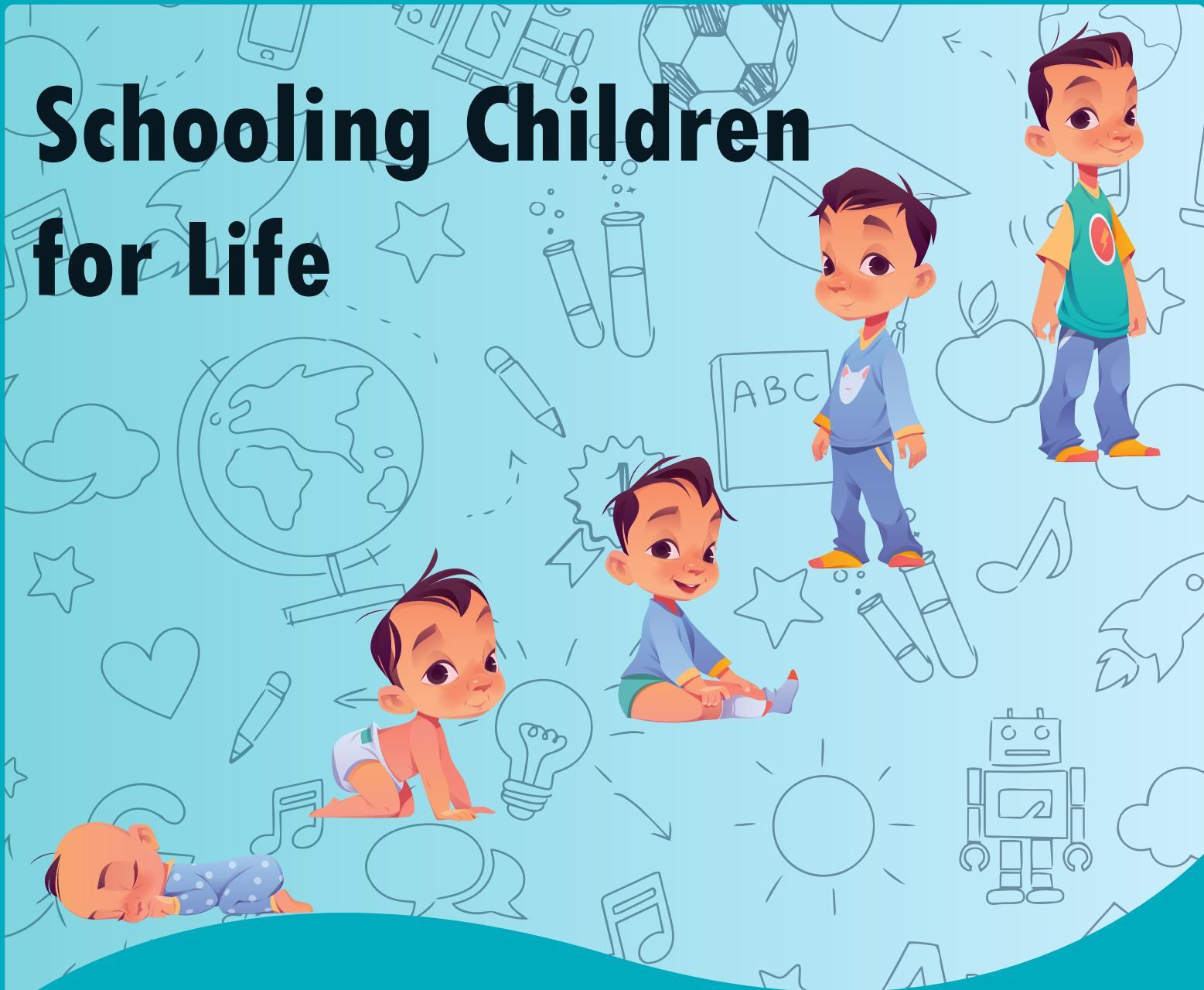


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ENSURING CHILD SAFETY AT ALL TIMES

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DANGS

PRISTINE, WILD, COLOURFUL

Face to Face

NIDHI SINGH



CONTENTS

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THEME: CHILDREN



Morparia's Page 02

Today's kids, tomorrow's leaders 04
Monica Singh

Ensuring child safety at all times 06
Tulip Sinha



Responsible parenting called for 08
Mamta Gupta

Healthy upbringing, early learning 10
Karthika Reddy



Playing and holistic development 12
Nandini Rao

Ensuring a disease-free childhood 14
Shubhangi Sharma



A pediatrician's prescription for good parenting 16
Dr. R. K. Anand



Know India Better 17

DANGS
Pristine, Wild, Colourful
Nandini Rao



Face to Face 25

Nidhi Singh
A. Radhakrishnan



Features

Composing odes in pottery 28
Manjira Majumdar

The many avatars of Noti Binodini 31
Shoma A. Chatterji



Diverse, yet united by Yoga 33
Tuhina Banerjee

Great Indians 36



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Today's kids, tomorrow's leaders

*Explaining how education plays a crucial role in shaping the lives of children in India, **Monica Singh** says access to education provides children with opportunities for personal and intellectual growth, which can improve their future prospects. A natural corollary is education also helps in increasing awareness about issues like health, hygiene, and social issues, leading to more informed and social-responsible citizens.*



Playing together helps the child learn social skills and team work such as taking turns, sharing and cooperation

Education is an essential aspect of a child's development and growth. In India, education for children has been a priority since the country's Independence. The government of India has made significant strides in ensuring that every child has access to education, irrespective of their socio-economic background.

The Indian education system comprises of pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education, and higher education. Pre-primary education, also known as kindergarten or nursery education, is optional, while primary education is compulsory for all children.

The government has made primary education free for all children, and it provides a mid-day meal scheme to ensure that children receive at least one nutritious meal per day. Secondary education in India is optional, but it is essential for further studies or job opportunities.

Role of education

The government has taken several steps to address existing challenges, including the Right to Education Act, which guarantees free and compulsory education for children aged six to fourteen years. The government has also launched several

initiatives, including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, to improve access to education and increase the quality of education in the country.

Education plays a significant role in shaping the lives of children in India. Access to education provides children with opportunities for personal and intellectual growth, which can improve their future prospects.

Education in India has also helped to increase awareness about issues like health, hygiene, and social issues, leading to more informed and socially responsible citizens.

Education is a critical aspect of a child's development and growth. Despite the challenges faced by the education system in India, the government's efforts to improve access and quality have had a positive impact on the lives of children in the country.

The schools

Safety standards in schools in India include measures to ensure the physical safety of children, prevent accidents, and protect them from abuse and exploitation. Schools must adhere to building safety codes and standards, including fire safety and earthquake safety measures.

The schools must have appropriate safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, and emergency exits. They must ensure the safety of students while transporting them to and from school. And, schools must have policies and procedures in place to protect children from abuse, exploitation, and discrimination.

Several laws govern safety in schools in India. These include The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 that mandates that every school in India must adhere to certain safety standards to ensure the well-being of children. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 that provides protection to children from sexual abuse and exploitation. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 which provides for the care and protection of children who are in conflict with the law.

Girl education is essential for the growth of a nation, and it plays an important role in women's empowerment. Educating girls is necessary for balancing society and the nation. In India, under numerous government schemes, several benefits are given for the education of a girl child.

Creative wonders

Creativity is an essential skill that helps children develop emotional, social, and critical thinking skills. Parents and teachers can encourage creativity in children in many ways. Artistic activities like working with clay or painting can help children express their creativity and work wonders with them in triggering imagination.

Too much screen time can limit a child's imagination and creativity. Encouraging them to engage in other activities like reading, playing outside, or imaginative play instead of on a mobile phone or electronic gadget will help them hone their creative side.

Playing pretend is an excellent way for children to use their imagination and be creative. Making children question things is also an effective way to sharpen their skills. Encourage the child to wonder by asking them questions like why the sky is blue or how gravity works.

Children must be given ample opportunities to express their intelligence and concurrently to explore their interests and hobbies that allow them to express their intelligence. Labelling children as either creative or uncreative must be avoided. Every child has the potential for creativity.

Young children must be encouraged to practice being creative by trying new things and exploring different ideas. Children must be given the freedom to explore their interests and pursue their passions independently. Encourage the child's ideas, even if they seem silly or unrealistic.

Creative interactions and engagements go a long way in the child developing problem-solving skills. Board games like Scrabble can promote creative thinking by stretching brains and improving cognitive abilities of children.

Food for a healthy body

For the healthy growth of a child's body, it is important the child is given healthy and nutritious food. Today, the markets are inundated with products that are labelled as food but contain harmful chemicals and additives that are detrimental to human health. Highly processed foods are linked to poorer health outcomes in children, including lower physical fitness, locomotor skills, and cardiovascular fitness.

These foods are also associated with higher risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. Highly processed foods are often high in sugar and low in nutrients, making them less healthy than whole, nutrient-dense foods. Studies have shown that children who consume more ultra processed foods have higher increases in their weight and body mass index (BMI) measures than those who eat fewer of these foods.

Additionally, children who eat a lot of highly processed foods may maintain these eating patterns into adulthood, leading to long-term health risks.

Parents should be aware of the potential health risks associated with highly processed food and strive to provide their children with healthier alternatives such as whole fruits and vegetables.

They must also inculcate good eating habits in children such as eating home-cooked food and healthy fruits and vegetables.

Food for a healthy mind

Reading is important for children as it helps them develop language and listening skills, stimulates their imagination, expands their understanding of the world, and prepares them to understand the written word.

Reading books aloud to children exposes them to new words and ways of using language, which helps in build language skills. By reading to children, parents provide them with a deep understanding of their world and fill their brains with background knowledge.

Reading also has developmental effects on children. It promotes brain development and cognitive skills. New research shows that young children whose parents read five books a day enter kindergarten having heard about 1.4 million more words than kids who were never read to.

Parents should be responsible for making sure that their children gain more knowledge through reading. They should start reading with their children early on so that they will find reading exciting and prepare them to explore the world. It is important for parents to make time for reading aloud with their children at home because teachers also need parental intervention in promoting literacy among students.

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Ensuring child safety at all times

*Dwelling on the safety of children as among prime causes of concern, **Tulip Sinha** says that nuclear families do not have the advantage of traditional support system which puts a question mark on their well being and safety. She suggests that places where a child is not under the direct supervision of a parent, the responsibility his/her safety should pass on to the person or the team handling the child.*



Individuals working at playschools need to take care that the children always stays safe

Safety of the young in today's time is a major cause of concern for families, especially nuclear families. With disappearing traditional support system of grandparents and relatives, the concerns only grow stronger. Modern living has several advantages and disadvantages at the same time. It provides freedom to nuclear families but, at the same time, denies them the security and comfort that comes with an extended or a joint family environment.

Simultaneously, when children start to grow and start stepping out of the safety offered by homes, it is important to ensure their safety at such times. So, taking care of this aspect of a child's life is crucial to protect them from harm and prevent accidents.

In such places where a child is not under the direct supervision of a parent, the responsibility of the safety of the child passes on to the person or the team that is handling the child. Individuals working at playschools need to take care that the child always stays safe.

Safe supervision

Such places need to follow and implement safety standards and procedures. These include adequate supervision. So, there should be enough adults present to supervise children and ensure their safety at all times. The ratio of adults to children will depend on the age of the children, but a general rule of thumb is one adult for every four children.

