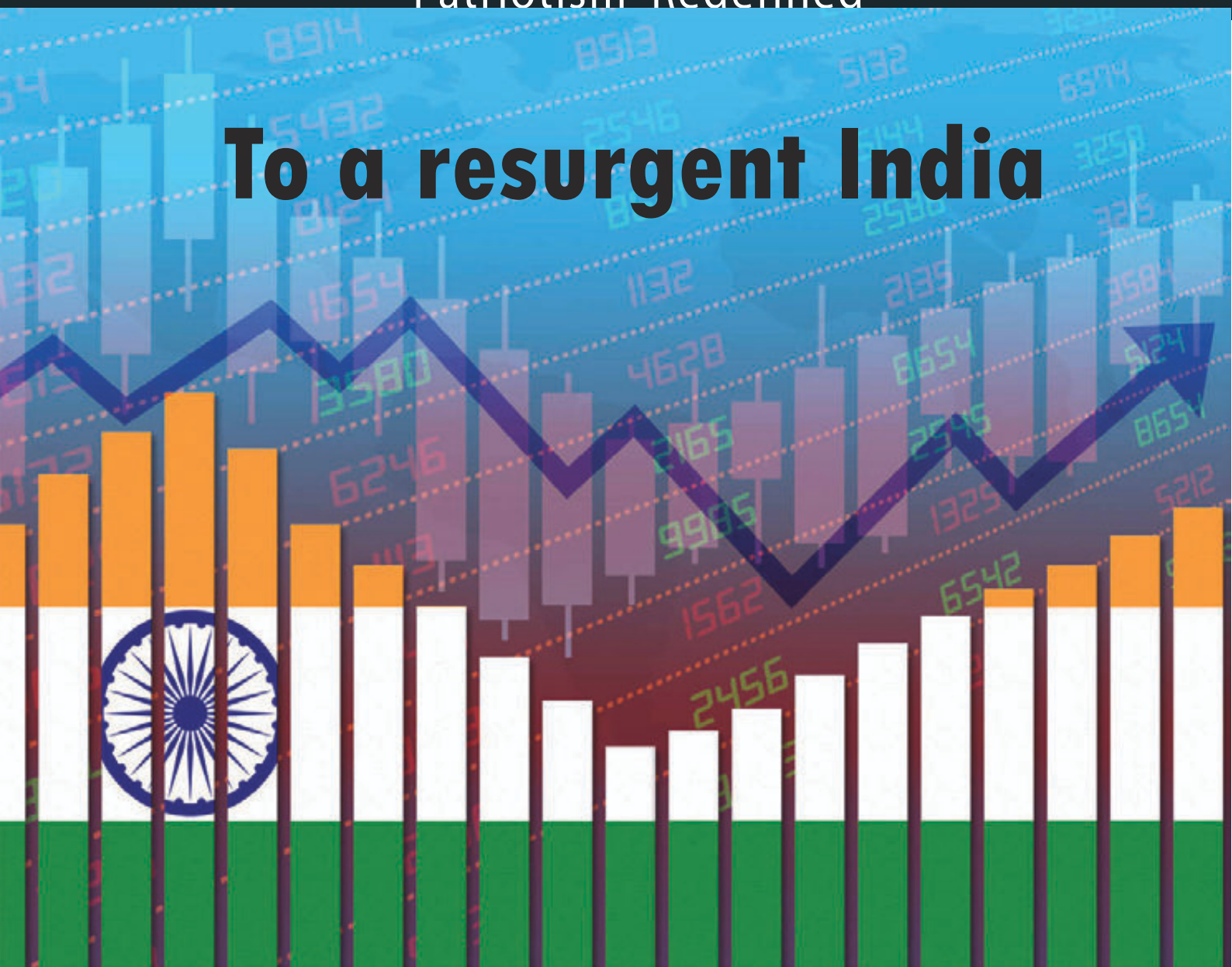


ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined

To a resurgent India



ON THE CUSP OF BEING WORLD LEADER

IN THE ELITE SPACE EXPLORATION CLUB

SHOWCASING STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

Know India Better

JEJURI

THE QUANT TOWN OF
MAHARASHTRA

Face to Face

DR UDAY MODI

SWACHH BHARAT



SWACHH BHARAT PLAN-B*
* USING VR TECHNOLOGY



THE 1
UNIVERSE CONT



IT MADE LITTLE SENSE THEN TO
HAVE A SEPARATE MR AND MISS
UNIVERSE CONTEST. WE COMBINED
THE TWO.



IT'S NOT YOGA. UNCLE SAM
ALWAYS BENDS OVER BACKWARDS
WHEN COURTING A NEW ALLY



CONTENTS

AUGUST 2023

Vol. 25/02

THEME:

A RESURGENT INDIA



Morparia's Page

On the cusp of being world leader **Manu Shrivastava** 02 04

In the elite space exploration club **Anushka Singh** 06

Showcasing strength in diversity **Neeti Prakash** 08

India's diplomacy making ripples **Nandini Rao** 10

Leading the climate change combat **Nimisha Lakhia** 12

Sailing through controversies **Ruchi Verma** 14

Indians, best resource for a vibrant India **Kriti Kalra** 16

Know India Better

JEJURI

The quaint temple town of Maharashtra **Nandini Rao** 17

Face to Face

Dr Uday Modi **A.Radhakrishnan** 25

Features

Portraying minorities in Hindi cinema **Shoma A. Chatterji** 29

The scroll painters of Naya, Pingla **Hiraman** 31

Manipur, plumbing new depths in shame **C V Aravind** 33

Great Indians



LT COL HARIPAL
KAUSHIK VIR CHAKRA



SHARADA RAJAN IYENGAR



GUFI PAINTAL



Managing Editor
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

Editor
Anuradha Dhareshwar

Design
Ananta Art Services

OIOP Clubs
Nagesh Bangera

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

visit us at:

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

On the cusp of being world leader

*India's resurgence gained momentum with the emergence of visionary leaders who recognised the need for holistic transformation in India. **Manu Shrivastava** cites Prime Minister Narendra Modi's example, whose visionary approach has rekindled hopes of India reclaiming its position as a global powerhouse.*



9,000 km length of economic corridors has been envisaged for implementation under Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I

India stands on the precipice of a remarkable transformation. As it emerges from the shadows of its past, India is positioning itself to become a true global leader. The journey has not been without its challenges, but under a visionary leadership, the country is experiencing an unprecedented resurgence.

From its thriving economy to its impressive reduction in poverty rates, India's progress is nothing short of extraordinary. Her economic growth has propelled the nation onto the global stage, inviting opportunities and fuelling optimism for both domestic and international investors.

India's journey began with the country gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1947, marking a new era of hope and opportunities. However, the initial years were marred by economic challenges, political instability, and social unrest.

Despite these obstacles, India has made significant

strides. The first few decades saw the establishment of robust democratic institutions, technological advancements in various sectors, and a growing middle class hungry for change. The nation's diverse population demonstrated resilience and determination to overcome adversity.

However, as India aimed to assert itself on the global stage, it faced stumbling blocks along the way. Economic reforms in the early 90s kick-started a process of liberalisation but also exposed vulnerabilities within the system. Corruption became rampant, hindering development initiatives and eroding public trust.

Leadership matters

The resurgence gained momentum with the emergence of visionary leaders who recognised the need for holistic transformation in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for example, with his visionary approach has rekindled hopes of India reclaiming its position as a global powerhouse.

Since assuming office in 2014, PM Modi has exhibited remarkable vision, determination, and leadership, propelling India towards greatness on the world stage. His unwavering commitment to economic reforms has been a cornerstone of his leadership.

Initiatives such as ‘Make in India’ and ‘Digital India’ have successfully attracted foreign investment and promoted entrepreneurship, bolstering economic growth. Focus on financial inclusion has brought banking services to millions of previously unbanked individuals, promoting economic empowerment at all levels of society.

A proactive approach to infrastructure development has given a significant boost to India's connectivity and growth. Ambitious projects like ‘Bharatmala’ highway network and ‘Sagarmala’ port development programmes have not only improved transportation and logistics but have also catalysed job creation across diverse sectors. Infrastructure projects like smart cities and renewable energy ventures have added further impetus to employment prospects.

There has been a display of exceptional diplomatic acumen by India, by actively engaging with nations across the globe. Bilateral ties have strengthened while promoting Indian interests on international platforms. The government’s dynamic foreign policy approach has fostered alliances with countries like Japan, Israel, and Arab nations paving the way for collaborations in areas such as technology transfer, defence cooperation, and energy security.

Innovation and technology

India presents an enormous market and a vast pool of talent and resources. Its economic growth rate has been consistently impressive, surpassing many developed countries. The key driver of India's thriving economy is its diverse industrial sector. From manufacturing to services, India has witnessed exponential growth in various sectors such as information technology, pharmaceuticals, automotive, and textiles. Diversification has resulted in increased productivity, job creation, and inflow of foreign investments.

India's economic success story is a result of innovation and technological advancement. The country has become a global hub for research and development in fields like software development, biotechnology, and renewable energy. Indian companies are at the forefront of innovation globally, delivering cutting-edge solutions that address complex challenges.

India has also positioned itself as a major player in international trade. The government has implemented policies that promote exports while simultaneously attracting foreign direct investment into the country. This approach has resulted in a significant rise in both imports and exports across sectors like engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, agriculture products, and IT services.

Emerging sectors in India are creating new avenues of employment that were unimaginable just a few years ago. The tech industry, for instance, has experienced exponential growth, with Bangalore now being hailed as the Silicon Valley of India. This technological boom has generated an array of job opportunities in fields like software development, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and more.

Beyond industry, another crucial contributor to India's formidable economic progress is its thriving service sector. The country has become a hub for outsourcing services in areas such as software development, customer support, digital marketing, and financial analysis. With favourable government policies and a large pool of educated professionals proficient in English, India has successfully positioned itself as an attractive destination for international companies seeking cost-effective solutions without compromising quality.

Trade and commerce

The dynamic nature of the stock market has been instrumental in propelling India towards economic success. The Sensex, comprising 30 of India's top-performing companies, showcases the strength and resilience of Indian businesses across

various sectors. With each surge in its value, investors from around the globe are drawn to India, recognising its potential for high returns and long-term stability.

The government has implemented several progressive policies aimed at attracting foreign investments and bolstering domestic industries. These reforms have created an investor-friendly environment promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustained economic growth.

