approach and expensive projects with suspect benefits have led to neglect of the most basic conservation tasks. Some time back when a young tiger was re-located from Pench to Panna, the animal started moving homeward after a few days. As reported in the Indian Express (September 19, 2022), "With four elephants and 70 teams of government officials and volunteers behind him, the tiger walked 440 km. in 30 days toward Pench through Chattarpur, Sagar and Damoh districts, before it was finally intercepted and brought back to Panna."

Disconcerting that such an expensive exercise was undertaken when big and small animals are known to have a strong sense of direction and are prone to walking back home to their 'territory'. The chances of absurdities, mistakes and projects far removed from reality can be minimised considerably if local communities are involved in decision-making. Their traditional knowledge and wisdom should be sought in conservation efforts.

**The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Planet in Peril, Man over Machine and A Day in 2071.**

## PINGALI VENKAYYA (1876-1963)

### National Flag designer who died unsung

**O**n India's 75th year of Independence, who do we thank? It is Pingali Venkayya (2 August 1876 – 4 July 1963), who designed the Swaraj Flag, later modified into the Tricolour Flag of India. He painted India with the vibrant colours of saffron, white and green on the canvas of courage, sacrifice, patriotism, and renunciation.

Multi-faceted Pingali was a lecturer, author, geologist, educationalist, agriculturist, polyglot, teacher, linguist, freedom fighter, staunch Gandhian and devoted Congress party member.

Born into a Telugu Brahmin family in Bhatlapenumarru, now in AP after high school in Madras, he graduated from the University of Cambridge, England. A polymath, his specific interests included geology, education, agriculture and languages. He earned a diploma in Geology from the Madras Presidency College, authored a book titled Thalli Raayi on geology, was a lecturer at the Andhra National College, Machilipatnam, researched on mica in Nellore, and established an institute in Machilipatnam.

Venkayya served as a soldier aged 19 in the British Army in South Africa (1899 -1902) during the Second Anglo Boer war. The British soldiers saluting their Union Jack made him realise that his country had no such symbol to identify with. It inspired him to design the national flag for India. He met Mahatma Gandhi in Africa and the association lasted more than 50 years. His life and contribution though are scarcely documented.

At the 1906 AICC session in then Calcutta, he was inspired to design a flag as he opposed the idea of hoisting the British flag at Congress meetings. In 1916, Venkayya published a book titled 'Bharatha Desaniki Oka Jatiya Patakam' (A National Flag for India) with 30 potential designs for our own National Flag and continued his detailed research.

In 1921, at the AICC session in Bezwada (now Vijayawada), Venkayya met Gandhiji and showed him his publication. Gandhi asked him to design a fresh flag and was presented with a rudimentary design of the first flag on a khadi bunting, within three hours.

Coloured red and green, the red representing Hindus

and green representing Muslims, the flag was called the Swaraj flag. On Gandhi's suggestion, Venkayya added a white band in the middle, representing all the other denominations and religions. It was approved and used informally at all Congress meetings.

In 1931 concerns arose about religious aspects and a Flag Committee was set up with a new idea, Purna Swaraj. The red was replaced with saffron. The order changed, with saffron on top followed by white and then green colours represented qualities and not communities; the saffron for courage and sacrifice, white for truth and peace, and green for faith and strength. The white band symbolised peace and harmony between the communities. The chakra placed on the white band in the middle represented the progress and self-reliance of the nation and for the welfare of the masses.

The National Flag adopted by the Constituent Assembly of India on July 22, 1947 became the symbol of the independence movement. On 15 August 1947, the Tricolour became the national flag with minor changes like a 24-spoked navy-blue Ashoka Chakra replacing the spinning wheel in the centre. While the flag went through many changes, its basic structure is attributed to Venkayya.

Venkayya earned many nicknames in one lifetime. Jhanda Venkayya for his part in designing the flag. A passionate gemologist, he was called Diamond Venkayya. A polyglot who was proficient in many Indian languages including Japanese and Urdu, he was referred to as Japan Venkayya.

Pingali Venkayya died in Vijayawada aged 86, penniless, forgotten by society and the Congress party. His last wish was to be covered in the Tricolour national flag that he had designed.



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



## HAVILDAR BACHITTAR SINGH, ASHOK CHAKRA (1917-1948)

### Hero of Hyderabad annexation

**H**avildar (Hav.) Bachittar Singh was born on 10 January 1917 in Lopo village of Punjab as the only child of Sardar Rur Singh. He was educated only up to 8th class but he excelled in swimming and wrestling. Right from his young age he was a nationalist and always wanted to join the army.

He joined the army and was enrolled in the Sikh Regiment on 10 January 1937. After completing basic military training, he served his battalion in Africa and Greece. He participated in the Second World War also and saw combat in South Africa. It was after India's Independence in 1947 that Hav. Bachittar showed skills as a soldier. The princely states governed their realms on their own but they were still subject to the Subsidiary Alliance system that gave the British control over their external affairs.