Another important aspect of ensuring safety of a child in such places is the presence of safe equipment. Play equipment given to children should be regularly checked and maintained to ensure it is in good working order. Any damaged or broken equipment should be immediately removed and repaired or replaced. There is a high chance that a broken piece will be swallowed by a child while playing with it.

Appropriate surfacing is also needed where the ground around play equipment should be soft enough to cushion falls, such as rubber or sand. Hard surfaces like concrete should be

avoided, as they increase the risk of injury. The play area should be fenced off to prevent children from wandering away and to keep them safe from traffic or other hazards outside the play area. Keeping a safe perimeter for children is extremely important for children attending playschools or playgroups.

Rules need to be clear

Clear rules and guidelines are a must in such spaces. These should be established for children and adults too who are using the play area. These should include rules for behaviour, equipment use and steps to follow in emergency situations. A First Aid kit should be readily available in case of accidents or injuries.

Many serious injuries and effects of injuries can be prevented if the first line of treatment of first aid is given in time. In fact, in cases where children are involved, the staff must be adequately trained to handle such situations which are extremely delicate and quickly worsen if not controlled in time.

All adults working with children should undergo background checks to ensure they are safe to be around children. This is a very important step in ensuring safety of a child who is completely dependent on care-takers and support staff at such places. By following these safety standards, playgroups can create a safe and fun environment for children to play and learn in.

Preventing accidents

In case of joint families, there's always some family member or the other who usually looks after the child in the absence of the parent. In rural areas, often neighbours also pitch in with help and a child is never left unsupervised. In cities especially in nuclear families this is absent. So, couple either send the child to playschool or hire a nanny or a caretaker to attend to the child in their absence.

Accidents can happen among the young at home and in school. But there are several steps that can be taken to prevent and manage them. It's important to first understand the kind of accidents and injuries young children are prone to in order to address them properly. In nuclear families, there's a high chance that a nanny will take care of the child at home if both parents are working. So, understanding this is crucial for the safety of the child.

One of the most common accidents a child faces is a fall. Infants are still developing their coordination skills and balance and may be unsteady on their feet. To prevent falls, make sure the floor is clear of any tripping hazards such as toys or loose rugs. Parents and teachers must install gates or barriers to block off the stairs or other dangerous areas where a child might wander off.

Young children are naturally curious and may put small objects in their mouth. One must keep small items out of reach and supervise children during playtime to prevent choking. Also, make sure to cut food into small, easy-to-swallow pieces so as the child is able to chew it properly and eat it.

Another common injury seen in young children and infants is a burn. Infants can easily touch hot surfaces or grab hot objects as they are not aware of the property of an object. To prevent burns, make sure hot items, such as coffee mugs or iron, heating equipment, etc., are kept out of reach of the young. Using protective covers for electrical outlets and securing cords so they can't be pulled down are also recommended for the safety of the child.

Common injuries

Young children and infants may accidentally ingest toxic substances, such as cleaning products or medication. So it is very important to keep toxic substances out of their reach. A child ingesting or spilling a poisonous or a harsh chemical is very common and highly injurious to the child.

So, one must make sure that such chemicals and items are not lying around in the house loosely or within the reach of the child. Also, make sure to have the number for Poison Control agencies and medical emergency in case a mishap happens.

Infants may bump into objects or accidentally cut themselves. Keep sharp objects out of reach and supervise infants during playtime. In the event of an accident, it's important to stay calm and seek medical attention if necessary. Having a first aid kit on hand and knowing basic first aid procedures, such as how to treat cuts and burns always helps.

By taking precautions and being prepared, infants and young children can be kept safe and healthy. It's also important to have clear communication with parents and caregivers about any accidents that do occur and how they are handled.

A child is resilient when it comes to injuries but also fragile and care must be taken at all times to prevent injuries and accidents that may hurt the child or cause a disability or a life-long impairment that will affect the child for the rest of his or her life.

With the decline of joint families, traditional wisdom and knowledge has also declined that was generally useful in bringing up a child safely and securely.

Tulip Sinha is a Law Student interning with The Maverick Project – A DraftCraft International initiative to further reach, accountability and the law in Pre-Primary, Primary, Intermediary and Secondary Education.

Responsible parenting called for

*Defining responsible parenting, **Mamta Gupta** expounds it as one that means not only the physical wellbeing of their children but also for developing them into refined human beings and enriching them with good values. It should encompass all aspects including their emotional and mental wellbeing and healthy development.*



Parents should start reading to their children early

Parents have a significant responsibility towards their infants that they cannot shirk away from. A parent cannot seek any waiver legally when it comes to parenting or taking care of one's child. In today's time, responsible parenting is all the more important because of the challenges that a child and a family face on a daily basis.

Responsible parenting means that parents are responsible for the child's overall healthy development. They are responsible for not only the physical wellbeing of their children but also for developing them into refined human beings and endowing them with all the values of life. Responsible parenting goes far beyond physical wellbeing of a child and encompasses emotional and mental wellbeing and healthy development as well.



Father and little daughter having fun painting together

There are some basic needs that only parents can fulfil when the child is young. Parents must ensure that their infants' basic needs are met, such as providing a safe and clean environment, feeding them appropriately, and ensuring they get enough sleep.

Emotional and physical well-being

There are some basic needs that only parents can fulfil when the child is young. Parents must ensure that their infants' basic needs are met, such as providing a safe and clean environment, feeding them appropriately, and ensuring they get enough sleep.

Parents are responsible for providing a physically and emotionally safe environment for their infants. This includes

taking steps to prevent accidents and protecting them from harm, as well as offering a loving and nurturing environment that promotes healthy emotional development.

Parents must take responsibility for their infants' health and wellness, which includes regular visits to the paediatrician, following recommended immunisation schedules, and addressing any medical concerns or illnesses that arise.

Cognitive development is crucial for a child's overall growth and healthy development. Parents should engage in activities that stimulate their infants' cognitive development, such as reading to them, talking to them, and providing toys and activities that promote learning and exploration.

Social development is another key area that responsible parenting must focus on and it has become very important lately. Parents should support their child's social development by encouraging positive interactions with others and providing opportunities for socialisation, such as playgroups and day-care programmes.

Parents should support their child's educational and developmental needs by providing appropriate learning opportunities, such as enrolling them in early education programmes, music or art classes, and other activities that promote cognitive, social, and emotional development.

It is important to note that parents play a crucial role in the child's development and wellbeing. It is important for parents to prioritise the child's needs and take responsibility for providing a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for him or her to thrive.

Communicating with the young

Like most other relationships, communication is the key in a parent-child relationship as well. An important aspect of responsible parenting is establishing a healthy and sound communication with your child. One may feel that an infant doesn't understand words or language but communication is not always verbal and even in verbal communication a child understands almost everything he or she is communicated.

Communicating with infants is essential for their social, emotional, and cognitive development. One of the best ways to do that is by talking to them. Even though they can't respond with words, talking to infants is important for their language development. Use simple, repetitive language, and speak in a high-pitched, sing-song voice to capture their attention.

Using facial expressions and gestures is another way to communicate with your child. Infants are very perceptive to facial expressions and gestures and parents are suggested to use these non-verbal cues to communicate emotions and reinforce language.

Communication is a two-way process and responding to the child is equally important. Infants communicate through non-verbal cues, such as crying, cooing, and facial expressions. Responding to these cues by providing comfort or changing the environment can help infants feel more secure and build trust in their caregivers.

Play is an important form of communication for infants. Engaging in simple games such as peek-a-boo, singing, or mimicking sounds and facial expressions is a great way to promote bonding and stimulate their cognitive development. A child is the happiest when he or she is playing and a responsible parent knows how to inculcate good habits, skills and values in the child during playing.

Even though a child may not be able to read, reading to a child happens to be a great way to help infants in language development and promoting a love for books and learn-

ing that will help through his or her entire life.

Infants and young children thrive on one-on-one interactions with parents or caregivers. By giving them undivided attention one can establish a great bond with the child. So, when you are communicating with them, make eye contact, respond to their cues, and show interest in their activities.

Contrary to common understanding, an infant or a young child is very perceptive and intelligent. A child knows very well what he or she likes and makes no qualms about it. So, when a child shows interest in a certain object and activity, make sure to follow the lead and use it to build on communication.

Responsible parenting for a new-born

An important part of responsible parenting is taking care of a new-born. A new-born is completely dependent on the parent. Responsible parenting for new-borns takes different dimensions and aspects into consideration as the needs of a new-born are very different. Safety is one of the most important aspects of responsible parenting when it comes to new-borns.

New-borns are fragile and require extra care and attention to prevent accidents. So, one must always place a new-born on their back to sleep, on a firm and flat surface that is free of any soft objects or loose bedding. Using a sleep sack or swaddle to keep them warm works better.

One must always use a rear-facing car seat in the back seat of the car and make sure it is properly installed and fastened. Never leave a new-born alone in a car as it can be life threatening to the child. Also, one must never leave a new-born unattended during bath time and always test the water temperature before placing them in the bath. Keep a hand on the baby at all times and never leave them in the water alone.

A new-born's head and neck must always be supported when carrying or holding them. Avoid shaking or rough handling, as it can cause serious harm. Make sure to always supervise a new-born during feedings and never prop a bottle or leave a new-born unattended with a bottle. This can lead to choking or aspiration.

One must ensure that the house has been baby-proofed and hazardous objects and materials, such as cleaning supplies, medications, and sharp objects, are kept out of reach of the children. If there are older siblings in the house, make sure they are properly supervised when around a new-born, and teach them how to interact gently and safely with the baby. It's important to always keep a watchful eye on a new-born and address any concerns or questions with a paediatrician.

Being a responsible parent doesn't require much. A child is born intelligent with an eagerness to learn new things. Parents can effectively communicate with them and support and enhance their social, emotional, and cognitive development. It's important to remember that communication with infants and young children is a two-way process, and being attentive and responsive to their cues is essential for building a strong bond and promoting healthy development.

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Healthy upbringing, early learning

*Raising a child comes with its attendant challenges. **Karthika Reddy** points out that creating a loving and nurturing environment is very essential. Children in a secure and supportive environment grow up more confident. It starts with parents who should give them unconditional love, provide attention, and be present in their lives while setting clear boundaries and expectations.*



Children with special needs deserve attention and education as much as any other children

Bringing up children is one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of life. The process of raising a child requires patience, commitment, and a deep understanding of child development. While doing so, it is important to keep in mind some key aspects of bringing up children and how to raise healthy, happy, and well-adjusted children.

First and foremost, creating a loving and nurturing environment is essential for raising children. Children who grow up in a secure and supportive environment are more likely to feel confident and have a positive self-image. Parents should offer their children unconditional love, provide them with attention, and be present in their lives. Parents should also establish clear boundaries and expectations, which help children feel safe and secure.

Communication is key in raising children. Parents should communicate with their children in a way that is age-appropriate and respectful.

This includes listening to their children, acknowledging their feelings, and validating their experiences. It's also important to model positive communication and conflict resolution skills to children, which will help them develop healthy relationships with others.

Providing appropriate challenges

Providing children with age-appropriate challenges and opportunities for exploration is another crucial element of bringing up children. Children need opportunities to learn, experiment, and grow, which can be achieved by providing a safe and stimulating environment for play and learning. Parents can encourage their children's curiosity and creativity by providing age-appropriate toys and activities, engaging them in family activities, and exposing them to new experiences.

Discipline is another important aspect of bringing up

children. Parents should establish clear expectations and limits for behaviour, and enforce these limits consistently and fairly. Discipline should be age-appropriate and should focus on teaching children about appropriate behaviour and consequences, rather than punishment.