India's consistent push towards digitisation and technological advancements has played a vital role in driving up stock market indices like the Sensex. The rapid expansion of digital infrastructure across urban and rural areas has opened doors for countless businesses to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. From fin-tech start-ups revolutionising financial services to e-commerce platforms transforming retail markets, India is at the forefront of leveraging technology for economic progress.

This promises a plethora of opportunities for job seekers. The country's thriving job market is attracting talent from various sectors both nationally and internationally. It is being aided by a relentless focus on skill development and entrepreneurship. Initiatives such as 'Skill India' have been instrumental in bridging the gap between education and employment, equipping millions with the necessary skills to thrive in an ever-evolving global economy.

India's economic growth has been nothing short of remarkable, propelling the nation towards becoming a global leader. Over the past decade, India's GDP has experienced a steady upward trajectory, showcasing its potential to surpass even the most developed economies in the world.

The agricultural sector is one of the most important ones in India. Advancements in agricultural technology have paved the way for increased productivity and efficiency. Improved irrigation techniques and better access to credit facilities have significantly contributed to enhanced yields and food security.

The road ahead

As India stands on the brink of becoming a global leader, the road ahead is paved with immense opportunities and challenges. The nation's journey towards global leadership requires sustained progress in multiple spheres, including infrastructure development, education and innovation, sustainable growth, environment protection, and diplomatic relations.

Ambitious projects like Bharatmala and Sagarmala, aim to transform India's transport and logistics sector. The development of smart cities across the nation is another crucial aspect of India's path to world leadership. India is nurturing a pool of talented individuals and leaders for the future. There is also a sustained focus on research and development.

India's path to world leadership also necessitates a commitment to sustainable growth. By prioritising renewable energy sources and adopting greener practices, India aims to lead the way in reducing carbon emissions and combating climate change. India is also forging strong diplomatic relations with nations across the globe. By actively engaging in multi-lateral organisations like the United Nations and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), India is playing an active role in shaping global policies.



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

In the elite space exploration club

*Ranked among the top five nations, India's advancements in the space technology sector are now in global domain. The country has demonstrated -- by the regular space missions undertaken including the Moon Mission – it is playing a leading role by launching satellites for the SAARC nations. India is also offering its space facilities to other nations. **Anushka Singh** explores.*



ISRO launched its third lunar mission Chandrayaan-3 in July 2023

In the field of science and technology, India has made strides and advances like none other. In the near future also, India's focus on the two leading pillars of growth and development is clear and strong. India has always been a frontrunner in science and technology and is all set to lead the world in the future as well.

The National Technology Day, celebrated every year on 11 May, commemorates the post-Independence achievements of India's science and technology sector. The celebration was started by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to honour Indian scientists, engineers and technologists who worked for India's scientific and technological advancement. In 2023, India marked 25 years of celebrating the day.

On the first National Technology Day, observed on 11 May 1998, there were three major achievements of India's leading science and technology experts – the first test flight of Hansa-3, India's indigenously built aircraft; successful test firing of missile Trishul; and, the day of Operation Shakti i.e. Pokhran-II nuclear tests that demonstrated India's capability to build fission

and thermonuclear weapons and sealed India's status as a nuclear power.

It was owing to these stellar achievements that the-then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee added 'Jai Vigyan' to Lal Bahadur Shastri's slogan of 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'. A strong focus on science and technology has always been integral to India's growth story. A key driver for economic growth, this field has brought laurels to the nation and is a promising sector determining India's leadership in the years to come.

Innovation hub

On 11 May 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called out India's Innovation Renaissance and how India's sustained focus to strengthen the technology and innovation ecosystem in the country is transforming India into a global innovation hub.

The theme for this year was 'School to Startups - Igniting Young Minds to Innovate' to encourage and promote

inventions from the youth to support start-ups with a special focus on the highly-competitive and latest-emerging field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Technology.

India's Global Innovation Index Rank has jumped from the 81st position to the 40th position where the youth of the country are setting up their own digital ventures and start-ups.

A special programme was also introduced for multiple projects – with an inflow of ₹ 5,800 crore for development and enhancement in the technology sector – as per the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' through strengthening scientific institutions in the country.

India is also setting up a Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) - a multidisciplinary mega-science project that requires expertise from a variety of fields such as laser, vacuum, optics, computer, physics, etc. - as part of the worldwide network.

LIGO-India will be one of the foremost science and technology initiatives of the 21st century as it will nurture brand new and cutting-edge research opportunities.

Leading scientific research

Indian scientists are in demand in research and development centres around the world. In the Alper Dodger (AD) Scientific Index 2023, 52 Indian scientists ranked in the top two per cent in the world. In the top two per cent scientists' list, India ranks at number 21. In the overall ranking, scientists from 216 countries were listed and 50,245 Indian scientists were on the list.

In the field of scientific research, India is one of the top five nations for space exploration. India's advancements in the space technology sector are widely known, globally recognised and demonstrated by the regular space missions undertaken including the Moon Mission. India is playing a leading role by launching satellites for the SAARC nations. India is also offering its space facilities to other nations.

India is one of the most desired destinations for investment for technology transactions – it stands at the third position globally. There has been a sharp increase in investment in science and technology in recent years with an increasing number of foreign and multi-national companies establishing research and development centres in India.

The Gross Expenditure on R & D (GERD) in India has been steadily rising over the years. Several policies introduced by the government are encouraging research and development by both private and public sector entities. Other policies and schemes are tapping on the human resource and enabling more advanced research, cementing India's position as a science and technology hub.

India's research segment is fast growing. Today, the nation is the top exporter of IT (Information Technology) products worldwide. In smart materials, high-specification machine processes and biofuels, India ranks second globally.

India is also aggressively pushing for patents and new rules are encouraging more education institutes to file for patents. In the domain of number of peer-reviewed science and engineering publications, India ranks third.

Space explorations

India's space sector is fast growing and very promising. There are more opportunities for investment and research now than ever before. Established in 1969, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched the country's first satellite Aryabhata in 1975. The list of India's and ISRO's successful missions since inception is endless.

India's first interplanetary mission to planet Mars - Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) - was launched on board PSLV-C25 on 5 November 2013. With this, ISRO became the fourth space agency in the world to send a spacecraft into the Martian orbit successfully.

The Mangalyaan spacecraft successfully entered Mars orbit on 23 September 2014. India's space technological edge was established when MOM, designed for a mission life of six months, completed seven years in the orbit. India was the first nation to successfully execute the complex Mars mission in the first attempt itself. The Mars mission cemented India's position in the space exploration sector.

Another important mission as part of the Indian space programme is the Gaganyaan – India's first manned space mission. The Gaganyaan project envisions launching a three-member crew into an orbit of 400 km for a three-day mission and return to Earth successfully. It will be a demonstration of human spaceflight capability.

This project is being developed indigenously with in-house experts and technologies. In a mission like this, human safety is the most important factor. So, new technologies based on engineering systems, human centric systems, etc., are being developed to ensure this. Just recently, the first batch of crew recovery team of Mission Gaganyaan completed Phase-1 of training at Indian Navy's Water Survival Training Facility in Kochi.

Future missions include Aditya L1 - the first space-based Indian mission to study the Sun; NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR) - a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) observatory being jointly developed by NASA and ISRO to understand changes in Earth's ecosystems, ice mass, vegetation biomass, sea level rise, ground water and natural hazards; Chandrayaan-3 - a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface.

Prime Minister Modi has said that India considers technology as a tool of the nation's progress, not a means to assert its dominance. India's leadership in scientific research and technology and the intention to use these for the upliftment of society and human welfare is unique. India is a peace-loving nation and has historically used technology for empowerment. In the future too, India intends to use it for upgrading human life, removing imbalance and promoting social justice – true mark of a global leader.

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

Showcasing strength in diversity

*India has always set an example making a virtue out of necessity. The countrymen with intrinsic differences of religion, language, culture, etc., are tolerant. India's people are its strength – they coexist peacefully, prosper collectively and help in nation building. No other nation in the world can boast of the diversity that exists in India, observes **Neeti Prakash**.*



No other nation in the world can boast of the diversity that exists in India

India's strength lies in its diversity, derived from various geographical landscapes, languages, cultures, cuisine, handicrafts, natural resources, ethnicities, etc. India's states and union territories are diligently contributing towards nation building in unique ways and helping prepare India for the challenges of the future.

In the year 2011, the massive state of Uttar Pradesh emerged as an incredible testament to human habitation, housing a staggering population of around 200 million people. To fully appreciate the magnitude of this, it's important to envision for a moment that Uttar Pradesh, in all its magnificence, stood alone as an independent nation - an impressive feat!

In this alternate reality, it would have boldly claimed the title of the fifth most populous country on the planet,

surpassing the populous land of Brazil (with 195 million people). The sheer weight of this demographic truth is both captivating and thought-provoking, beckoning us to explore further.

The demographics

After the latest Census was conducted in 2011, a highly enlightening demographic map of the country was unveiled that offered a fascinating insight into the population dynamics of India and its relevance in the 'global' world. The astonishing revelation was that the most populous state of India surpassed the entire population of another nation, serving as a powerful testament to the immense size and scale of India's demographic strength.

It also disclosed that even the least populous demographic entity of India boasted figures equivalent to the serene

and picturesque island of Bermuda, for example, showcasing the remarkable diversity within the country.

India's southern archipelago of Lakshadweep gracefully emerged as the least populous territory of India, serving as a home to approximately 60,000 inhabitants. India's vast population diversity is a reflection of the intricate tapestry of its states.

The same demographic map reflected a significant Hindu majority, with Hindus comprising the largest religious group among all Indian states and union territories. With an impressive 966 million adherents, India housed approximately 94 per cent of the world's Hindu population during that period.

The sheer scale of Hindu residents in just four Indian states - namely Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh - far surpassed the combined numbers of Hindus residing outside of India, underscoring the significance of these regions in shaping the global Hindu community and presenting India as a leader on global fora. Kerala emerged as the most religiously-diverse state with a large population of Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

Located on the western coast of India, Maharashtra boasts several significant attributes. Notably, it encompasses Mumbai, the financial hub and largest metropolis of the country, rendering it an influential powerhouse. However, Maharashtra's prominence extends beyond economic prowess. This state is also home to the largest numbers of Jains and Buddhists in India.