With the Indian Independence Act 1947, the policy of subsidiary alliances was abandoned and the princely states were given the option to accede to India or to Pakistan. By 1948 most of the princely states located in India had acceded to India but the state of Hyderabad had chosen to join neither Pakistan nor India.

Hyderabad was ruled by the Nizam, Mir Sir Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII. He presided over a largely Hindu population hoping to maintain his independence with an irregular army, known as the Razakars. The Telangana uprising and militant Razakars raised the spectre of instability in the region. Therefore, the Indian Government decided to undertake a military operation to annex Hyderabad.

Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru sought to defeat Hyderabad's secessionist ventures through diplomatic means. He was apprehensive that military action in Hyderabad may cause large scale riots in India. The Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel sought military means to solve the Hyderabad issue.

With Muslim supremacy in mind, the Razakars began to eliminate all opposition including communist and Congress members, Telangana rebels and other Muslim moderates who disagreed with his extremist views. The Nizam also made

unsuccessful attempts to seek intervention of the United Nations.

A skirmish between the Indian army and the Hyderabad forces at Kodad prompted Vallabh Bhai Patel to go forward with armed action. Operation 'Polo' was launched. The date for the attack was fixed as 13 September, even though General Sir Roy Bucher, the Indian chief of staff, had objected on grounds that Hyderabad would be an additional front for the Indian army after Kashmir.

On 13 September 1948, 2 Sikh Platoon was given the most important task in Naldurg area. Havildar Bachittar Singh was leading the platoon. At around 4 am, the B Company of the platoon set up blockades on the road. When two vehicles were seen approaching his position Hav. Bachittar Singh ordered his soldiers to fire on the approaching vehicles. There was a heavy exchange of fire but Hav. Bachittar Singh in a show of bravery captured both the vehicles and their escorts.

On the same day, enemy soldiers took secure positions and attacked his platoon. Hav. Bachittar Singh led the counter attack on the enemy forces. When he was about 30 yards away from the target, he got hit by a LMG burst in his thigh and fell. Despite being critically injured, Hav. Bachittar Singh, crawled forward and threw two grenades on the LMG post, and silenced it. He refused to leave the battle field and kept on motivating his men.

His courage inspired his platoon achieve the objective, but Hav. Bachittar Singh was martyred. He was given nation's first highest gallantry award during peace time, 'Ashok Chakra' for his bravery, indomitable spirit and supreme sacrifice.

At 5 pm on 17 September 1948, the Nizam announced a ceasefire, thus ending the armed action. The Hyderabad army led by Major General El Edroos, surrendered. Subsequently, the Nizam signed an instrument of accession, joining India.

**Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)**

## PRADEEP BHIDE (1953-2022)

### Pioneer who left his mark

**H**is crisp signature line: Namaskar! Me Pradeep Bhide. Aajchya thalak batmya (Today's headlines) on Mumbai Doordarshan Kendra in his easy familiar style resonated with generations of viewers.

5'8" Pradeep Bhide was a well-known news presenter on Marathi television. The exemplary voice artiste pioneered the art of reading bulletins and hosting shows. He shaped the Kendra's newscast since its formative years, having joined in 1974 two years after the channel's inception on 2 October 1972, well before its name was changed to DD Sahyadri and served it for more than 40 years.

A Science graduate, he did Journalism from the Ranade Institute of Communications and was always attracted to radio and television. Pradeep joined the Kendra as a trainee production assistant, and later selected as News Correspondent. Initially with the news translation department with the likes of illustrious colleagues like actress Smita Patil and Bhakti Barve, he began reporting at the age of 21.

A golden opportunity dawned when the then director of the Kendra, Shastri tasked him with presenting news, due to his impressive trademark voice and screen presence. DD gained popularity in the late 80s and 90s with television sets entering middle-class households and the state-run news channel was the only audio-visual format available for viewers.

His pleasant personality, dignified demeanour, baritone voice and clear pronunciation made him a hit. He was adept in written and spoken languages.

He belonged to the now eclipsed era of professional news anchors, with matter-of-fact, impartial intonation throughout the bulletin, voice dropping a little when bad news was conveyed, rising to smile briefly when good tidings came. He narrated news in an engaging style, provided analysis, anchored other special shows occasionally even covered outside assignments.

Pradeep never had a formal retirement. On 19 January 2017, when he arrived to read his last bulletin as a sign off,

since his health was deteriorating, his humble, friendly manner awestruck his juniors, despite his celebrity status.

Born to teacher parents who taught Sanskrit, Marathi, and Hindi, and were frequently transferred, Pradeep was educated in five to six village schools in Maharashtra.

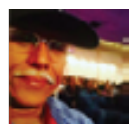
Language traditions were encouraged at home from childhood. He used to study from textbooks and other non-academic literature, enabling him to develop his sense of sound and attain a clean and clear pronunciation. The fifteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, called Vishnu Sahasranama, was recited aloud every day, which according to him, helped a lot.