Finally, parents should prioritise their own self-care, which will help them be better equipped to care for their children. This includes maintaining good physical health, getting enough sleep, and seeking support from family and friends when needed.

Bringing up children requires a combination of subtle feelings and an understanding of child development. Parents who create a loving and nurturing environment and provide opportunities for the child to grow, explore and communicate effectively and help establish appropriate discipline, are more likely to raise emotionally and mentally and physically healthy individuals that will help in the growth of the society.

Raising children is a challenging but rewarding experience that can shape the lives of both parents and children for years to come.

Teacher training necessary

Training for teachers is essential in pre-school education as it helps to prepare them to meet the unique needs of young children. The role of teacher in identifying or nurturing a child's hidden talent cannot be emphasised enough. So, proper training of teachers is also important in ensuring the development of the child properly.

Understanding child development and the mind of a child is very important. Proper training offered by professionals and experts in their respective fields provides teachers with an understanding of the developmental stages of young children, including their physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development. This helps teachers to tailor their approach to meet the needs of each child and create a safe and supportive learning environment.

Curriculum planning if done correctly and implemented properly can help a child in many ways. Training helps teachers to design and implement an appropriate curriculum that aligns with the developmental needs of young children. Teachers learn how to use play-based and child-centered learning strategies to engage children in active learning and facilitate their development.

Classroom management also is a key skill needed in dealing with young children. Training helps teachers to manage their classrooms effectively, creating an environment that is conducive to learning and in creating opportunities for children to not only develop individually but as a team or a group. This includes creating a daily routine, establishing clear expectations for behaviour, and using positive reinforcement to encourage appropriate behaviour.

When effectively delivered, training helps teachers to develop effective communication skills that are essential for building positive relationships with young children and their families. Teachers learn how to communicate in ways that are age-appropriate and respectful, which helps to foster trust and support the development of each child and develop fruitful relationships with the parents of the child.

Special-needs children

Special needs education is a very important segment: A child with special needs deserves attention and education as much as any other child. Training offered to teachers in such areas helps them identify and support children with special needs, including those with developmental delays, physical disabilities, and learning challenges. Teachers learn how to work with parents and other professionals to provide the necessary support and resources for each child.



Teachers should engage children in active learning and facilitate their development

Effective training with exhaustive modules can ensure the safety and health of young children in their care. Teachers learn how to create a safe and healthy learning environment, which includes maintaining hygiene, preventing accidents, and responding to emergencies.

Training for teachers in pre-school education is essential to provide young children with a high-quality learning experience. Teachers who have received training are better equipped to meet the unique needs of young children, create a safe and supportive learning environment, and foster the development of each child. By investing in the training of teachers, one can help ensure that young children receive the best possible start to their educational journey.

Teachers should be trained in child health and safety, including basic first aid, recognising and responding to common illnesses, and preventing accidents in the classroom. Children are highly prone to diseases and proper supervision and handling when the children are away from their parents can help them stay healthy and safe, ensuring their energy and time is spent on learning and playing.

Cultural competency

Communication with the parent is very important, for the child as well as the parent. Teachers should be trained in effective communication with parents, including keeping them informed about their child's progress, addressing any concerns they may have, and providing opportunities for parental involvement in the classroom.

Teachers should be trained in cultural competency, including understanding and respecting diverse cultures and backgrounds, and creating a classroom environment that is welcoming and inclusive for all children. This is important for the child to grow into a sensitive and responsible individual that respects the diversity of the land.

Early intervention can address many issues related to children and help solve them as well protecting the future of a child. Teachers should be trained in identifying children who may be at risk for developmental delays or other concerns, and in providing early intervention and support for these children.

A child is like a sapling that will grow into a beautiful strong tree if given the right amount of nutrients and water. When a teacher is provided proper and adequate training that is reflective of the need of the hour or of the society, he or she can go a long way in providing high-quality education and care for young children, and help support their development and success in the years to come.

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Playing and holistic development

Nandini Rao says that holistic development is all-encompassing and is the key to overall growth of the children. Enlisting factors, she says it is one of the biggest concerns parents have for their young especially in today's times when there are limited opportunities to lead a healthy and active life, adding it is a global phenomenon and challenging one at that.



Toys play a significant role in a child's cognitive, emotional and physical development but they need to be chosen with care

Holistic development is one of the biggest concerns parents have for their young especially in today's times when there are limited opportunities to lead a healthy and active life. From a time when a child would spend the majority portion of a day playing outdoors to now when sedentary lifestyle is affecting children as well, the challenges in providing a healthy lifestyle are mounting.

To add to the burden of this global problem is the penetration of the internet and electronic gadgets and tons of social media apps in human lives that keep the parent and the child entertained and, in the process, glued to their mobile phones is only worsening the situation.

Playing with infants is important for their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. It is a holistic activity that offers many benefits including promoting bonding

and trust. Physical development of a child is boosted when the child can play carefree. Playtime allows them to explore their environment, develop fine and gross motor skills, and strengthen their muscles and coordination.

Social development, also an important part of growing up today, is strengthened with playing as it helps the child learn social skills and team work such as taking turns, sharing, and cooperation. Additionally, emotional development of a child is also promoted while playing. Play activities allow children to express their emotions and help them in regulating their emotions.

One of the most important aspects of holistic development of a child, cognitive development is boosted with adequate playing. It helps a child develop cognitive skills such as problem-solving, attention, and memory. It also promotes

language development, as they hear new words and concepts during play.

Aiding stress management

When a child plays, the physical activity stimulates the child's imagination and creativity that in turn helps the child to learn and develop in a fun and engaging way. Like any physical activity, playing also helps in reducing stress, physical and mental. It helps in the reduction of stress of the children and their parents or caregivers at the same time, by providing a break from the daily mundane routine and by promoting relaxation.

By playing with infants, caregivers can help support their development across all areas, while also creating a positive and enjoyable experience for each other. It's important to remember that playtime should be safe and supervised, and that infants should always be closely monitored to ensure their safety and well-being.

Toys are an essential part of childhood, as they play a significant role in a child's cognitive, emotional, and physical development i.e., holistic development. However, it is crucial to remember that toys can also pose potential hazards to children if not chosen and used correctly.

Children develop at different rates, and toys should be selected based on a child's age, development, and skill level. Age-appropriate toys help children learn, explore, and develop skills while keeping them safe.

Young children, for instance, should be given toys that are large enough not to be swallowed, have no sharp edges, and are soft and easy to grasp. Older children can be given toys that require more dexterity, such as building blocks or puzzles.

Safety issues with toys

Despite the many benefits of toys, some can pose potential hazards to children. For instance, toys with small parts can present a choking hazard to young children, while toys with sharp edges or corners can cause injury. Additionally, toys made with toxic materials or chemicals can pose health risks to children if ingested.

Toys must be safe for children to play with, and parents and caregivers must take precautions to ensure this. Choose toys that are suitable for a child's age, development, and skill level. This can help prevent choking hazards, as well as avoid frustration and boredom.

Look for toys that meet quality and safety standards set by reputable organisations. Regularly inspect toys for damage, wear and tear, or broken pieces that can cause injury. Discard or repair toys that are no longer safe.

Supervise children when playing with toys, especially those that require parental guidance. This can help prevent accidents and injuries. Store toys safely and appropriately to prevent potential hazards, such as tripping, falling, or suffocation.

Children explore the world through touch and taste, and it is essential to choose toys made of safe materials that are free from harmful chemicals. Parents should be careful about toys made of cheap plastic, which may contain lead or other toxic materials. Toys made of natural materials, such as wood or fabric, are often safer than plastic toys.



Parents should also avoid buying cheap, low-quality plastic toys that may contain toxic chemicals. Instead, choose toys made of safer materials like natural wood or organic cotton

Finding alternatives

Toys made of high-quality, non-toxic plastics are safe for children to play with. These plastics do not contain harmful chemicals like lead or phthalates, which can be dangerous to a child's health. Eco-friendly toys are made from sustainable and non-toxic materials like bamboo or recycled plastic. They are durable, safe, and environmentally friendly.

Some plastic toys contain toxic chemicals, such as phthalates, bisphenol-A (BPA), lead, and cadmium, that can be harmful to children's health. These chemicals are used to soften or add color to plastic toys, but they can leach out and be ingested or absorbed through the skin.

To protect children from these hazardous chemicals, it is essential to select plastic toys that are free from phthalates, BPA, lead, and cadmium. Look for toys that are labelled as "BPA-free" or "phthalate-free" and check for safety certifications which sets safety standards for toys.

Parents should also avoid buying cheap, low-quality plastic toys that may contain toxic chemicals. Instead, choose toys made of safer materials like natural wood or organic cotton. By being vigilant about the safety of plastic toys and choosing safer alternatives, parents can help protect their children from potential health hazards.

The creative process

For a child, there is nothing more satisfying, enjoyable and fulfilling than the process of being able to express freely and openly. It is very important for a child to be able to do so for a healthy emotional development.

A child is born creative and it is essential for the parent to boost his creativity. Playing is a great way of doing so and many means and modes are now available where playful activities are used to nurture and develop a child's creative side.

Creative experiences also help a child explore and cope with his feelings and deep emotions. It helps a child in trying out new ideas and new ways of thinking, problem-solving, new outlets of imagination and free thinking which is conducive to emotional health and overall well-being.

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.

Ensuring a disease-free childhood

*Emphasizing that for a child, it all begins with good health first, **Shubhangi Sharma** suggests that to protect new-borns from illnesses, it is important to ensure high coverage of quality antenatal care, skilled care at birth, postnatal care for mother and baby, and care of small babies in facilities or through home visits. Immunisation, nutrition and other things follow.*



Immunising children against diseases is important to help them stay healthy

Ensuring that infants stay free of disease is crucial for their overall growth, health, and development. Adequate nutrition during infancy and early childhood is essential to the construction of sturdy brain architecture and the achievement of a broad range of skills.

Immunising children against diseases is important to help them stay healthy and protect others from diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children. Widespread immunisation also helps protect those who are too young or unable to be vaccinated.

To protect new-borns from illnesses, it is important to ensure high coverage of quality antenatal care, skilled care at birth, postnatal care for mother and baby, and care of small babies in facilities or through home visits.

Mother and child

Breastfeeding is an important way to provide protection to new-borns as breastmilk contains antibodies that will help build up their immune system and protect them from illnesses that could make them sick.

It is also important to insist visitors wash their hands, use hand sanitizer, ensure all caregivers are vaccinated, stay away from sick people, etc., to keep new-borns disease free. Keeping mothers and babies together significantly improves new-born outcomes.

Infants are susceptible to various common diseases and illnesses. The most common childhood illnesses that infants can contract include the common cold, ear infections,

sore throat, urinary tract infection, skin infection, bronchitis and bronchiolitis, stomach flu (gastroenteritis), hand-foot-and-mouth disease (HFMD), febrile seizures, chickenpox, colic, baby acne, bacterial conjunctivitis and diaper rash.

Paediatric ailments

Common cold is one of the most prevalent childhood illnesses caused by viruses that spread easily in environments where people have close contact with one another. Ear infections are also common in children and can be caused by bacterial or viral infections.

Sore throats are painful and can be caused by a variety of factors such as strep throat or tonsillitis. Urinary tract infections can cause discomfort while urinating and may require antibiotics to treat. Skin infections such as impetigo or cellulitis can cause redness and swelling on the skin surface.