On the other hand, the Northern state of Punjab, nestled on India-Pakistan border, claims a distinctive identity with its concentration of Sikhs. In fact, with approximately 58 per cent of Punjab's 28 million residents identifying as Sikh in 2011, this state serves as the primary abode for the majority of the world's Sikhs.

States contribute

India's diverse landscape of states and territories presents a marked contrast in terms of wealth, as evident from the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) figures registered in 2019 and 2020.

Situated along the breathtaking Arabian Sea on India's western coast, the enchanting region of Goa, and India's smallest state, mesmerises visitors with its extraordinary natural beauty and landscapes. Goa surpasses the lowest per capita GDP by a staggering tenfold.

Accustomed to opulence, Goa boasts the highest per capita GDP in all of India, firmly establishing itself at a remarkable USD 22,000, akin to some of the most prosperous nations in the world.

Notably, literacy rates in India vary greatly among states, revealing a stark disparity. Bihar recorded a distressingly low literacy rate of only 64 per cent among individuals aged seven and above, as illustrated by the Indian Census of 2011.

Conversely, Kerala proudly claims the highest proportion of literate residents, with an impressive literacy rate reaching a staggering 94 per cent. The literacy rates in India as per the 2011 Census were quite commendable, with around three-quarters of the Indian population being able to read and write.

According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21, male literacy in India stands at 84.4 per cent and female literacy stands at 71.5 per cent. The Indian state of Andhra Pradesh has a literacy rate of 66.4 per cent, making it the lowest among all states in India, and Kerala still ranked highest in the list with 96.2 per cent.

Economic growth

India's southern states have some of the largest economies in the country and are contributing in a big way in India's growth story. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana are the major contributors to India's GDP – they account for more than 30 per cent of India's economic output. Estimates reveal that the southern states will contribute 35 per cent to India's seven trillion-dollar economy that the nation is expected to achieve by 2030. The primary contributors will be Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as the latter is estimated to emerge as a one trillion-dollar economy by the same time. So, the southern states will be the growth engine for India, providing a strong support to India's goal of becoming a 35 trillion-dollar economy by 2047.

Maharashtra, with a diverse economy and a strong focus on manufacturing, finance and services sectors, has the highest GDP among all Indian states. Culturally-rich Maharashtra contributes about 14 per cent to the overall GDP of India.

There are several reasons for Maharashtra's success – a sustained focus on infrastructure development, a booming IT sector that has lucrative returns, a focus on setting up Special Economic Zones or SEZs to provide infrastructure incentives and other ease of business to industries, initiatives to boost the services sector, increased investments in upgrading, education, upskilling, training and a strong focus on initiatives to improve agricultural productivity.

India's Information Technology (IT) sector or the IT Industry is the largest contributor in terms of the total exports of India. For many years now, the IT sector in India has been contributing significantly to economic growth and prosperity. The largest IT hubs in India are located in three states, namely Haryana, Karnataka and Telangana, and the combined contribution to the Indian GDP of these three states is a significant 17 per cent.

Gujarat is one of the richest states in India. The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Gujarat is over 150 billion dollars with well-established textiles, chemicals and petrochemicals industries. One of the primary reasons for the economic prosperity in the state is the presence of a strong industrial base. Over the years, Gujarat has focused on facilitating businesses and industries by improving infrastructure such as airports, ports, railways and roadways and that has worked greatly to its advantage.

India is a country of diversity and has always been known so. Indians with intrinsic differences of religion, language, culture, etc., are tolerant. India's people are its strength – they coexist peacefully, prosper collectively and help in nation building. No other nation in the world can boast of the diversity that exists in India.

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

India's diplomacy making ripples

Nandini Rao explains how today, nations turn to India in times of crisis, seeking its assistance and counsel. The Indian government has truly redefined foreign diplomacy, placing India at the forefront of global affairs. With big plans, the Prime Minister's continued efforts are set to further elevate India's position as a key player on the international stage.



PM Modi has left an indelible mark on foreign diplomacy during his nine-year tenure

India's diplomatic metre is at a record high and all set to grow. One cannot ignore the overwhelming reception Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives during his overseas visits, which attests to his popularity and the eagerness of the world leaders to engage with him.

Even US President Joe Biden, during a meeting of Quad leaders in Tokyo, jokingly remarked, "You are causing me a real problem..." as he received numerous requests to attend events where Modi would be speaking during his first state visit to the US in June.

PM Modi has left an indelible mark on foreign diplomacy during his nine-year tenure, redefining India's global standing and garnering admiration from people around the world. His powerful speeches, candid demeanour, and the genuine warmth he extends through heartfelt hugs are unique for a world leader.

His diplomatic efforts have taken him to nations big and

small, reviving long-forgotten ties and forging new connections.

His adept handling of international relations has elevated India's position on the global stage like never before. And, it has set the tone for India's global presence for years to come.

Assertive India

In an unprecedented move for India since its Independence, PM Modi chaired a meeting during India's presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 9 August 2021. The debate titled 'Enhancing Maritime Security — A Case for International Cooperation' saw Modi outlining a comprehensive five-principle framework.

He emphasised the importance of removing barriers to maritime trade and highlighted India's Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) framework, which aims to enhance

regional maritime security. He also underscored the need to respect the rights of seafarers from other countries for the promotion of free maritime trade.

On 1 December 2022, India assumed the monthly rotating presidency of UNSC. This was the second time, after August 2021, that India presided over the Council during its two-year tenure as an elected UNSC member. On 14 December 2022, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres inaugurated a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the United Nations headquarters – the first time in history.

On 21 June 2023, International Yoga Day, United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) President Csaba Korosi along with India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ruchira Kamboj and New York City Mayor Eric Adams welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he arrived to lead a special Yoga session at the UN headquarters in New York City. The world observing the ancient Indian practice of yoga is a remarkable feat in itself.

Europe et al

In 2015, PM Modi became the first Indian leader to address the British Parliament. His speech, laced with humour and historical references, received a standing ovation at the UK Parliament's Royal Gallery. In his address, he touched upon crucial issues such as terrorism and radicalisation while emphasising the special relationship between India and the United Kingdom. He underscored that the relationship transcends mere commerce and competition, drawing strength from their shared spiritual links and ideals.

Amidst the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, PM Modi had embarked on a crucial trip to Europe. His visit to Denmark, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in two decades, held immense significance. It is a turning point in India-Denmark ties. Relations between India and Denmark had been strained since Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 2002 Copenhagen trip when the then premier Anders Fogh Rasmussen offered unsolicited advice on dealing with Pakistan and Kashmir. The subsequent years saw no prime ministerial visits to Denmark, and even during Manmohan Singh's 2009 visit for a United Nations meeting in Copenhagen, no bilateral talks were held.

Modi made history by becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Palestine, a nation that India has historically supported. The visit was hailed as "historic" by Palestinian leaders and was deemed truly memorable and groundbreaking by India's foreign ministry. During his three-hour stopover, Modi delivered a speech in the presence of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, endorsing the cause of a "sovereign, independent" Palestine. This visit marked a significant step in strengthening India's ties with Palestine.

Inviting SAARC leaders

Modi shattered convention even before taking oath as the Prime Minister on 26 May 2014. As the prime minister-elect, he extended invitations to the heads of governments of all South Asian states for his swearing-in ceremony. While foreign envoys had attended similar events in the past, no world leader had been invited to what was traditionally considered a domestic affair. This unprecedented move reflected Modi's vision of regional cooperation and engagement. Notably, despite speculations, then-Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended the event, signalling a glimmer of hope for improved relations between India

and Pakistan.

EAM Jaishankar elaborates that India is perceived as a credible and effective development partner by the world, particularly the Global South. The country is recognised for its commitment to delivering tangible results on the ground.

The minister recently strongly criticised Canada for hosting an event that celebrated the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He expressed concern about the space given to separatists, extremists, and individuals who advocate violence in Canada. He deemed it detrimental to the relationship between the two countries, questioning the motive behind such actions rightly stated, "We are at a loss to understand, other than the requirements of vote-bank politics, why anybody would do this."

Addressing the issue of 700 Indian students, primarily from Punjab, facing deportation from Canada due to fraudulent admission offers, Jaishankar stressed that these students should not be penalised for the crimes of others. He highlighted that they had taken admission and pursued their studies in good faith, emphasising that it would be unfair to punish them.

Approach on terrorism

India has remained steadfast in the face of coercion, inducements, and false narratives, vis-à-vis her approach to the situation along the Northern border and firm opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative. India has registered commendable success in delegitimising cross-border terrorism, demonstrating its commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Yet, on the ongoing tensions between India and China along their border, there is a need for both countries to find a way to disengage. Escalated tensions resulting from the clash in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, emphasise the importance of peaceful resolution and diplomatic engagement.

India has made her position resolute and stands as a reliable development partner for nations across the world, boldly criticised even developed nations like Canada for its dangerous celebration of Indira Gandhi's assassination, advocated for fair treatment of Indian students, reiterated India's principled approach to border disputes and cross-border terrorism, called for disengagement with China, and condemned Rahul Gandhi's remarks made overseas.

Today, nations turn to India in times of crisis, seeking its assistance and counsel. The Indian government has truly redefined foreign diplomacy, placing India at the forefront of global affairs. With big plans, the Prime Minister's continued efforts are set to further elevate India's position as a key player on the international stage.

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.

Leading the climate change combat

Nimisha Lakhia points out India has embraced its role as a global leader in combating climate change by recognising that sustainable development goes hand in hand with protecting planet's future. Through innovative policies and ambitious commitments, India is charting a path towards a greener and more sustainable future.



The 'Namami Gange' programme launched in 2014 has helped in rejuvenating the River Ganga through a multi-faceted approach

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing our planet today. With rising temperatures, melting glaciers, and extreme weather events becoming increasingly common, it is crucial for nations to step up their efforts in combating this global crisis. In this regard, India has emerged as a true leader in the fight against climate change.

India's commitment to sustainable development and delivering results, which most nations have failed, has positioned it as a global climate change leader. Reducing pollution, embracing renewable energy, preserving forests, ensuring water security are some of the initiatives that promise a greener future for India.

The scientific consensus on climate change is clear: human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels and defor-

estation, have accelerated the warming of our planet. The consequences are far-reaching and include rising temperatures, extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation, etc., all of which lead to heavy economic losses.

As the most populous nation, India is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. With millions dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods and a vast coastline susceptible to sea-level rise, urgent action is imperative.