Pradeep started with Marathi theatre first. He also set up his own media company, Pradeep Bhide Communications. He voiced over 5,000 ad films, Films Division documentaries, short films, infomercials and promos and hosted up to 2000 programmes with luminaries. He also had brief stints with the media departments of MNCs.

He hosted the Pune Festival for seven-eight consecutive years from the first year and received its Best Announcer Award. Pradeep officiated at the swearing-in ceremony of the first ever Shiv Sena-BJP alliance at Shivaji Park in 1995; the swearing in of Devendra Fadnavis as the Chief Minister in 2014, some public functions of the President and the Prime Minister. He believed that to create and develop a good news reporter, a news reporter quality search competition should be held.

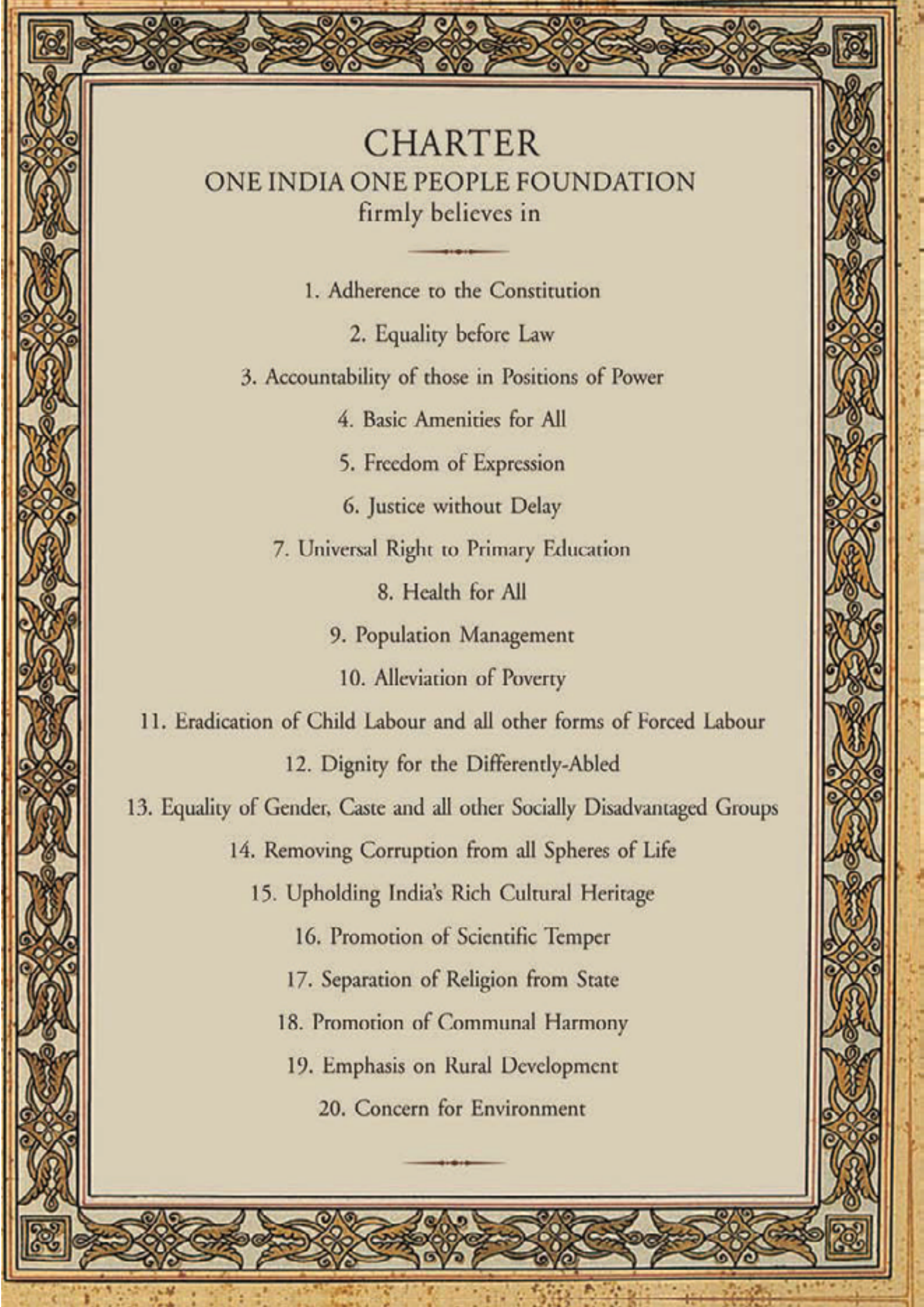
Pradeep died at 68 after a prolonged battle with brain cancer. His condition deteriorated to a stage where he could not recognize people anymore. He will always be remembered as one of the most dignified news personalities of Doordarshan, an inspiration to many aspiring journalists. It is the end of an era.

Bhide is survived by his wife, son, daughter and grandchildren.



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





# CHARTER

## ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

---

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



# WHO AM I?



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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