Colic is a common paediatric ailment characterised by periods of intense crying that lasts for at least three hours and happens more than three times a week. Doctors aren't exactly sure what causes colic but it may be due to digestive issues or overstimulation.

Parents should always seek medical attention if they feel their child is seriously unwell. They should regularly consult their paediatrician for advice on appropriate care for their child's illness or condition.

Combination practices

Preventing common childhood illnesses requires a combination of protective and preventive measures. Protective measures such as exclusive breastfeeding, adequate complementary feeding, and vitamin A supplementation provide the foundation for keeping children healthy and free of disease.

Preventive measures include immunisations, reduced household air pollution, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. Additionally, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue is an important practice to prevent the spread of common childhood illnesses.

Parents should also be aware of the symptoms of common childhood illnesses and how to manage them before they progress to an advanced stage. It is important to consult a healthcare provider for specific advice on managing common childhood illnesses.

New-borns are at higher risk for infections, and their immune system is not as strong after birth, so it's harder for them to fight off infections. It is important to be aware of what signs could mean that the new-born is sick. The symptoms of serious illness in new-borns can be subtle, and they aren't always easy to spot.

Look out for the signs

Some common warning signs that an infant may be sick include sluggishness, refusing food or drink, vomiting (not just spitting-up), diarrhoea, fever, changes in feeding patterns, sweating during feedings, sleeping more than normal, irritability or crying more often than usual. Mild cold symptoms like runny nose or sneezing are usually not a cause for concern unless accompanied by other symptoms such as fever or coughing.

If the new-born has fever or vomits green (bile), a doctor must be consulted immediately. Infections can also move around a new-born's body more quickly. Viruses usually cause fevers in new-borns. But to identify what is wrong with an infant who has fever, doctors usually recommend running tests for conclusive diagnosis.

With infants, thermometer must be used always to check body temperature and not checking by feeling the child's forehead as that is not reliable.

Generally, the following indicate that the child is doing well – if the baby is alert and active when awake, is feeding well and can be comforted when crying.

It can be difficult to differentiate between mild cold symptoms and signs of sickness in new-borns, as the symptoms can be subtle.

Common cold symptoms in babies include nasal congestion, a runny nose, coughing or sneezing, decreased appetite or difficulty taking a bottle, and irritability. However, these symptoms may also be signs of a more serious illness.

Newborns are more susceptible to colds because their immune system is not yet mature. Parents should seek medical attention if their newborn's cold interferes with breathing, lasts longer than ten days, causes ear pain, or if the baby coughs hard enough to cause vomiting or changes in skin colour. Additionally, if the baby refuses to nurse or accept fluids, coughs up blood-tinged mucus, or has yellow or green pus from eyes, parents should see a doctor immediately.

It's important for parents to take their new-born's signs and symptoms seriously as some cold-like symptom might signal more serious illnesses such as pneumonia or an ear infection. However, most colds are simply a nuisance and will resolve within ten to fourteen days without complications.

Home remedies work better

Parents can use home remedies to treat common infant illnesses, but they should proceed with caution. Some natural remedies that are safe for infants include an oatmeal bath to hydrate dry skin, diluted chamomile tea instead of alcohol to soothe sore gums, and warm water or chamomile tea to relieve constipation.

Honey should not be used in children under age one as it can lead to infant botulism. For cold in babies, parents can mix honey with hot water and a squeeze of lemon to make a drink that is lukewarm.

Liquids are important for babies with colds as they help avoid dehydration. Parents can give their baby warm water, broth, soup or chamomile tea. They should serve liquids warm, not hot. Rest is also important for babies with colds as it takes energy to fight an infection.

Some other home remedies for babies up to 6-7 months include using garlic fumes for cold and cough and covering the chest, head, and feet during winter months. Parents can also place a warm towel on their baby's tummy to relieve gas pains.

Fennel water is an effective home remedy for colic in infants. Fennel water can help soothe the baby's digestive system and reduce colic symptoms. Coconut oil is a natural moisturiser that can be used to treat dry skin and rashes in infants. It has anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce redness and swelling.

Shubhangi Sharma is a Research Volunteer with The Maverick Project – A DraftCraft International initiative to further reach, accountability and the law in Pre-Primary, Primary, Intermediary and Secondary Education.

A pediatrician's prescription for good parenting

Dr. R. K. Anand gives tips on good parenting and shares his prescription for a healthy and happy family.



Indian young family of four playing board games like chess, ludo or snack and ladder at home

For about 55 years, I have had the privilege of working with thousands of families. That experience has given me the insight to write the following prescription for a healthy and happy family.

Prescription for a healthy and happy family

Be fit! You as parents must serve as role models for your kids. Lead a healthy lifestyle. If you follow a lifestyle with right food habits, daily exercise and adequate rest, your kids are likely to follow suit.

- Your diet, vegetarian or non-vegetarian, should include more whole grains, leafy vegetables, salads, seasonal fruits, nuts and sprouts. Aim to eat at least one home-cooked meal each day with the whole family.
- Consume less fat, sugar, salt, red meat and other refined foods.
- Exercise daily. This could be in the form of a brisk walk, an active sport and light weights for strengthening the body. Yoga and Pranayama are helpful for maintaining good health as well as

for increasing the flexibility of the body.

- Stay away from tobacco chewing, smoking, alcohol and recreational drugs.
- Develop a hobby and have social-interaction with people to grow. Do consider joining voluntary groups to promote the rights of children. If your children see you reach out, they too will be outgoing.
- Most important, smile and be happy. Indian scriptures teach us that "You are already happy, for that's your real nature. A veil of ignorance sometimes makes you unhappy when things do not seem to go your way".
- Positive visualization. While the baby is still in the womb, pray and visualise that your child is healthy and is growing to become a happy and caring person.
- Be conscious of the dangers of consumerism and materialism. A serious problem of 'affluenza', not influenza, is rapidly spreading across the country. Teach your child the value of money. Giving in each time to the child's demand may do more harm than good.
- Encourage your children to enjoy reading from an early age.
- Respect your children. Learn to listen more and speak less; praise more and criticize less; love more and judge less. Of course do not hesitate to be firm when the situation demands. Also, respect your children's friends and know their families.
- Let your children learn from you to respect all communities and cultures.
- Don't underestimate the role of fun! Playing hide and seek with your two-year old or playing scrabble with your older one, sharing jokes, playing music, intelligent TV watching, taking annual holidays together are essentials for raising happy and confident children.
- Learn to balance career and family life. Spend quality time with your spouse and your children. Also find time to take care of your own health.
- Cherish your joint, extended or nuclear family. Remember that each one of us has our moods. Find the right occasion to share your feelings and help each other grow in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. A family which prays together, stays together. If you believe in a Higher Power, let the family pray together before going to bed. If there are elders in the home, let the children greet them on getting up and get their blessings.

It is fun to live in a laughing, loving family. May I wish all readers this blessing.

The writer is a senior paediatrician and author of 'Dr. R.K. Anand's Guide to Child Care'. (From OIOP archives).



DANGS

Pristine, Wild, Colourful

*A little-known paradise, Dangs has a unique landscape with an ecosystem patently its own. Nestled among hills, populated with ethnic tribes and bestowed with related trappings, it showcases a culture that has a signature flavour to it. **Nandini Rao** sketches the native Dangis known for their various tribals, their colourful life, rituals, festivals folklore and customs and says they are a major tourist draw.*



Tribals dancing at a festival in the Dangs

If there's one word that aptly describes Dangs, a mesmerising region in the western Indian state of Gujarat, it's pristine. It will be safe to say that Dangs has continued to stay untouched, natural and wild all this while.

The zone is rich in wildlife and natural resources and is home to a number of indigenous tribes that call Dangs their home. It's these native communities that render Dangs a uniqueness that is rare in India and make it a culturally diverse region.

The zone is also a very historic one and has mention in the famous ancient Indian Sanskrit epic Ramayana. Apart from the rich history, the diverse natural and cultural heritage makes Dangs an enigmatic place and a popular tourist destination.

The location

Dangs district is situated in the south-eastern part of the Gujarat and is skirted by the state of Maharashtra and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The region is famous for many tourist places including Saputara, Ahwa, Mahal, Don, Waghai, etc. The monsoon season in Dangs is extremely wet and usually lasts from June till September.

The least populated district of Gujarat, Dangs has its

administrative headquarters located in Ahwa. It spans across an area of 1,766 sq km has a population of 2,28,291 persons. Of the entire district area, 1,008 sq km is covered in forest providing Dangs a treasure trove of natural resources.

The number of indigenous people in the state is very high. The gender ratio in the district is 1,006 (Females per 1000 Males) and the ST population stands at 94.65 per cent i.e., 2,16,073 people. Almost 90 per cent of the population of the district lives in rural households.

To reach Dangs, one has to reach one of the bigger neighbouring cities like Surat, Navsari, etc. The nearest airport to reach Dangs is situated in the South Gujarat city of Surat, 141 km away from Ahwa.

Those travelling by road have to use National Highway No. 350 or State Highway No. 14 – while the former passes through Waghai in Dangs, the State Highway goes through Ahwa. Almost all the State Transport buses that intersperse through Dangs connect it to Ahmedabad, Surat, Nashik, etc. The nearest railway stations to reach Dangs are Surat, Navsari and Valsad in South Gujarat. Dangs does not have broad-gauge railway network as yet. However, narrow-gauge trains do run through the area.



Tourists visit Saputara Lake for boating

History and heritage

Dangs has a history that dates back to ancient times. In Ramayana, Dangs has been mentioned as Dakaranya or Dandak. They say, it's this connection with Ramayana that explains why the folklore of Dangs is ripe with anecdotes from the lives of Lord Ram and Sita. Another Hindu epic, Mahabharat too has mention of Dangs. It is believed that during their exile, the Pandavas roamed through Dangs and lived there as well.

There is a pilgrimage site in Dangs called Shabari Dham, surrounded by hills and forests. It is dedicated to one of Lord Ram's biggest devotee, Shabari. It is believed that Shabari Dham is the place where Shabari meditated.

Later, many dynasties ruled Dangs, over centuries and decades, making it a culturally diverse region that it is today. These include the Mauryans, King Satya Vahan, Kahatra and Abhir kings and the Chanakya dynasty.

Later, the Chalukyas, Marathas and the British too ruled the region. In 14th century, the kings who ruled Dangs at the time, broke existing allegiance and became independent. Interestingly, in 1664, when Shivaji attacked Surat, he had set his military base in this region only.

Until the time of the formation of the state of Gujarat in 1960, Dangs was a part of the Bombay Presidency.



A villager ploughing his field in the Dangs

The indigenous people

Dangs is as much known for its natural environs as its rich cultural heritage. It is home to several indigenous tribes and has a unique blend of traditional and modern lifestyles. Originally, it were the Kunbi and Bhil tribes that inhabited the region.

Despite overwhelming similarities in customs, culture, appearance and lifestyle, each tribe here has distinct characteristics that differentiate one from another. These customs and characteristics have been passed down from one generation to the next, over centuries, and form a part of the rich heritage that each native community possesses and retains through its customs and lifestyle.

Other than the Bhils and Kunbis, there are the Warli and Gamit tribes that reside in Dangs. Some like the Warli are known

for their unique art-work called Warli painting, others are known for crafts like embroidery, bamboo work, etc.

Warli artwork or paintings are usually made on the walls or the floors of houses and use geometrical shapes in abundance. These works depict scenes from the daily lives of the Warli people – hunting, farming, etc.