However, amidst this urgency lies a glimmer of hope. India has embraced its role as a global leader in combating climate change by recognising that sustainable development goes hand in hand with protecting our planet's future. Through innovative policies and ambitious commitments, India is charting a path towards a greener and more sustainable future.

Sustainable development

India, a nation rich in cultural heritage and diverse landscapes, has set an exemplary path for other nations to follow with its commitment to sustainable development. Recognising the need to balance economic progress with environmental preservation, India has implemented a range of initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable practices.

One of the key milestones in India's commitment to sustainable development is the adoption of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). India has made significant progress towards achieving these goals through policies that promote renewable energy generation, clean transportation systems, and waste management practices.

India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) serves as a comprehensive roadmap for addressing climate change challenges while ensuring inclusive growth. The plan focuses on promoting energy efficiency measures across sectors, enhancing forest cover through afforestation programmes, boosting renewable energy capacity, and implementing measures for water conservation.

Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), launched jointly with France in 2015, aims to mobilise global efforts to harness solar energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Established by PM Modi and French President Francois Hollande in November 2015, ISA aims to scale up solar energy, reduce the cost of solar power generation through aggregation of demand for solar finance, technologies, innovation, research and development, and capacity building.

The government is constantly working towards transforming India into a low-carbon economy while ensuring inclusive growth. By aligning its national priorities with global sustainability objectives, India demonstrates its untiring dedication to building a greener future for generations to come.

Reducing carbon footprint

Despite being the world's most populous country, India has made significant strides in curbing emissions and fostering sustainable growth. One of the key factors contributing to India's impressive CO2 footprint reduction is the rapid adoption of renewable energy sources.

The country has witnessed an exponential growth in solar and wind power installations, with ambitious targets set for further expansion. By investing heavily in renewable energy infrastructure, India aims to generate 40 per cent of its total electricity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

In addition to renewable energy, India has also implemented policies aimed at curbing pollution from industries. Stringent emission norms have been introduced for automobiles and factories, ensuring that pollutants are minimised and air quality is improved. Initiatives such as the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) have been launched to combat air pollution in major cities across the country.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched NCAP in January, 2019 with an aim to improve air quality in 131 cities (non-attainment cities and Million Plus Cities) in 24 States / UTs by engaging all stakeholders.

Embracing renewable energy is the cornerstone of future development. Recognising the need for sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels, India has embarked on a remarkable journey towards becoming a global leader in renewable energy adoption.

One of the key drivers behind India's success in embracing renewable energy is its ambitious target of achieving 450 gigawatts (GW) of renewable capacity by 2030. This includes a significant increase in solar and wind power installations, as well as exploring other clean technologies such as hydroelectric power and bioenergy. This move has attracted investments from both domestic and international players, fostering a thriving ecosystem of green energy projects across the country. As more solar parks and wind farms emerge, there is a surge in employment opportunities ranging from manufacturing solar

panels to installing wind turbines. This transition towards clean energy not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also promotes sustainable economic growth, making India an attractive destination for green investments.

Protecting green gold

India's rich and diverse forest cover has long been regarded as the country's "green gold" and efforts are being made to conserve this. These initiatives not only contribute to combating climate change but also safeguard biodiversity and provide livelihood opportunities for millions of people.

Through the Joint Forest Management (JFM), a unique partnership between local communities and the government, local residents actively participate in forest protection, afforestation, and reforestation activities. Through their collective efforts, they serve as guardians of the forests, ensuring sustainable use of resources while empowering themselves economically.

Numerous national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and protected areas across India's vast landscape are meticulously managed with rigorous conservation plans in place. They serve as havens for endangered species like tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, and countless other flora and fauna. By preserving these natural habitats from encroachment and illegal activities such as poaching or logging, India actively promotes biodiversity conservation on a global scale.

Cleaning Ganga

The Ganga, often revered as the lifeline of India, has faced unprecedented pollution levels for decades. However, in recent years, India has undertaken an ambitious mission to clean up this mighty river and restore its pristine glory. This initiative not only showcases India's commitment to environmental preservation but also serves as a shining example of how collective efforts can bring about positive change.

Recognising the critical state of the Ganga, the Indian government launched the Namami Gange programme in 2014 – it aims to rejuvenate and protect the river through a multi-faceted approach that involves various stakeholders, including local communities, environmental organisations, and government bodies. The programme focuses on curbing pollution from industrial waste, sewage discharge, and religious activities along the riverbanks.

One remarkable aspect of the Ganga cleaning initiative is its emphasis on public participation. The government has actively involved citizens through awareness campaigns, cleanliness drives, and educational programs. By instilling a sense of responsibility among individuals and communities living near the riverbanks, this grassroots approach has not only resulted in tangible improvements but also fostered a deeper connection between people and their environment.

Water security is also a major issue today in the backdrop of climate change. India has taken significant strides towards ensuring water security for its people. The government encourages farmers to shift from traditional irrigation methods to more modern techniques such as drip irrigation and sprinkler systems. This not only reduces water wastage but also improves crop productivity.

To tackle urban water scarcity, India has invested in infrastructure development projects such as constructing reservoirs, dams, and canals for efficient storage and distribution of water resources. Implementation of wastewater treatment plants ensures that treated water can be reused for non-potable purposes such as irrigation or industrial processes.

Nimisha Lakhia is a trainee with DraftCraft Media Network - an initiative of DraftCraft International – a platform for media students, experts, and professionals to quash populist trends and help create unbiased and independent news.

Sailing through controversies

Ruchi Verma explains that the legendary struggle for independence from the British colonial rule, which spanned numerous decades and inspired several other colonies to fight for their independence, played a pivotal role in shaping India's trajectory towards growth and as a vibrant democratic nation.



MGNREGA serves as a social security scheme by granting employment to rural labourers across India

India, a nation flourishing with diversity and teeming with vibrancy, has not been untouched by the currents of controversies that have surged throughout its rich and poignant history. These impassioned and contentious debates have assumed a formidable role in shaping India's trajectory – the present and the future – propelling it towards profound transformations.

History is witness of the many notable controversies that have beset India, while simultaneously delving into the metamorphosis it has undergone as a result. By meticulously examining these landmark moments, one can unlock a deeper understanding of India's unparalleled resilience and relentless pursuit of growth and harmony, within India and in the world.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of India's compelling engagement with controversies, it is important to delve into the historical landscape against which these gripping events unfolded. The legendary struggle for independence from the British colonial rule, which spanned numerous decades and inspired several other colonies to fight for their independence, played a pivotal role in shaping India's trajectory towards growth and as a vibrant democratic nation.

Throughout this difficult journey riddled with uncertainties and controversies, heated debates inevitably emerged ultimately forging the path towards a nation that thrived on diverse perspectives and the power of dissenting voices and imbibed the same values as an independent nation.

Controversies and social progress

India, a nation renowned for its vast cultural legacy and remarkable diversity, has consistently grappled with contentious social issues, such as caste discrimination, religious tensions and gender inequalities. However, rather than succumbing to the weight of these controversies, India has utilised them as catalysts for initiating crucial dialogues and igniting the flame of change and progression.

Through persistent conversations and logical debates, legislative ones included, India has managed to move ahead on the path of being a mature nation, implementing significant reforms that combat the long-standing inequalities that have plagued its societal fabric. In this way, India stands as a testament to the transformative power of confronting social disparities head-on, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

The reservation policy implemented in India is proof that the nation is committed to rectify historical injustices and foster social inclusivity. The government initiatives, enshrined in the Indian Constitution through various amendments, hold two key objectives.

Firstly, it aims to ensure the adequate representation of backward classes or economically-disadvantaged sections within the state's services. Secondly, it strives to empower these marginalised communities by providing them with opportunities that were historically denied to them. By embracing reservation, India endeavours to create a society where every citizen, regardless of their background, can contribute and thrive on an equal footing.

The reservation policy has been controversial but necessary to uplift the backward sections in the country. Reservation is offered in the education sector, during recruiting for government jobs and also, for the seats in Union and State Assembly. This policy, though contentious, sought to uplift marginalised communities, empowering them to participate more actively in societal affairs and nation building.

Similarly, campaigns against gender discrimination and violence against women have fuelled nationwide movements demanding justice and equality, which have resulted in legal amendments and increased awareness.

Political controversies and democratic strength

India's vibrant and unwavering democracy has withstood countless storms in the political arena, emerging stronger and more matured each time. From grappling with corruption scandals that have shaken public confidence to navigating the intricate dynamics of coalition governance, the country's democratic institutions have been thoroughly tested.

Yet, in the face of adversity, India has remained resolute in its commitment to safeguard democratic principles, fostering transparency and bolstering governance structures. This unyielding dedication to upholding democratic values has propelled the nation forward, ensuring accountability and nurturing an environment where democratic ideals can thrive.

The introduction of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, in 2005, stands as a remarkable testament to India's commitment to further transparency and accountability within the realm of public administration. This pivotal legislation has been instrumental in endowing citizens with the power to readily access information from various governmental bodies, effectively promoting a governance system that is more open, responsive, and inclusive.

Moreover, with the implementation of transformative electoral reforms like Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), India has further fortified the integrity of its electoral process, thus strengthening the very foundations upon which its democratic

ethos firmly stands.

Economic controversies and development

India's path to economic advancement has been anything but smooth, as it has encountered its fair share of controversies along the way. The introduction of crucial economic reforms, such as the liberalisation and globalisation of its market, was met with scepticism and deliberation regarding their potential negative impact on the underprivileged communities and traditional sectors of the economy.

However, these controversies played a pivotal role in promoting fruitful discussions concerning the imperative need for inclusivity and sustainable progress. Consequently, India pivoted its policies, re-evaluated its strategies, and implemented comprehensive social welfare initiatives, thus ensuring a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) symbolises a ground-breaking initiative by the Indian government to fortify job opportunities and ensure the well-being of rural families. As the globe's most extensive work guarantee programme, MGNREGA serves as a social security scheme that aims to alleviate poverty by granting employment and a means of sustenance to rural labourers across India.

By tackling unemployment head-on and promoting socio-economic stability, MGNREGA has emerged as a transformative force, empowering countless individuals and fostering a sense of security within rural communities. It has become a beacon of hope and a testament to the government's commitment towards a prosperous future for all.

MGNREGA offers a multitude of benefits that greatly contribute to the socio-economic development of rural India. By providing guaranteed paid employment opportunities in rural areas, this ground-breaking initiative not only boosts spending power within villages, but also stimulates India's overall consumption growth. It also furthers social inclusion by empowering individuals residing in rural areas and safeguarding through the provision of wage employment opportunities.