One of the major events where the various tribes of the region come together is the Dangs Darbar. It is an annual cultural fiesta that takes place in Ahwa in the Saputara Hills and lasts for a few days.

Dangs Darbar is usually observed in March or April, around the time of another big festival Holi or Shimga, as it is popularly known in the region. It's a great time to see the various tribal people of Dangs dressed in traditional attire and exhibiting their unique dance, music, artwork, instruments, etc.



Gira waterfalls near Waghai

Warli and Bhil tribes are the prominent tribes of Dangs. While the Warli people are known for their artwork, the Bhils are known for martial skills. There is a significant Warli population in Maharashtra in Thane and Palghar district. As far as the Bhils, they are also found in Surat, Vadodara, Broach or Bharuch, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, etc.

Folk songs and dances form an integral part of tribal life and their cultural heritage. Kunbi tribe, on the other hand, is mostly involved with farming and the members are skilled artisans creating exquisite handicrafts and folk-art including weaving, pottery, etc.

One of the best ways to experience and observe tribal culture is by participating in one of the many tribal festivals that are celebrated in Dangs. Some of these include Bhagoria, Pola, Pachvo, Tera, Mavlidevi, Diwasa, Pitra or Sira Puja, Wagh Baras and more. In fact, Navratri too is celebrated with fervour in Dangs.

Saputara for all

There is something for everyone in Dangs. Some of the popular destinations include Don Hill, Botanical Garden in Waghai, Mayadevi Temple, Pandava Cave or Aravalem Caves in Saputara, Devinamal Temple, Ataladham Anjani Parvat (Anjan Kund), Shabridham and Pampa Sarovar, etc.

In terms of adventure tourism, there's Paragliding, Ropeway, Boating and Zipline adventures available in Dangs, particularly in Saputara. Other popular tourist destinations of Dangs district include Saputara Hill Station, Giradhod Waterfalls, Mahal area, Vansda National Park, Purna Wildlife Sanctuary, etc.

Saputara Hill Station is situated about a thousand metres above sea level. It is situated along the banks of the Sarpaganga River and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Dangs. Many tourists from Gujarat and neighbouring Maharashtra visit the hill station known for its adventure



Local tribal women washing clothes near Purna Sanctuary

activities like paragliding, boating, trekking, camping, etc.

Gujarat's only hill station, Saputara is cosily tucked in the Sahyadri range of the Western Ghats. The hill town also has Saputara Lake, Nageshwar Mahadev Temple, picturesque vista points like Sunrise Point, Sunset Point, Table Point, Gira Waterfalls, etc., which are frequented by visitors and tourists.

The Ropeway Cable Car experience is a must-do while visiting Saputara. The Ropeway, also known as Pushpak Ropeway, can be taken from Sunset Point to Sunrise Point. The minutes-long ride offers a view of the breath-taking Sahyadri valley on one side and the town on the other, as it takes the riders above the bright, blue Saputara Lake.

Saputara Tribal Museum or Saputara Museum is a great place for history, art and culture enthusiasts. The artefacts at display at the museum, established in 1970, represent the lives and the culture of the tribes inhabiting the Dang region. These include the Bhils, Kunbis, Warlis, Gamits, among others.

The museum is home to more than 400 artefacts and handicrafts of the Dang tribal and is a big hit among tourists who visit Saputara. The main type of artefacts in display includes ornaments, costumes, tools and musical instruments. Music plays a very important *part* in the life of a tribal. Even outside the museum, one may chance upon a Warli tribal playing a musical wind instrument called Pawari, just like that!



Forests in Dangs are extremely rich in biodiversity

Forests and waterfalls

In a district where more than half of the area is covered in forests, there are ample opportunities and avenues to enjoy nature at its best, especially in Purna Wildlife Sanctuary and Vansda National Park.

Forests in Dangs are extremely rich in biodiversity and are home to several species of flora and fauna. As a result, it is an eco-sensitive zone and critical in maintaining the ecological balance of the zone.

The forests are also rich in plants with medicinal value and are often used by the locals as traditional medicine. Common trees in the forest include teak, sal, bamboo, sisham, kadaya, khair, etc. Among the birds and animals, Dangs' forests have hornbills, parakeets, woodpeckers, owlets, antelopes, mongooses, leopards, hyenas, etc.

Vansda National Park, or Bansda National Park as it's also known, is situated in the Vansda forest range covering an area of around 24 sq km along the Ambika River. The rich biodiversity of the forest includes hornbills, peafowl, deer, leopards, etc. Many people come here to hop on to the several trekking trails and enjoy nature in its truest form.

Purna Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in between the Western Ghats and in the 161 sq km area encompasses rolling hills, valleys, plateaus, parts of Purna River and a few rivulets. It was declared as a sanctuary in July 1990.

The vibrant green zone is home to the Bhils, Kokanas, Kolchas, Warlis among others. Many tourists visit the forested sanctuary to rejuvenate and be close to nature. Mahal, a village situated in the sanctuary, is a popular camping destination. Here, several animals inhabit the forest and the campsite, managed by the forest department, offers facilities for tourists including tree house, huts, etc.

Gira Waterfalls are located near Waghai and are also surrounded by dense forests typical to the Dangs landscape. The 30-metre-high waterfall has the water falling on rocky steps giving it a cascading effect.

Located on the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra, Wilson Hills are also popular among tourists visiting Dangs. The hills lie among dense forests and offer mesmerising view of the surrounding valleys.

Interestingly, Wilson Hills, the popular hill station has



Wilson Hill- A monument has been built in memory of King Vijay Dev and Lord Wilson

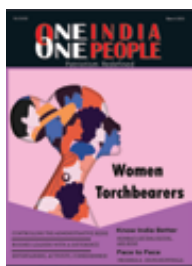
been named after Lord Wilson – the Governor of Mumbai from the year 1923 till 1928. It was named so by King Vijay Dev - the last king of Dharampur. The two had envisioned developing the hills into a hill station but the plans could not materialise. Today, there's a monument here in memory of King Vijay Dev and Lord Wilson.

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“Watching new life sprout and grow is an incredible indescribable feeling.”



Nandu Singh

A young couple **Nandu and Nidhi Singh** based in Pune, run Nursery Live, a popular ecommerce one-stop-shop platform for all gardening related requirements.

With a vision to create greener spaces and make the Earth a healthier place to live in, it has attracted in a short span, over 45 lakh active garden lovers and a Facebook following of over seven lakh users.

Nidhi Singh, COO speaks passionately about all things green with **A. Radhakrishnan**.



Nidhi Singh

How old a concept is gardening? Where was the world's first garden created?

Gardening has been a part of human history for thousands of years. A way for humans to cultivate plants for food and other uses, it has evolved over time to include ornamental plants and flowers, vegetable gardens, etc.

The world's first known garden was in Babylon, Iraq over 5,000 years ago, and it was called the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. One of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, it was known for its beauty and engineering.

Did you have a garden growing up? Your first memories?

Fortunately, yes. Watching new life sprout and grow is an incredible, indescribable feeling, especially when I see a new flower bud blooming.

My earliest memories are of playing in and assisting my mother in her passion, caring for the 150 plants growing in our house garden. She imparted her gardening wisdom through practical lessons.



Marigold Flower



Chrysanthemums Flower



Orange Fruit Plant

What elements are part of your dream garden?

It would have a variety of elements promoting peace, tranquility, and beauty, and include flowering plants, shrubs and trees -- roses, peonies, and cherry blossoms. A small pond surrounded by water lilies, and a small waterfall would be a bonus.

A vegetable garden would provide fresh produce for cooking, and a greenhouse for year-round growing. A comfortable seating area for enjoying the outdoors, would be a perfect place to relax and read a book. A winding path would provide a peaceful place for a morning walk, and a fire pit for cosy evening gatherings. Overall, a peaceful escape and a place for all the senses to enjoy.

Please tell us the genesis of Nursery Live?

After some hands-on experience in software development at TCS, I felt the need to do something impactful. Thus in 2010, along with my husband Nandu, also a techie, we started a software company, where we developed projects outsourced from the U.K, U.S, and Canada.

Somewhere in 2014, while setting up my terrace garden, I realised that developing a garden was not as simple as it seemed. You need the right plants, the right tools, and expert advice. Exploring options to create a hassle-free garden, I realised that other garden lovers sailed in the same boat.

After doing some market analysis, we decided to create a platform to help make gardening experience smooth. Thus, Nursery Live was born. As Co-founder and COO, I look after catalogue, domain, and customer experience, while Nandu as CEO is responsible for marketing, technology and team building.

In the last seven years, we have connected with 45 lakh garden lovers and have served over 12 lakh customers, pan India.

What does a garden teach you?

A garden can teach one a variety of valuable life lessons and skills. Firstly, it teaches patience and the value of hard work as one waits

for seeds to grow into beautiful flowers or bountiful crops. Secondly, it teaches about responsibility and the importance of caring for and maintaining the garden.

Thirdly, it can teach about the interconnectedness of all living things and the delicate balance of nature. Furthermore, it can also provide an opportunity to learn about horticulture and the science behind plant growth.

Overall, a garden can be a place of learning, growth and reflection, and provide a space for individuals to connect with nature and appreciate the beauty of the world around them.

Essential skills a gardener should have?

Firstly, they should have knowledge of plants, including their growth habits, requirements for sunlight and water, and how to care for them.

Secondly, they should have good planning and organisational skills, as well as the ability to design and layout a garden effectively.

Thirdly, they should have strong attention to detail, including the ability to identify and treat plant problems such as pests or diseases. They should also have manual dexterity and physical stamina for tasks such as digging, planting, and pruning.

Additionally, they should be able to effectively communicate and work with others, including clients, coworkers and suppliers.

What is the best way to turn a flat balcony into a beautiful garden space?

This takes careful planning and creative thinking. Firstly, consider the amount of sunlight and wind the balcony receives and choose plants accordingly. Container gardening is ideal for balconies, and you can choose from a variety of pots, hanging baskets, and wall-mounted planters.

Secondly, create a focal point, such as a small fountain or a

sculptural piece, to draw the eye. Additionally, use a variety of plants with different textures, heights, and colours to create interest. To maximise space, consider vertical gardening and incorporate climbing plants on trellises or wall-mounted planters.

Finally, incorporate comfortable seating and lighting to make the balcony an inviting and relaxing space.

Which plants work best in pots? How important is fertilisation?

Many plants can be grown successfully in pots, making it a great option for those with limited garden space or those who want to add some greenery to a patio or balcony.

Some popular choices include:

Herbs: Herbs such as basil, mint, and thyme are well-suited to growing in pots and can be used in cooking or for their fragrant oils.

Succulents: These low-maintenance plants are well-suited to growing in pots and can add interesting texture and colour to a container garden.

Vegetables: Container gardening is a great option for growing vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuce, and peppers.

Ferns: Ferns are well-suited to growing in pots and can add a lush, tropical feel to a container garden.

Bamboo: Bamboo is a great option for adding height and interest to a container garden and can also be used for privacy or as a screen.

When choosing plants for pots, it is important to consider their light and moisture requirements, as well as the size of the pot and the growing conditions in your area.

Fertilisation is essential for healthy plant growth, providing essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. It should be based on the specific needs of plants and the soil and growing conditions. Over-fertilisation can damage plants, so it's crucial to follow recommended guidelines. Using organic fertilisers, such as compost, can also improve soil health and provide a slow-release source of nutrients.

How often should soil be replaced? Why is well-drained soil so crucial for plant health?

Soil replacement is important for maintaining optimal growing conditions for plants. Vegetable gardens typically need soil replacement every 2-3 years and flower beds every 4-5 years.

Poor growth or compacted, nutrient-deficient soil may indicate it's time to replace the soil. This also helps control pests and diseases. It also ensures plants have access to necessary nutrients for growth.

Well-drained soil is crucial for plant health because it prevents waterlogged roots, which can lead to root rot and ultimately kill the plant. When soil does not drain properly, water accumulates and suffocates roots, causing them to rot. Adequate drainage allows oxygen to reach the roots, essential for healthy plant growth. Moreover, poorly drained soil can also cause excess salts to accumulate, which can be toxic to plants.

What about pest control and plant diseases in gardens?

Pest control and plant disease management are important aspects of maintaining a healthy garden. Pests such as insects, mites, and snails can cause significant damage, while diseases such as fungus and bacteria can also harm or kill plants.

To prevent pestilence and plant diseases, it is important to practice proper garden maintenance, such as cleaning up debris, providing adequate water and nutrients, and monitoring plants regularly for signs of distress. Additionally, using natural pest control methods, such as companion planting and encouraging beneficial insects, help.

How often should I water a garden? The best time and how much? Would you recommend Drip irrigation?

The frequency and amount of water needed for a garden depends on the specific plants, soil type, and weather conditions. Generally, most gardens need to be watered once or twice a week, with the amount varying on the type of plant and the weather conditions. It is important to avoid overwatering, which can lead to root rot.

The best time to water a garden is early morning or late afternoon, when temperatures are cooler and there is less evaporation. Drip irrigation, which delivers water slowly and directly to the roots, is a highly effective method.

How much sun does a garden need?

It depends on the specific plants being grown. Some plants, such as succulents and cacti, require full sun, while others, such as ferns and shade-loving perennials, prefer shade.

It is important to match the sun exposure needs of the plants to the conditions in the garden. A garden that receives full sun for six or more hours per day is considered to be in full sun, while a garden that receives less than four hours of direct sun per day is considered to be in full shade.

Compare gardening as a job and as a hobby?

Both offer opportunities for growth, creativity, and connection to nature.

Gardening as a job focuses on the commercial aspects, such as producing crops for sale, landscaping, and garden maintenance. It requires knowledge of horticulture, plant care, and business management.

Gardening as a hobby, on the other hand, is a personal pursuit focused on enjoyment and relaxation. It can range from growing a few houseplants to creating a large and diverse backyard garden. The focus is on personal fulfillment, learning, and self-expression through gardening.

What advice would you give a new gardener?

Treat your plants like family members and show them love and care. They will reward you by becoming your loyal and ever-lasting friends. Begin with a small garden, plan carefully, be patient, and savour the joy it brings.

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

Composing odes in pottery

Manjira Majumdar has an informal chat with Shantiniketan-based studio potter Lipi Biswas and finds a liberal spread of work of art. Finding the entire array of her work soothing, she marvels at her art hand-crafted and perfected in the kilns at the back of her studio.



Lipi serving warm tea to guests in her studio

Walking into the studio of potter Lipi Biswas is like walking into a space of meditative calm. The mellow sunshine filters through the green leaves outside and is reflected on an array of well sculpted pottery lining the studio shelves, and adorning the odd tables spread out.

Lipi's pottery is sheer poetry in motion. Utilitarian objects that can be used in your home to make it a lovely aesthetic space. Shelves of glazed tea pots, mugs, bowls, platters, decorative plates and small stylized figurines are arranged beautifully, for you to pick and choose from, to match your home décor.

If you are a pottery lover and it is difficult for you to

make a choice, you can simply sit back and listen to Lipi talk animatedly about her creation while sipping some warm tea that she serves in Japanese style. You marvel at the natural elements of this art, hand-crafted and perfected in the kilns at the back of the studio.

Tucked away in a small corner known as *Boner Pukur Danga*, roughly translated into the back of the jungle pond, (here jungle would best translate into various tree laden woods the region is noted for), Lipi is Shantiniketan's best-kept secret. She is not a Kala Bhavan trained sculptor or studio potter. She pursued Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayajirao University in Vadodara, where she met her artist husband Bidyut Roy. Though not an



An array of well sculpted pottery line the studio shelves



architect, Bidyut is known to have designed and built beautiful, sustainable houses. The couple's unique home doubles up as a home-stay for anyone wishing to spend a few days in the woods.

Lipi's USP is that she involves local tribal talent and uses indigenous material for her pottery. She is pinch clay pottery specialist. (Pinch pottery is hand-made pottery produced from ancient times to the present. The pinching method is to fashion pottery from a lob of clay, and then pinch it to the desired shape. It is the simplest and the fastest way of making the clay take the shape required by simply using the thumb and fingers. Simple clay vessels such as bowls and cups of various sizes can be shaped by this pinching process and it is a basic pot making method often taught to young children or beginners. (Source: Wikipedia)

As once recipient of a grant under the Indian Foundation for the Arts, (IFA), Lipi works with local adivasi potters who have taught her a thing or two. She feels they possess innate creativity in art and rhythm. No wonder Gurudev Tagore chose this location for his world university; where nature coexists with the simple beauty of daily life. He used these cross influences in his music, art and teachings so that it remains an entire concept

of give and take. Lipi in turn taught them the technicalities of deep firing and chemical-glazing.

Lipi's day begins by collecting vegetable and fruit peels, ash, rice husk and clay to prepare the glaze for the pottery. In between sips of tea, she recounts the early days when the couple decided to settle down in Shantiniketan. "We started this studio with some investments as pottery requires raw material. My studio was like a workspace with all sorts of people dropping in; initially we seemed to be heading nowhere with orders...Till one fine day when luck smiled upon us."

"It was raining heavily one evening and I saw this gentleman outside my door soaked to the skin," she draws us to her story telling. "He was an American doing research on Tagore and it was time for him to leave. But not before he had placed a substantial order with me. And since then, there has been no looking back", chuckles Lipi.

Art according to Lipi, nestles in the lap of nature. And the couple does not wish to disturb or violate nature in any way. They are engaged in organic farming at a farmhouse built some distance away. Their only daughter is away in Indonesia pursuing a course in art, mainly batik printing.



Glazed tea pots, mugs, bowls, decorative plates and other utilitarian objects adorn Lipi`s beautiful studio

Lipi's inspirations are several from the world of pottery and among women studio potters, she admires Ira Chaudhuri, who is Kala Bhavan trained. Over time, Lipi has perfected her art. There is so much to talk about in this freewheeling *adda* that has warmed up but the shadows lengthen outside and I have to reluctantly take my leave.

Manjira Majumdar is a Kolkata-based independent journalist and researcher. She has also authored several books including an anthology of short stories **NO RETURN ADDRESS** on Partition and Displacement.



The many avatars of Noti Binodini

*Defying the myth that biographical or autobiographical plays are no draws, Binodini Dasi, aka Noti Binodini is an exception. Plays on her life have been staged time and again because her life has more drama, twists and turns than a film script would have. An icon in the history of Bengali theatre, both for her talent and the sacrifices she made in the cause of theatre, **Shoma A. Chatterji** looks at this exceptional phenomenon.*



Sudipta Chakraborty portraying the title role of Noti Binodini in the play ‘Binodini Opera’

Isn't it a bit strange that no proscenium stage plays in metro cities are named after a woman – be it a yesteryear actress or singer or director?

For example, Kolkata, believed to be the theatre capital of India, has many proscenium spaces. But all named after famous theatre persons or poets or playwrights. All men and no woman at all. There is Madhusudan Mancha named after Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Nazrul Mancha, named after Kobi Nazrul Islam, Rabindra Sadan, named after Rabindranath Tagore. In Mumbai, similarly, we have the Gadkari Rangayatan, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the Nehru Centre, the Prithvi Theatre and so on. In Delhi, they have the Kamani Auditorium, Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts, National School of Drama, India, Habitat Centre and so on and so forth. The sole exception is that, after the passing away of the famous doyen of Hindi theatre group Rangakarmee, founded by the late Usha Ganguly two small auditoriums in the same premises in Kolkata have been re-christened Binodini-Keya Mancha and Usha Ganguly Mancha. But this is not

widely known.

Noti Binodini or Binodini Dasi was a theatre actress of the Bengali stage who demanded that a new theatre be named after her as ‘B-Theatre.’ But this did not happen because the powers-that-be refused to register the name after a theatre actress. Actresses in those days were considered social outcasts. The appearance of the native actresses on stage became a practice only from the latter half of the eighteenth century. Earlier, men would enact the female characters. Though a steep contrast between the social life of the Europeans and the Indians valorised post the Revolt of 1857, the theatre space, became one of the major grounds where these two strands -- the coloniser and the colonised -- would come together. The aim of these performances was to entertain men during their evening rendezvous and leisure pursuits.

Biographical or autobiographical plays are not very popular they say. But Binodini Dasi (1863-1941), or Noti



Another scene from 'Binodini Opera'

Binodini is an exception. Plays on her life have been staged over and over for a long time because the story of her life is more dramatic and has more twists and turns than a film script. The 'nati' (noti in Bengali) in her name means 'actress.' As an actress, Binodini carved an immortal place in the history of Bengali theatre not only for her talent and versatility, but also for the sacrifices she made in the cause of theatre. She documented the story of her life in two separate autobiographies, *Aamar Katha* (My Story) and *Aamar Abhinetri Jeebon* (My Life as an Actress.) Kali for Women has published the English translations by Rimli Bhattacharya. She was perhaps the only literate actress of her time though her roots lay in the red light lanes of Kolkata.

When the theatre company that took Binodini to starry heights began to collapse, in 1883, her mentor, Natya Samrat Girish Ghosh persuaded her to become the mistress of Gurmukh Rai, a rich Marwari businessman who was a devoted fan of Binodini. The actress, hating to go back to her old life of prostitution, rejected the idea. But her love for the stage and empathy for her peers whose lives were endangered, won in the end and she succumbed to pressure. Instead of accepting a cheque for ₹50,000 from Gurmukh Rai, Binodini asked him to build a theatre.

Rai, besotted with Binodini, agreed at once, but on condition that the theatre hall would be named B-Theatre, after the first letter of Binodini's name. But after the theatre's name was registered, Binodini was shocked to discover that her name was rejected in favour of another name, Star, in 1884. Her peers and mentor had decided that a theatre house named after a prostitute would fail to draw audience for their plays.

The latest addition to this plethora of proscenium and celluloid representations of the life and works of Noti Binodini comes across in the most recent production called *Binodini Opera* produced by Cinnamon Media and Events and directed by Abanti Chakraborty with noted National Award-winning actress of the stage and screen, Sudipta Chakraborty portraying the title role. Why the name "Opera" and not just Noti Binodini? Because the play of two hours has been conceived, executed and presented as an "opera" defined as "a drama set to music and made up of vocal pieces with orchestral accompaniment and orchestral overtures and interludes." An "overture" in this case, is the orchestral introduction to a musical dramatic work while an "interlude" is described as "a musical composition inserted between the parts of a longer composition, a drama."

The play opens with a long overture with a female chorus singing and dancing away to merriment introducing the prima donna Binodini who steps in grandly in a tiered stage that allows for vertical mobility with hangings from the ceiling of the proscenium used by the characters to add dimension to their

movements and to the characters. The songs are very good and even the dialogues are often in rhyme. But as the sound system was less than perfect, the lines were not very clear to the audience. The art direction is also good. The play was longish to hook the audience for long. A bit of clipping in the beginning and the end might make the finished production more edgy and sharp.