Today, as environmental concerns and the imminent threat of climate change loom large, the imperative for sustainable development has taken centre stage. As a result, India has been actively shifting gears by diligently endorsing renewable energy adoption and earnestly promoting the conservation of precious ecosystems. Such forward-thinking initiatives not only empower the nation to mitigate environmental challenges but also pave the way for a brighter, greener future.

India's journey through controversies has undoubtedly shaped its identity and trajectory as a nation. The ability to navigate through these challenges reflects the resilience of its people, institutions, and commitment to growth. By engaging in constructive debates, implementing reforms, and prioritising social justice and inclusivity, India has emerged stronger, mature, and better equipped to address future challenges.

As the country continues to evolve, it must draw inspiration from its past experiences, building upon the lessons learned and leveraging its diverse heritage. This will enable India to forge ahead on its path of progress imbibing unity, innovation, and sustainable development for generations to come - to build a harmonious, inclusive society that upholds the principles of justice, equality, and dignity for all its citizens.

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

Indians, best resource for a vibrant India

*India's population, now world's highest, comprises people belonging to different backgrounds living together peacefully under one flag - a testament to resilience and acceptance of her people. It is this adaptability and resilience that empowers Indians to face challenges with grace and find innovative solutions even in adverse circumstances, asserts **Kriti Kalra**.*



In times of crisis, Indians come together as one to support each other

India, the land of diversity and cultural richness, has always been a source of fascination and admiration. Its myriad languages, cultures, cuisine, traditions and multifaceted people make it an extraordinary nation on the global stage. However, beneath the surface lies a pressing question ... How can India truly harness its potential to become a thriving and prosperous nation?

The unique qualities that India's people possess can be channelled to overcome challenges and propel India towards greatness. From embracing diversity to nurturing a spirit of community, from unleashing intellectual prowess to cherishing cultural heritage – each aspect contributes to shaping an optimistic future.

India is a shining example of unity in diversity. In every corner of the country, from the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas to the sun-kissed beaches of Kerala, India thrives on its kaleidoscope of identities. The diversity goes beyond mere geographical variations and encompasses a blend of religions, beliefs and customs that coexist harmoniously.

This cultural mosaic enriches society by fostering tolerance and understanding among its people. Indians understand the importance of respecting different perspectives and ideas, realising that unity can be achieved through embracing diversity rather than suppressing it.

In embracing diversity, Indians also showcase an unparalleled adaptability to change. India's astronomical population, and now the highest in the world, comprises people belonging to different backgrounds living together peacefully under one flag - a testament to resilience and acceptance of her people. It is this adaptability and resilience that empowers Indians to face challenges with grace and find innovative solutions even in adverse circumstances.

Harnessing people power

India's people are a treasure trove of talent and potential waiting to be unleashed. From the bustling streets of Mumbai to the serene hills of Himachal Pradesh, Indians possess an innate drive for success and a strong work ethic. By channelising the human resource, harnessing it, India can achieve unprecedented growth and development. One of the key elements of this is education. India boasts a rich heritage of knowledge and learning, with ancient universities like Nalanda and Takshashila serving as testaments to the country's intellectual prowess. By investing in quality education at all levels, from primary schools to prestigious institutions of higher learning, India can equip its citizens with the skills needed for growth and success in a rapidly-changing world.

It is also very important to nurture an environment of innovation and entrepreneurship to tap on the human potential.

(Continued on page 27)



JEJURI

The quaint temple town of Maharashtra

*Nestled within the picturesque landscapes of Maharashtra, lies the captivating town of Jejuri beckoning travellers and the devout with its historical allure, breathtaking vistas and array of ancient temples, the most prominent being the Khandoba Temple. This idyllic destination is a true gem waiting to be explored, says **Nandini Rao**. With its rich cultural heritage and profound spiritual significance, Jejuri offers an immersive experience that leaves an indelible mark on all who venture here.*

Text : Nandini Rao

Photos : DraftCraft



The first flight of steps leading to the Khandoba Temple

As one sets foot in Jejuri, they are greeted by the awe-inspiring sight of the Khandoba Temple, a revered landmark that dominates the town's skyline. This ancient shrine, dedicated to Lord Khandoba, stands as a testament to architectural brilliance and holds deep religious importance for countless devotees. The grandeur and vibrant aura of the temple reach their zenith during festivals, attracting multitudes of pilgrims from far and wide.

Every aspect of Jejuri, a municipal council in Purandar taluka of Pune district, is worth a visit. Strolling along the winding alleys of Jejuri, visitors are bound to stumble upon hidden treasures at every turn. The town's charming bazaars present a delightful shopping experience, where one can indulge in traditional handicrafts, vibrant textiles, and exquisite jewellery.

Engaging with the friendly locals, known for their warm hospitality and delicious snacks, and enthralling tales of the region's history, offers a window into the treasure trove of culture of the lively town.

For nature enthusiasts, Jejuri's surrounding hills provide solace and tranquillity. The rugged terrain, adorned with lush greenery and dotted with ancient forts, offers breathtaking views. These natural wonders serve as a perfect retreat, providing respite

from the hustle and bustle of city life. A trek on the picturesque slopes of Vetar Hill, also known as Vetar Tekdi, rewards adventurers with spectacular views of the green countryside. Vetar Hill, with an elevation of 800 meters, has a temple of Vetala atop the hill from which the name is derived. There is an observation deck also which is maintained by the Indian Forest Department.

In 1739, a general of the Maratha Empire and brother of Peshwa Bajirao, Chimaji Appa, defeated the Portuguese in the Battle of Vasai. Soon after, Appa and his men took out 38 church bells from Portuguese churches and installed them in 34 temples across Maharashtra, including one at Jejuri's Khandoba Temple.

Formidable forts and ancient temples

Apart from the rich history bundled up in the temple town, Jejuri's rich historical legacy also comes alive through the formidable forts located in the vicinity of the temple town, many of which played a pivotal role in the rise of the Maratha Empire. Amidst the ancient ramparts and majestic gateways, one can delve into tales of valour that resonate through the fort's storied past. The strategic location atop a hill offers a commanding vista



The town as seen from Jejuri gad or Jejuri Fort

of the surrounding plains, leaving visitors awe-struck by its architectural grandeur.

Beyond the forts, Jejuri's historical significance manifests in its ancient temples, particularly the Khandoba Temple. Jejuri is a famous pilgrimage place where Lord Khandoba devotees visit their beloved god from far and wide. Khandoba, also known as Malhari and Martand, is a manifestation of Lord Shiva. Khandoba is revered and worshipped by many castes and communities in Maharashtra, as a clan god. Khandoba's wives Banai and Mhalsa belong to the nomadic shepherd tribe called the Dhangars and the Lingayats of Karnataka, respectively.

Jejuri is home to two temples of Lord Khandoba, an old one and a new one, both situated separately on the descending Purandar range that skirts the pilgrim town. The new temple is larger and located at a height of 250 feet. The older temple, on the other hand, is smaller in size and built on a plateau known as Kadepathar, about 400 feet higher, a couple of miles away, and believed to be more sacred. The Kadepathar plateau spans about eleven acres and houses several other shrines and temples. The

old village is now deserted and has a lake in its vicinity known as the Peshwa Lake built by the last Peshwa, Bajirao II.

The temples of Jejuri exemplify spectacular architecture and art. Intricate rock-cut sculptures and ancient inscriptions adorn these mystical spaces, evoking a sense of wonder and admiration for the artistic prowess of bygone generations. Exploring these sacred enclaves is a journey of discovery and a testament to the town's cultural heritage.

To fully immerse oneself in Jejuri's vibrance, timing one's visit during the town's lively festivals is a must. The exuberant celebrations of Holi, where locals come together to revel in a riot of vibrant colours, create an atmosphere of joy and camaraderie. The festival of Diwali illuminates Jejuri with a mesmerising display of lights and fireworks, enveloping the town in an enchanting aura that lingers in the memories of all fortunate enough to witness it.

One of the most important festivals observed in Jejuri is Champa Shashti - a festival dedicated to Lord Shiva and mainly



Oil offering at the temple

celebrated in Karnataka and Maharashtra region. The festival falls on the sixth day in the Margashirsha month during the Shukla Paksha and is widely celebrated in Jejuri where millions of devotees gather to offer prayers to Khanderao or Khandoba, an incarnation of Lord Shiva.

Another important festival is Somavati Amavasya, which is the no moon day that falls on a Monday. On this day, millions of devotees of Lord Khandoba gather at the temple carrying turmeric powder, known as 'Bhandara'. Revellers throw turmeric in the air and smear it on oneself and each other, singing and dancing all along. Owing to the colourful celebration, the pilgrim town has earned the name 'Sonyachi Jejuri' which translates to 'golden Jejuri'. Devotees bathe in yellow turmeric powder and offer penance on this day.

Other important occasions each with a religious or cultural significance at Jejuri include Chaitra Purnima, Guru Purnima, Shravan Purnima, Ghatasthapana, Dussera, Paush Purnima, Mahashivratri, etc.



A local woman selling 'Bhandara' offered to Khandoba

A religious epicentre

Jejuri is home to one of the most revered temples in Maharashtra, the Khandoba Temple, and is also known as Khandobachi Jejuri for that reason. Khandoba is worshipped with high reverence by the Dhangars and is regarded as the 'God of Jejuri'. On 14 September 1752, a historic treaty between Tarabai and Balaji Bajirao was made here.

As one ascends the hill to reach the temple, a sense of anticipation fills the air. The gentle breeze carries with it the scent of incense and the sound of devotional hymns played by the Gondhalis, heightening the spiritual ambience that envelops the sacred site. The panoramic views that unfold along the way provide a heart-stopping glimpse of the surrounding landscapes, further enhancing the sense of reverence and tranquillity.

The temple's architectural brilliance and intricate craftsmanship leave visitors in awe of the devotion and skill that



A local priest in the temple town of Jejuri

went into its construction. The tall spires, adorned with vibrant colours, reach towards the heavens, creating a captivating sight against the backdrop of the azure sky. The electrifying spiritual vibe of the zone can only be experienced in person.