Even within their limited footage, the actors have performed very well with special reference to Sujan Mukherjee as Gurmukh Rai who elevates the character to a higher plane with the physical expression of his passion for Binodini. Padmanabha Dasgupta as Kumar one of Binodini's admirers, is good but the brief abstract from Shakespeare's Othello seemed a bit out-of-place. Abhijit Guha does not fit into the dignified personality of Girish Ghosh mainly because of his physique and his looks which strip the character of some of the dignity it demands. All these are neutralised by the persona, the movements, the electric performance of Binodini by Sudipta Chakraborty.

Till date, of all the various performances of Noti Binodini witnessed over the years, I will still back Nati Binodini (Hindi) by Theatre and Television Associates of Delhi. Directed by Amal Allana, it is a radical departure from the norm that presented not one but five different actresses playing Binodini on the stage at the same time. One of them was the old and doddering Binodini in the 'present', while the others — part of the flashback — appeared while she was writing her autobiographies. The four wore identical costumes and make-up, representing different ages and phases the girl went through till she flowered into an actress and then left the stage. It was a brilliantly structured play with a split-level set and mood lighting, embellished by fine acting and music. But the over-weeepy and dodderingly old Binodini took away from the character the strength she was known for.

Till today, the story of Binodini Dasi remains an enigma because the end remains as mysterious as her life was. Did she voluntarily walk away from the stage one fine day and was never heard of again? Or, did she remain in the wings as a guide and teacher, not stepping into the stage again? Or, did she follow Thakur Ramkrishna Paramhansa when he walked up to her after her sterling performance as Sri Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in a play with the same title? No one knows.



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.

Diverse, yet united by Yoga

Asserting that Yoga has the power to change lives, leads to a healthy body, a peaceful mind, a happy heart, and a liberated soul, **Tuhina Banerjee** elaborates on the global congregation at the International Yoga Festival 2023 in the spiritual climes of Rishikesh. People re-energized and soaked in the culture of the place, which was just right, she observes.



Participants at the International Yoga Festival enter the Parmarth Niketan Ashram in Rishikesh

Introspection, connection with the self, transformation, solace and bliss -- Most of the over 1,500 participants from around 90 countries came to feel an array of experience at the the International Yoga Festival 2023 at Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh held from March 8 to 14.

They took the spiritual odyssey and got soaked in the serene ambience on the banks of Ganga, with cool breeze and Vedic chants wafting across the venue. Some were looking for peace within, some trying to find a catharsis in the asanas and some seeking the unknown.

A unique amalgamation

It was the first visit of Karen D Ernst to India as a tourist. Karen, who is from Kentucky but lives in Berlin and works for a



Karen D Ernst came down to Rishikesh essentially for Yoga and was enamoured with the culture of the place

US airline, came down to Rishikesh essentially for Yoga and was enamoured with the culture of the place.

"I registered for the Yoga festival just a few weeks back when my friend, who has been coming here regularly, persuaded me to do so. I read about it and found amazing speakers and yoga experts and teachers attending the festival from all over the world and the work they are doing. I decided that this was the place I wanted to be in and get reenergized," she said.

"I walked down the banks of River Ganga on my first day. They were having aarti, I could hear the chants and it was so emotionally overwhelming. I offered flowers and diya and felt an instant connection with the place and the friendly, kind people," Karen added.



Kerstin Friesland from Munich was at the Festival for the fourth time. She teaches Yoga in Germany



Krishna from Ghana, who has been teaching Yoga in Dubai for 7 years now



Meghan from Chicago and Lu from Alabama in the US have been coming to the festival for the last 3 years

Meghan from Chicago and Lu from Alabama in the US have been coming to the Yoga festival for the last three years. And what brings them here every time? Lu said, "It's the spirit of the festival and the tranquility it offers." Meghan pointed out, "It is a great opportunity to meet new people from new places. The festival is a potpourri of cultures and connects me to my being."

A young woman from Colombia, South America, who has rechristened herself as Ambica, said, "This is my fifth visit to this amazing festival. Every time, it's a new and fresh experience. I come here to feel the spiritual aura, which is quite transcendental. I have learnt Yoga and teach asanas to people back in Colombia."

A 20-something man from Ghana who calls himself Krishna is a Yoga expert. Krishna lives in Dubai and teaches Yoga there. He talked about his Yoga experience in Dubai. "Dubai has a growing Yoga community. Since the past seven years, I have been living in Dubai and teaching Yoga. More and more people, including Emiratis, are embracing it. We have many Yoga activities, clubs, festivals being held in Dubai. The local government and municipality there are also promoting and supporting it. India has given us such a rich culture and it's our sacred duty to spread it in the world."

Kerstin Friesland from Munich was at the Yoga festival for the fourth time. "From the moment I came to Parmarth Niketan Ashram, I felt a special energy. It's absolutely unique. Practicing yoga on the banks of Ganga is just beautiful. I feel blessed every time I come here. This festival gives you an opportunity to connect with people who share the same vibes."

For Kerstin, the essence of Yoga is to feel her true identity. "To stay in the moment and to become connected with everything around me. To embrace the idea of 'all is one'. Yoga has changed my life immensely. I started 10 years ago and for the last two years, I have been teaching Yoga in Germany. Yoga is my big rescue for all of my struggles in life. It gives me the power to come back to myself and to concentrate on myself. It is such a beautiful tool for me."

Melanie and Nadine from Zurich, Switzerland emphasized that Yoga was kind of a lifeline for them. Melanie said, "We come here to feel the vibrance that's so infectious and to attend the classes and sessions that are so enriching." Nadine said, "It boosts the spirit and gives me a lot of self-validation and confidence."

Yash from Kolkata attended the event for the first time. "My mom has been coming here since 5-6 years. She loves it. This time, I decided to be here to look within, get away from my routine, just relax. Also have some kind of positive transforma-

tion, meet new people, be more tolerant and more open to ideas, look after my body, have a sense of gratitude and learn something new."

For the first time, Karen did Kundalini Yoga here during the festival with Gurushabd Singh Khalsa. She said "It was a totally different experience. I also attended a fascinating class of Leela Yoga Vinyasa with Erica Kaufman. It offered calm and a connection with nature. It was very inspirational and exciting. This is what this festival brings -- a different vision and thought. It has opened up my mind, my heart and my spirit to see and feel Yoga and live Yoga. Earlier, I thought Yoga was just a practice. Now, I am living Yoga, being Yoga. It has been a life-changing moment."

Undoubtedly, Yoga has the power to change lives. Yoga leads to a healthy body, a peaceful mind, a happy heart, and a liberated soul. There were over 70 hours of Yoga classes from Yoga teachers practicing multiple styles of Yoga including Kundalini Yoga, Power Vinyasa Yoga, Iyengar Yoga and Kriya Yoga during the seven -day festival. Some of the most interesting sessions/classes included 'The Art, Science, and Bliss of Vedic Chanting by Dr Katy Jane; Mastery of Pranayama by Mohan Bhandari; Vedanta: The Ultimate Pursuit of Man by Swami Svatmananda; Heart Chakra Balancing by Yogirishi Vishvketu; How To Manage Anxiety Through Ayurveda by Maria Alejandra Avcharian; Embodied Nonduality: The Nervous System As The Gateway To Self-Mastery by Dr Andrea Paige; Detox And Renew -- Secrets To Anti-Ageing by Dr Smita Naram; Prana Shakti -- Soul Sadhana by Saul David Raye; Sooth Your Insides: Mindfulness and Metta by Dr Eden Goldman; Yoga Nidra For Ancestral Healing and Self-Forgiveness by Kal Prakashini; and Cosmic Healing and Pranik Nidra by Dr Urmila Pande.

The diverse sessions started at 4am and ended at 5.30 pm every day. Ganga aarti, kirtans and cultural programmes followed the classes in the evening. Besides, satsangs and divine discourses were rendered by saints and spiritual masters from India. The festival helped participants to learn from enlightened spiritual leaders, yoga teachers, evolutionary thought leaders, and wellness experts to discover their inner selves.



The writer is a freelancer who specialises in lifestyle and wellness issues.



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DR. P K WARRIER (1921-2021)

Peerless Ayurvedic healer

Dr Panniyampilly Krishnankutty Warriar, the famous Indian physician was born on 5 June 1921 in Kottakkal in Malappuram District of Kerala as the youngest of six children of Sreedharan Namboothiri and Kunthi Varasyar. He had his schooling at Raja's High School, Kottakkal and Zamorin's High School, Kozhikode.

A nephew of Vaidya Ratnam P S Warriar who founded the Arya Vaidya Sala, he studied Ayurveda at the Arya Vaidya Pattasala under the tutelage of his reputed uncle. For a while a young Warriar plunged headlong into the freedom struggle and was associated with the communist movement in Manjeri that was marshalling its resources to take on the British Government.

He later returned to his roots at the Arya Vaidya Sala and took over as its Chief Physician and Managing Trustee. During his stewardship the Arya Vaidya Sala took giant strides and established several branches across the country. A concern that netted annual revenues of ₹ 9 lakh when Dr Warriar took over the reins in 1954 now boasts of a revenue of over ₹400 crore.

More than five lakh patients on an average avail the services of Arya Vaidya Sala annually. Among its clients are heads of states, intellectuals, senior bureaucrats, artists and common people from all walks of life. Dr Warriar personally treated Prime Ministers including Atal Behari Vajpayee and also President Pranab Mukherjee apart from several foreign dignitaries.

Dr Warriar was among the physicians instrumental in propagating the ancient science of Ayurveda which he opined was a path that could take time in healing but was always effective. He advocated a holistic approach in the treatment of diseases and contributed immensely to the standardisation of Ayurvedic drugs. A prolific writer and orator, Dr Warriar's writings, speeches and research papers have been compiled under the title 'Padamudragal.' He also published seminal volumes on subjects like ethnopharmacology and ayurveda and also co-authored the five-volume treatise "Medicinal Plants – A compendium of 500 species. He established a research laboratory for identification of medicinal plants to ascertain the chemical identity of their pharmaceutical constituents which eventually grew into the 'Centre for

Medicinal Plants Research.'

A genial soul who rubbed shoulders with the cognoscenti and the hoi polloi, Dr Warriar often recounted cases when patients who had exhausted all remedies under other disciplines made a beeline to the Arya Vaidya Sala and went back cured and rejuvenated. Dr Warriar turned centenarian on June 2021 and passed away on 10th July after being afflicted with Covid 19, breathing his last at the 'Kailasa Mandiram' the official headquarters of the Arya Vaidya Sala in Kottakkal.

Among his laurels were the Padma Shri (1999) and the Padma Bhushan (2010). He was also a recipient of honorary D Litt from the Calicut University and the 30th Dhanvanthari Award instituted by Maharashtra government. The Kerala government bestowed on him the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for his autobiography "Smrithi Parvam" which encapsulated his over seven decades of practice as an Ayurvedic physician. The autobiography incidentally was a best seller as well.

At an All India Ayurvedic Conference, Dr Warriar was presented with the prestigious 'Ayurveda Maharishi' award. A patron of the fine arts, the physician was instrumental in the setting up of an Academy in the name of his uncle P S Warriar which sponsored the training of students in the sublime art of Kathakali. The passing away of Dr Warriar who served the Arya Vaidya Sala till his last breath, cast a pall of gloom over the Ayurvedic fraternity across the country.