Lavthaleshwar Temple is another famous Shiva temple that is located between the towns of Jejuri and Saswad in Pune district. It is a small, simple temple that is located underground. Lavthaleshwar houses a Shivaling and Nandi and an idol of Naga in front of the temple. They say that 'Lavthavati Vikrala Brahmandi Mala' – Lord Shiva's famous prayer or Shankar aarti was written in this temple by Samarth Ramdas Swami.

Beyond their religious significance, temples in Jejuri offer a respite from the chaos of everyday life. The quiet surroundings, coupled with picturesque landscapes unfolding from the hilltop, create an atmosphere of peace. Visitors can sit in quiet contemplation, allowing the serenity of the surroundings to wash over them, and find solace in the embrace of nature and the spiritual energy that permeates the temples.



Local women selling wares for prayer and offerings at Jejuri



Annual sword lifting competition is a highlight at Jejuri Temple

Apart from the temple, Jejuri offers additional attractions for tourists. The town is known for its ancient fort, popularly known as the 'Jejuri Gad' which provides a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. Jejuri is also famous for its step wells showcasing excellent craftsmanship and engineering skills of ancient times.

Unique traditions

The Khandoba Temple is famous for its unique traditions and rituals. One of the most interesting rituals is the showering of the deity with turmeric powder, known as the 'Bhandara'. Devotees participate in this vibrant ceremony, covering the idols of Lord Khandoba and each other in a golden hue of turmeric.

This practice is symbolic of Lord Khandoba's association with the colour yellow and his victory over evil forces. The temple premises come alive with devotional chants, music and a festive atmosphere during this ritual. Devotees throw turmeric powder in the air as they climb up the steps of 'Jejuri Gad' or the fort to reach the temple, filling the air with yellow colour throughout.

The phrase that they say while showering people as they climb is 'Yelkot yelkot jai malhar.'

It has become a cherished tradition among newlyweds to embark on a pilgrimage to Jejuri, wherein lies the revered Khandoba Temple. This holy expedition entails a momentous act, as the husband gallantly lifts his wife and ascends the imposing stone steps, signifying their commitment and strength as a united couple. It is one of the most prominent customs observed at Khandoba Temple. The practice symbolises strength, unity, and devotion within a marriage. It is believed that by lifting their wives, grooms demonstrate their ability to protect and support their life partners throughout their marital journey.

As couples enter the temple premises adorned with vibrant decorations and an air of sanctity, they immerse themselves in an enchanting atmosphere filled with love and faith. Husbands prepare themselves mentally and physically for the impending task. With each passing moment, anticipation



Turmeric, offered to Khandoba, fills the air in the town

builds as they await their turn to lift their beloved wives.

When finally called upon by the temple priest to perform this remarkable act, grooms approach their radiant brides with confidence shining in their eyes. Amidst a symphony of laughter, cheers, and jubilant exclamations, families and friends encircle the radiant couple as they prepare for their momentous lift. The excitement builds as each husband prepares to hoist his beloved bride into his arms. The anticipation is palpable – an electrifying energy that courses through every onlooker.

And then it happens – with a surge of strength and determination, husbands effortlessly raise their wives high above their heads. In that fleeting moment suspended in time, a profound connection between two souls is manifested. It is a testament to their unwavering bond and shared dreams for a blissful future together.

The collective resonance of applause echoes through the temple walls as each couple completes this symbolic act. The beaming smiles on both husband and wife are infectious – mirroring the elation experienced by those who have found love and chosen to embark on this sacred journey called marriage.

This ritual is not unnoticed, as eager relatives seize the opportunity to immortalise this tender, symbolic gesture by capturing it on their trusted mobile devices. Additionally, some devotees choose to enhance the moment further by seeking the services of professional photographers, who cater exclusively to those ascending towards the sublime abode of Khandoba.

Seeped in history

One of the most beautiful landmarks in Jejuri is the Bajirao Peshwa Lake that stands as a tranquil oasis, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in its serene still waters and rich historical legacy. Named after the legendary Maratha warrior and statesman, Bajirao Peshwa, this expansive lake offers a respite from the bustling city life and a chance to connect with nature in all its splendour. Exploring the environs of the Bajirao Peshwa Lake reveals a myriad of delights for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. Visitors can delve into the stories and legends associated with Bajirao Peshwa, gaining insights into his remarkable life and the historical events that unfolded during his time.



A statue of Ahilyabai Holkar at Jejuri gad

Bajirao I, born as Visaji, was the 7th Peshwa of the Maratha Confederacy who, during his 20-year rule as a Peshwa, defeated Nizam-ul-Mulk several times. These include in the battles of Bhopal and Palkhed. He is considered as one of the greatest cavalry generals. The Peshwa contributed in a big way to establish Maratha supremacy in Southern India and Northern India as well. He was one of the key persons in the Maratha Empire who fortified the Maratha power in the region including in Bundelkhand, Malwa, Rajputana, etc. He was also instrumental in freeing the Konkan region that was, at that time, under the Siddis of Janjira and the Portuguese rule as well.

Another important landmark in Jejuri is the statue of Ahilyabai Holkar, perched on a side along the steps of the Jejuri Gad, on way to the Khandoba Temple. Many visitors pay homage to her here. Ahilyabai Holkar, born on 31 May 1725, became the hereditary noble queen in the Maratha Empire and was instrumental in establishing Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh as the headquarters of the Holkar dynasty.

When her husband, Khande Rao Holkar, met with an untimely death, and at the same time, her father-in-law Malhar Rao Holkar too, she took the reins in control and started administering the Holkar dynasty. She faced several hurdles but

was steadfast in her determination to protect her people. She defended the Malwa state in a fierce manner and displayed unwavering courage against invaders. She personally took charge on the battlefield with the military commander Tukoji Rao Holkar.

However, it was not solely through her military prowess that Ahilyabai distinguished herself. She was a trailblazing visionary, known for her unwavering commitment to constructing Hindu temples that echoed throughout the expanse of India. Her legacy is one of unparalleled devotion, as she oversaw the construction of hundreds of temples and Dharamshalas, serving as sanctuaries for the devout and pious, scattered across the nation. Her place on the foothills below the Khandoba Temple is the perfect tribute to her contributions to society.

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.

Our Last Six Issues

Call: 022-23534400 / E-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com / Web: www.oneindiaonepeople.com

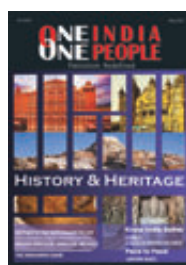
July 2023



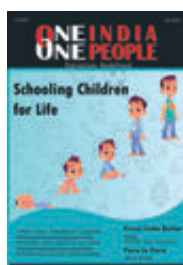
June 2023



May 2023



April 2023



March 2023



February 2023



“My inner consciousness commands me to be good to all and selflessly help the needy as much as I can.”

Dr. Uday Modi (57) is an Ayurveda doctor and TV character actor, who runs a free tiffin catering service, named Shravan Tiffin Seva/Service and has been providing meals, medication and his time for the past 17 years to abandoned impoverished elderly abandoned parents. He says he is proud to be the son of more than 300 beneficiaries.

Here he talks about his passionate mission with **A.Radhakrishnan**

What made you start this tiffin service?

One day a 78 year old person came to my clinic crying. He said that though he had three children, no one was supporting him and his paralysed wife. It was a very difficult existence.

I was saddened on hearing this and I told him not to worry as from the next day onwards I would provide him tiffin from my house. I told my wife about what had happened. She pointed out there could be also others like them. We agreed that we would cook as much as we could provide. Soon pamphlets were slipped in local papers and notices put up on walls. Beginning with daily tiffin for three to four people in the first week, it later on gradually kept increasing.

So to circumvent this difficult situation, I decided to form a trust 'Shravan Tiffin Services' in the year 2007. Beginning with Bhayandar (west) in Mumbai, where I live, we spread slowly to Bhayandar (east) and Mira-Bhayandar in Thane, Maharashtra.

Did you face any difficult situations?

Obstacles that arose included tempos breaking down due to rains and having to take recourse to rickshaws to deliver tiffins, which proved costly. Sometimes the roti provider was unavailable, and when we delivered tiffin late we would be harangued by the beneficiaries. But I didn't mind because I considered them my own parents and as I suffer from diabetes, I could understand their



Dr. Uday Modi

situation. I was after all, Shravan, son to 325 fathers and mothers.

Why did you name your service Shravan?

We all know the story of Shravan Kumar whose parents were blind. To enable them to see the world he made a palanquin of two baskets and a bamboo pole and carried it on his shoulder with his parents sitting on the either side. This story inspired me to name my service as *Shravan Tiffin Service*.

How do you manage the funds? Is it adequate?

Raising adequate funds to run the service is always a challenge. We need at least three lakhs a month. We get some donations, but it is insufficient. Sadly, donors want publicity on the tiffin boxes, but I don't want that. I generate some funds as a character actor in TV serials, and as a practicing M.D in Ayurveda. By the grace of God some friends also pitch in and this way, we manage. Other doctors do help in treatments, but there is absolutely no help from the government. I feel happy and grateful when a person approaches me to enquire about the donation process.

What is your staff strength and how do you pay them?

We have 11 dedicated persons, all paid on salary basis. Two cooks rustle up the meals in two kitchens, one for general beneficiaries and the other for those suffering from diabetes.



Dr. Modi lovingly hands over a tiffin to an elderly lady who has no family support

How do you select the beneficiary parents?

Both, those abandoned and the infirm are included. We take their Aadhar card xerox, and for reference another person's Aadhar card. Prior to that we verify whether they are really needy. Our person goes for verification, checking out their place of residence, the number of people staying and so on. We have two tempos which display our ads on them and this helps people approach us.

What makes children abandon their parents? Where does the fault lie? Is it in upbringing?

It makes my heart bleed when I come across such instances. There can be many reasons. Old age and sickness are two prime factors. The axiom *Matru Devo Bhavo and Pitru Devo Bhavo* (revere your mother & father as God) seems to have been forgotten.

Upbringing cannot be faulted. No parent will teach a child to think wrong. The fault perhaps lies in the blind aping of western culture which is prevalent nowadays.

One can understand children not wanting to be with their parents, but neither providing food nor looking after them, is a critical situation. I have asked their children to pay for the tiffin but they rudely argue and refuse. Yes, nowadays the world has turned very selfish and self - centered.

In everyday life, we pray to God while leaving for work and touch the feet of our father and mother before starting our work. I do not understand where this beautiful Indian culture has disappeared.

What does each tiffin consist of and what does it cost? How is it classified?

Our food is simple but hygienic and nourishing. Monday to Saturday we serve 6 *rotis*, *dal*, *rice*, *bhaji* in a single tiffin and 12 *rotis* in

double tiffin, but on Sunday's we provide *puris* and sweets. Cost per tiffin works out to ₹ 100/- each.

As a doctor I know that the elderly require special consideration in the preparation of their food. That is why I classify it according to the most common pathologies... diabetes and hypertension fundamentally. Food for diabetics is cooked in a separate kitchen. I personally taste the food before it is packed, thus guaranteeing the quality of the tiffins to be distributed.

What about medication?

Yes we also provide the elderly medicines as and when required.

Is it a 24x7 service?

We provide this service all 365 days, though it is very difficult. There is no holiday, no sick leave, not even for plying damaged vehicles. You see the elderly depend on the tiffins every day. Else they go hungry and we cannot fail them.

How far has your dream of an old age home fructified?

For 17 years, I have been harbouring this daily thought to do something more for those people, to improve their standard of living.

My dream project named *Maa Baap Nu Mandir*, though not a solution, will definitely make a difference and give them a roof overhead and proper meals and care. I have named it so because they should not feel that they are in an old age home. Love and care will be a priority for ageing persons here. After all, we owe our very existence to our parents.

Seventy percent of the project is completed. But being a big project, it is very difficult to manage funds. Of course though a



In absence of logistic support during COVID, Dr. Modi personally delivered tiffins to his beneficiaries

normal structure, it will be airy and lighted. They shall not be confined to their rooms as they are not criminals. Other recreational facilities such as community hall, library, dining hall, garden, a temple and also a *Gaushala* and organic farming within the campus, will enable them definitely a healthy atmosphere.

Did the pandemic affect you?

Yes of course, it did. It was difficult to get groceries and donations were sparse. Shops were closed, had limited or fixed timings to buy grocery and vegetables. Providing tiffins to beneficiaries at their place was difficult too as we were not permitted to enter the premises.

Do you think your children will continue your legacy?

Yes my children will certainly continue my legacy. When my children Aayushi and Varun were young, they used to save their pocket money which we gave them and I am happy they also help me in my Shravan tiffin seva to some extent. It's a true saying that 'every penny has got value, though big or small'.

They have grown accustomed to keeping their demands for toys, gadgets and clothes minimal. They understand that their father's savings are meant for a social cause.

Did your appearance on the TV reality show Dance India Dance help your cause?

Super Dancer was the only the platform that we got a chance to

introduce our Shravan Tiffin Seva. It did give us traction.

How spiritual are you?

I am a spiritual person. I feel that rather than hoarding physical things and being a slave to luxury, empathy for the abandoned human beings and animals are necessary in this cruel world. The Mahabharata and Ramayana teach us how to stick to our principles and how context and circumstances change the application of said principles.

My inner consciousness commands me to be good to all and selflessly help the needy as much as I can.

Communication Details:

Dr. Uday Modi 9820448749

Panna Salvi 7208305211



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

(contd. from Pg 16)

Indians have shown their mettle time and again when given opportunities to pursue their passions. India has become the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world with 107 unicorns. By creating an environment that encourages risk-taking and provides support for start-ups, India can cultivate a generation of visionary entrepreneurs who will transform industries and drive economic progress.

Another important aspect in harnessing people power to the fullest is focus on inclusivity. It's important to empower the marginalised groups – women, rural populace, tribal groups, etc., to uplift individual lives and, at the same time, contribute towards building an inclusive society where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. When every citizen feels valued and empowered, they become agents of change who can collectively shape India's destiny.

Community spirit

India, known for its rich cultural heritage and diversity, is built on the strong foundation of community spirit. This spirit of togetherness is a significant driving force behind India's progress and resilience. From small villages to bustling cities, Indians have a deep sense of belonging and shared responsibility towards each other and their nation.

In times of crisis or adversity, Indians come together as one to support each other. Whether it is providing relief during natural disasters or organising community-driven initiatives for social upliftment, the spirit of community runs deep in the Indian ethos. This collective strength helps in building a stronger India that can withstand any challenge that comes its way.

Communities in Indian cities, town and villages play a crucial role in nurturing talent and empowering individuals to reach their full potential. Local sports clubs, educational institutions, community centres, social and cultural activities, etc. provide a platform for learning, growth and opportunity. The support and guidance received from fellow community members foster innovation and creativity among individuals, contributing to the overall development of the nation.

Moreover, this spirit of community extends beyond geographical boundaries and transcends barriers such as caste, religion, or language. Indians recognise that unity in diversity is not just a slogan but an integral part of their identity. By embracing different cultures and perspectives within their communities, they create an environment where everyone feels valued and included.

During COVID-19 induced lockdown and other major calamities such as floods, earthquakes, etc., community spirit of the Indian people have helped immensely in emerging out of such pandemics and disasters.

Intellectual Property

Indians are known for innovation and creativity. From ancient times to the present day, Indians have contributed immensely to the field of intellectual property, transforming ideas into reality and shaping the world we live in.

Renowned mathematicians like Aryabhata and Sriniva-

sa Ramanujan to modern-day innovators like A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Indians have pioneered advancements in various fields such as mathematics, science, technology, medicine, and more. These visionary minds have not only brought forth revolutionary concepts but also strived to protect their ideas through patents and copyrights and bring change to better the world.

The Indian legal system has played a crucial role in facilitating the protection of intellectual property rights. The Patents Act of 1970 was a significant milestone that aimed at fostering innovation by granting exclusive rights to inventors for a limited period. This legislation not only encouraged Indian innovators but also facilitated collaborations between local talents and international industries.

Moreover, India's growing economy has positioned it as an attractive market for global players seeking opportunities for research and development. Multinational corporations recognise the immense talent pool present within India's borders and are establishing research centers in collaboration with Indian scientists and engineers. This collaborative ecosystem not only boosts India's technological capabilities but also promotes knowledge exchange on a global scale.

Cultural wealth

From the majestic temples of Varanasi to the intricate dance forms of Bharatanatyam, Indian culture is steeped in history, art, and spirituality. Each region of the country boasts its unique customs, rituals, and artistic expressions that have withstood the test of time. The arts play a significant role in preserving India's heritage. Indian classical music, with its soul-stirring melodies and intricate ragas, transports listeners to a realm beyond mundane existence.

The centuries-old folk dances like Bhangra from Punjab or Bihu from Assam exemplify the vibrancy and dynamism ingrained in Indian traditions. These artistic forms not only entertain but also instil a sense of unity among Indians by celebrating their shared heritage.

The intricacy of the Khajuraho temples in Madhya Pradesh or the grandeur of the temples in South India showcase India's architectural prowess and craftsmanship. These magnificent structures serve as reminders of India's glorious past and inspire awe even today.

Furthermore, literature has played an integral role in shaping Indian culture. Sanskrit scriptures like the Vedas and Upanishads contain profound philosophical insights that continue to guide humanity towards self-realisation. The works of literary giants such as Rabindranath Tagore and Kalidasa have inspired millions with their profound verses.

Kriti Kalra is an activist and field researcher with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.

Portraying minorities in Hindi cinema

Early mainstream Bollywood hardly touched upon communal conflicts. Filmmakers were afraid that portrayal of such sensitive issues would raise the hackles of the Central Board for Film Certification. This absence of violence between communities also reflects the secular sensibilities of people within Bollywood, opines **Shoma A. Chatterji**.



Bombay Poster



Khatta Meetha

“A deep structure of cultural difference provides the bedrock of perceptions, one coloured by Hindu and more broadly modern modes of othering” wrote Ravi S. Vasudevan of Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* made after the communal riots in Mumbai following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. ‘Cultural difference’ is no longer a moot question after the 9/11 tragedy of the twin towers of WTC. It has enlarged and reached out to the world where destruction, willful, designed violence, mass killings triggered by fundamentalist beliefs that have no basis in scriptures or in the foundations of a religion, take place every day, everywhere for no understandable reason. Will Hindi cinema be able to repair the damage and restore to the celluloid Muslim and to his real-life counterpart the dignity he/she deserves?

Seemin Hasan who taught English at Aligarh Muslim University, once said, “The projection of Muslims as uneducated, misguided and ruthless communalists reflects anxieties. Such images (beginning with Wasim Khan’s character in Mani

Ratnam’s *Roja* as an example) as uneducated, misguided and ruthless communalists reflects anxieties. Such images are also projected in films like *L.O.C. Kargil* (2003) and *Mission Kashmir* (2000.) The Muslim identity is trapped in the image of the terrorist. The last decade of the 20th century signals an important departure as a new stereotype of the Muslim is born – as a ruthless stranger with an anti-nationalist agenda.”

Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s *Anari* (1959) is a unique example of a beautiful relationship between Raj Kumar (Raj Kapoor) the hero and his landlady who he nurses and looks after in her dying days. Today, we see Christians and Anglo-Indians no longer as cameo performers but as characters in a film set within their ethnic backdrop. Two examples are Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Black* (2005) and *Guzaarish* (2010). *Guzaarish* is said to be a celluloid improvisation of a real life, wheelchair-bound paraplegic, Ethan Mascarenhas in the film portrayed by Hrithik Roshan. These films are set within the Christian ethos. *Black* is set in Shimla and revolves around the lives of the McNallys. But Devraj



Madhubala in Mughal-E-Azam

Sahai, the alcoholic recluse who steps into the family in Black is Hindu.

Basu Chatterjee presented entertainment through single ethnic groups in *Khatta Meetha* (1977) and *Baaton Baaton Mein* (1979.) *Khatta Meetha* portrayed the Parsee community very well through two families joined in marriage with grown-up children coping with the sudden change through the sudden crash that overtakes them. *Baaton Baaton Mein* deals with the problem of a girl earning more than her would-be spouse within a Christian setting. The films explored middle class values with simple characters and a straightforward narrative embellished with beautiful songs. *Being Cyrus* (2006) directed by Homi Adajania however, portrays the Parsees as dysfunctional, shrewish, villainous, alcoholic or crazy. It was promoted as a psychological murder mystery but its totally negative connotations did not do any good to the representation of the Parsee in Indian cinema. A wonderful cocktail of several ethnic Indian groups presented in recent times is Rima Kagi's *Honeymoon Special Private Limited*.