In a glowing tribute to Dr Warriar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi observed that he was saddened by the passing away of Dr P K Warriar and that his contributions to popularise Ayurveda will always be remembered. In his long and illustrious career of over seven decades, Dr Warriar carved a permanent niche in the galaxy of top physicians the world has ever seen.



C.V. Aravind is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

SATISH KAUSHIK (1956-2023)

A versatile actor

In the quicksand called Hindi film industry, there are performers who never got the top billing but could carve out a niche by creating a distinct identity of their own. In the array stands one honourable mention: Satish Kaushik, whose humble beginning saw a trajectory that took him to the heights of many of his peers.

Readers will recall a picture doing rounds in social media where he is seen getting down at the then Victoria Terminus of Mumbai station in search of a career in tinsel town. What remained constant from that moment till he breathed his last was the disarming smile on his face that seemed to be customised for humour. It stayed in his trails and travails of 68 years.

Alumnus of the acclaimed National School of Drama and the Film and Television Institute of India, Kaushik, born on 13 April 1956, could carry off roles on big and small screen with effortless and practiced ease. As someone who came from Haryana's hinterland and graduating from Delhi's Kirori Mal College in Delhi, Kaushik had already set his eyes on acting.

Those who remember him for his cameos as "Calendar" in Mr India and Pappu Pager in Deewana Mastana, would do well to remember his award-winning performances in *Ram Lakhan* and *Saajan Chale Sasural*, both blockbusters. Straddling celluloid with the more challenging theatre, he showed his histrionics as Willy Loman in the Hindi play *Salesman Ramlal*, an adaptation of Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman'.

In a meandering career, one of his highlights was as dialogue writer of the superhit *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983). His tryst as a director and producer also took off in this period with *Roop Ki Rani, Choron Ka Raja* (1993) and *Hum Aap ke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* (1999). The first, as also *Prem* (1995 with Tabu), bombed at the box office.

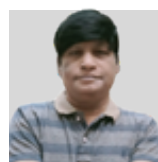
He co-wrote and anchored a TV countdown show, *Philips Top Ten*, for which he won the Screen Videocon Award. Closely bonding with Shekhar Kapoor and Anupam Kher, Kaushik in association with the latter, launched a new film company called Karol Bagh Productions. Their first film, *Tere Sang*, was directed by Satish Kaushik. A film on the legendary

historical figure of Tansen apparently never took off. Just as his dream to promote Haryana's film industry was a non-starter.

While comedy was his forte, his versatility ensured he essayed serious and negative roles with similar panache. *Jamai Raja* (1990), *Chal Mere Bhai* (2000), *Calcutta Mail* (2003), *Brick Lane* (2007) and *Udta Punjab* (2016) being striking examples. *Brick Lane* was screened at the Telluride Film Festival in US and won two nominations at the BAFTA Awards for Best Actress and Best Director.

Shrugging off failures, he would bounce back, that trade mark smile never leaving his face, for, the stalwart was groomed in the august company of Shekhar Kapoor courtesy *Masoom* (1983). His earlier failures were compensated with *Mujhe Kuch Kehna Hai* (2001) and *Badhai Ho Badhai* (2002). Thereafter, the hit parade continued through the spate of some off beat films towards the end. One common chord that ran through his career was his ability to handle anything behind or in front of the camera. From acting to direction and production, his ken was beyond question. If he did not meet commercial success at times, it was no commentary on his merits.

His career in the showbiz a mixed bag, Kaushik's personal life moved along parallel lines. Married in 1985, he lost his son aged two. Sixteen years later, he had a daughter through surrogacy. As the son of soil, he dreamt of Chandigarh Film City which ran into rough weather and never saw the light of the day. Kaushik died of a heart attack in Gurugram on 9 March 2023 at 66. Only a day before he was seen enjoying Holi revelries with Javed Akhtar and Shabana Azmi. His death ends an eventful chapter in Hindi cinema, TV and theatre.



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

LT CDR MANORANJAN KUMAR SC (-2014)

Hero of a safety mission

Manoranjana Kumar was born in Jamshedpur district of Jharkhand. He did his schooling from wherever his father, Subedar Naveen Kumar was posted. Good in academics, he had scored 91% and 89% in class X, XII respectively.

Keen to serve the armed forces like his father who was with the Armoured Corps, Manoranjan joined the Indian Navy after finishing his high school from Army Public School, Bareilly. He then underwent training in electronics engineering in Goa and Lonavala in Maharashtra. By 2014, he had been promoted to the rank of Lt Cdr and had been trained as a diver.

He joined INS (Indian Naval Ship) Sindhuratna in January 2012 and was appointed as Watch-Keeping Officer (Electrical), Diving Officer and Officer-in-Charge of third compartment. While Kilo-class submarines like INS Sindhuratna had an average life of 30 years, the Navy had carried out several refits to increase the aging vessel's life. INS Sindhuratna had undergone the last refit between May- Dec-2013. On 25 Feb 2014, with a crew of 94 personnel embarked onboard, INS Sindhuratna sailed for sea examination post completion of refit.

On 26 February at about 05.30am, when INS Sindhuratna was 80 kms off Mumbai coast, excessive build-up of smoke was reported in the third compartment that housed one-half of the submarine's main batteries. Manoranjan Kumar with his colleague, Lt Cdr Kapish Singh who was functioning as Deputy Electrical Officer, immediately swung into action. They mobilised personnel to take all possible measures in dealing with the emergency.

As the temperature in the compartment increased due to heat and visibility reduced, both officers continued to fight the emergency. At one stage, when they realised the conditions for human survival in the vicinity of damage had deteriorated, they immediately ordered the evacuation of the damage control team comprising 13 personnel. The commanding officer ordered the submarine to surface. Four separate parties were sent down to compartment 3, but were forced to retreat.

The electric mains were switched off as a precaution and the rescue teams had to work in total darkness. Message

was sent to Command HQ for help and a helicopter arrived within an hour and evacuated seven personnel. A naval fast attack craft evacuated more sailors. Manoranjan and his colleague not only fought fire, they also provided vital inputs to the Command Post on the status of damage control. This action contained the damage and prevented the fire spreading to the battery compartment, obviating the dangerous possibility of damage to the entire submarine. Despite breathing difficulty, both officers continued pushing the crew to safety. Manoranjan Kumar and Kapish Singh got exposed to toxic gases for prolonged period that proved fatal.

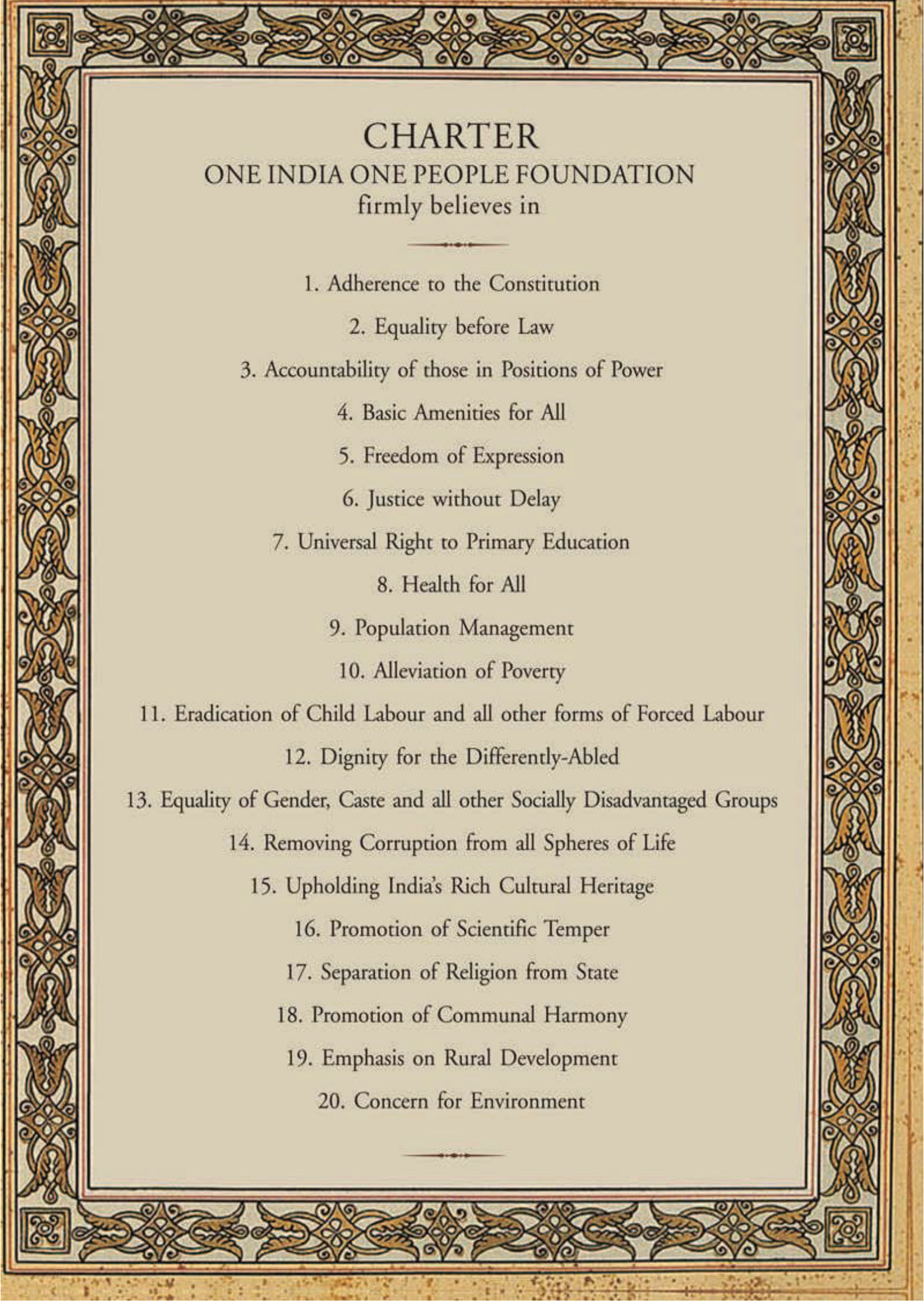
There was a row that the batteries were too old and red tape had slowed the procurement of critical safety equipment. Investigations established the fire was not caused by batteries. Taking moral responsibility, the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral D K Joshi resigned.

On 15 August 2014, Manoranjan Kumar was decorated with Shaurya Chakra for exceptional courage, camaraderie, devotion to duty and supreme sacrifice. He kept the safety of the submarine and personnel above his own. His act of bravery and courage was beyond the call of duty and in keeping with the traditions of Indian Navy.

Kumar's body was received with a guard of honour at the Ranchi airport before being taken to his family home in Jamshedpur. His father Subedar Naveen Kumar, his two uncles, and his younger brother Sumant, a student of class XII flew from Mumbai to Ranchi with his body. They were accompanied by seven of Manoranjan's course-mates from the Navy. Jharkhand's first chief minister and leader of Jharkhand Vikas Prajatantrik Shri Babulal Marandi, Jamshedpur MP Dr. Ajoy Kumar and officials from the Governor's office also reached the airport.

Lt Cdr Manoranjan Kumar is survived by his parents Subedar Naveen Kumar, mother Smt. Rukmini Devi and brother Sumant.

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



CHARTER

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

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

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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