Sikhs have been represented mainly through and in historical fiction films such as the Shaheed Bhagat Singh series and, *Gadar*, where a single Sikh takes on the entire Pakistani army. Sunny Deol and Dharmendra should be credited for keeping the Sikh flag aloft while Akshay Kumar has paid an entertaining tribute to the Sikhs in *Singh is King* (2008) where every male character is a turbaned Sikh.

Early mainstream Bollywood hardly touched upon communal conflicts. Filmmakers were afraid that sensitive issues like communal conflicts would raise the hackles of the Central Board for Film Certification. This absence of violence between communities also reflects the secular sensibilities of people within Bollywood, where marriages between different communities are as much an integral part of real life as it is a part of the work structure and the system. Harmony remained the bottom line so far as communalism between and among people was concerned.

Earlier films like V. Shantaram's *Padosi* (*Shejari* in Marathi) focused on a harmonious relationship between two neighbours, one a Hindu and the other, a Muslim. The religious minority in India was often portrayed as a token presence with positive shades, introduced as an important character in the script. Significant among these are – the Muslim who brings up the illegitimate boy in B.R. Chopra's *Dhool Ka Phool* (1960) and the Muslim taxi driver in Vijay Anand's *Guide*. A Muslim social which spoke of romance and heartbreak such as *Chaudhavin Ka Chand*, *Barsaat Ki Raat*, *Ghazal*, *Mere Mehboob*, *Pakeezah*, etc. or historicals like *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Jodha-Akbar*, *Anarkali* and *Mirza Ghalib* did not threaten the status quo. A film which spoke of change did. A classic example is the controversy Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* raised. There was a beautiful moment in *Bombay*. When the twins of the intercommunal couple get lost in the communal riots, they are given shelter and rescued by a hermaphrodite, a hijra who has no caste identity.

The positive and often romantic portrayal of non-Hindu religious minorities in Indian films is a prime reason for their international popularity. Bollywood has shown the world how people of different faiths join joyfully in each other's festivals, lay down their lives protecting each other and share in each other's joys, griefs and family secrets. The theme song of the film *Dhool ka Phool* made in the late 1950s: *Tu Hindu banega naa Musalman banega, insaan ki aulad hai, insaan banega* (You will grow up to be neither Hindu nor Musalman, you are the child of a human being and will remain a human being), echoes the sentiment of *bhakt* Kabir. This sentiment has been repeated in film after film, strengthening the message that all are sons and daughters of Mother India and are therefore inseparable, no matter how hard the politicians try to break their unity and sense of oneness.



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.

The scroll painters of Naya, Pingla

The Chitrakar community of Naya village, Midnapore in West Bengal are narrative scroll painters who in the past provided edutainment to rural audiences by singing stories from mythology and social context. **Hiraman** tell us how this community has preserved their tradition and transformed an idyllic village with their art into a thriving tourist destination.



Swarna Chitrakar with her scroll

Swarna Chitrakar has a Wikipedia page and is a critically acclaimed traditional artist. She has visited the US and the UK multiple times, apart from France, Italy, Germany and Sweden to showcase her art skills, collaborate with artists and participate in residency programmes.

Anwar Chitrakar is a National Master Craftsmen-awardee and a reputed painter who sold his canvas at a Dubai-held auction for ₹ 4 lakhs in 2021. He has showcased his work at London's Victoria & Albert Museum and Mumbai's Jehangir Art Gallery among several others.

Mamoni Chitrakar, married with two school-going kids is a much-admired artist and has held workshops at the US-based Smithsonian Institute and holds weekly online heritage appreciation classes from her home in a Midnapore village in West Bengal.

They all have one thing in common, their surname, Chitrakar, and the art form they pursue. The Chitrakar community resides in village Naya in Pingla block of Midnapore and are *patuas*— a semi-itinerant caste of narrative scroll painters who provided edutainment to rural audiences by singing stories from mythology and social context in the past but presently have transformed an idyllic village with their art into a tourist destination.



Mamoni Chitrakar while at work

Every *patua* has two names, one Hindu and the other Islamic. Their diverse repertoire includes tales from Hindu mythology, tribal folklore, as well as Islamic tradition, the Patachitra in West Bengal has progressively regained its new voice to continue new conversation formats with the society at large, engaging with contemporary themes for a global audience.

Unrolling the hand-painted scroll frame by frame— props for their performance—they sang the *pater gaan* (story song). In places like Birbhum, Bankura, Nandigram and Chandipur this performative art is still practised by a handful of families but it is in Naya where it has flourished. Naya's *pats* are diverse in their repertoire and have boldly embraced contemporary themes.

With the introduction of visual media, like TV and cinemas, the art of *patuas* witnessed a rapid decline. No more considered artists but treated as beggars most sought out odd jobs or migrated to urban centres in search of livelihood working as tailors, painters, vegetable sellers or worked as daily wagers.

It was in 2004 following a visit of a social enterprise which specialises in developing community-led creative industries based on cultural heritage like performing arts and crafts things began to change. Informs Siddhanjan Ray Chaudhuri, General Manager - Business Development &



A mythological tale by Rahim Chitrakar

Projects, banglanatak.com, “During our maiden visit to Naya we found that there were 25-odd *patuas* who still made their living telling stories using *pats* painted in vegetable colours and living in mud houses. With no industries around to provide them with jobs, we planned how we could augment their livelihood by doing what they knew best. That's painting and singing songs.”

In the last decade and a half since Banglanatak intervened it has invested in the skill enhancement among the senior *patuas* and skill development of the youth; brought in artists from abroad to engage the *patuas* to try new mediums; encouraged the cultivation of plants for dyes and colours; introduced product

diversification; invited collectors, connoisseurs and scholars from India and abroad to Naya; supported participation of the *patuas* in art festivals, holding workshops in museums and galleries abroad; and importantly organising an annual folk art festival which draws tourists in hordes.

Presently, 250-odd artists reside in Naya who make a living through painting, be it on scrolls, canvas, coffee mugs, dress materials, furnishing and other utilitarian products. The village, an ultimate tourist attraction for those visiting West Bengal has emerged as an exemplar of folk artists' community thriving, thanks to their art. For the Kolkattans visiting the village on weekends, Naya is like a living museum with the walls painted in vivid colours, every courtyard an art gallery and the *patuas* busy painting or humming songs.

“Each artist makes anything between Rs 40,000 to Rs 60,000 a month. While a few who have made their name in the art world can sell a painting worth a couple of lakhs,” says Manoranjan Chitrakar, who is in his mid-40s.

The increasing demand for *patuas* in the local and global economy has given rise to the growing participation of all the members of the Chitrakar community, especially women. Unlike in the past, today women travel beyond their village, and in doing so introduce newer transformations within the *patua* community and the art form. In present times, Patachitra has emerged as a fluid art and subjects like human trafficking, girls' education, rural elections, rationing, tree protection, female infanticide, Tsunami, Cyclone Amphan and AIDS awareness are painted with wide abandon. During the Corona epidemic, *pats* were used to raise awareness and deliver crucial messages in rural Bengal and one such *pat* by veteran artist Swarna Chitrakar became viral garnering one lakh views.

Pingla is now a flourishing hub of more than 300 artists with its cooperative, Chitrataru Collective, which focuses on marketing better opportunities for its artists and the development of the village as a whole. “Unlike men, we get to paint only after having done the household chores. It's a couple of hours mid-evening or post dinner that I am able to devote to painting,” says Mamoni Chitrkar, whose scroll nine feet-long scroll during the pandemic was brought by a London collector for ₹ 45,000.

In order to preserve the tradition and showcase different types of *patas*, a Folk Art Centre has come up in the village. Since 2010, it has been organising the annual Patachitra festival- POT Maya which attracts tourists and attracts the sale of products running into lakhs. Incidentally, Chitrataru has bagged a GI tag for their art form.

Hiraman is a freelance writer and a weekend farmer

Manipur, plumbing new depths in shame

C V Aravind feels that the outrage in the strife-torn state should not be looked at merely as a one-off crime but has all the trappings of a larger game being played out by influential classes and politicians.



People protest on the streets after a video of two tribal women in Manipur stripped and paraded naked went viral. | One of the women was later gang raped

For well over two months now Manipur has been witnessing violent clashes between two communities, Meite and Kuki, over a claim of the former for 50% reservation in public jobs and college admissions. The state administration has been making futile attempts to quell the discontent. A new dimension was added to the fluid situation when a viral video surfaced in the media which depicted two women without a stitch on their bodies being dragged along a street by a group of men who continued to touch them inappropriately.

According to reports one of the women was later gang-raped and her brother was killed by the hoodlums for resisting the assault on his sister. The video of the incident which happened on the 4th of May went viral on 19th of July and the public outrage was such that even Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared on national television that the law would act with full might and firmness against the accused. Manipur CM Biren Singh raised eyebrows by confessing that he had come to know of the incident only after the video clip went viral. The ruling BJP at the Centre sought to deflect attention by citing similar incidents in states ruled by the opposition.

The most striking feature of the horrific video was the perpetrators went about their business, totally bold and brazen, least bothered about the law catching up with them. The crime committed in broad daylight was filmed allegedly at the instance of the criminals themselves; and with a clampdown that has seen a number of them being arrested the chickens have come home to roost.

Ironically the humiliation of the women took place just one kilometer away from the Nongpik Sekmai police station. And just for the record, this was no ordinary police station. It had been honoured as the 'Best Police Station' in the country. One wondered if the cops manning the station were off duty on that day or had assigned with VVIP protection. Agreed the mob frenzy was too tough to handle but one expected the villagers to have stepped in and stopped them in their tracks. That did not happen and the women were left to the marauders who were out to wreak revenge on the Kuki community. The women turned out to be vulnerable targets but they were also pawns in a larger game that was being played out by influential classes and politicians.



PM Narendra Modi condemning the molestation, gang rape and violence in Manipur

The central government and the state government however were jolted out of their reverie after they received a strong rap on the knuckles when a bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India, Justice D Y Chandrachud took suo motu cognizance of the incident and the viral video and in an order that minced no words commanded the governments to act immediately or to leave it to the apex court to take charge. It was this reprimand and the outrage all over the country that prompted the state government to arrest a few of the perpetrators though the majority are still at large. The Manipur incident which it is rumoured has also been replicated in Mamata Banerjee ruled West Bengal is a blot on the country and a reminder that forces inimical to the nation are very much active. Unless exemplary punishment is meted out to the guilty such incidents might only increase with every passing day.



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





**WORLD CLASS
QUALITY MEDICINES
AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

BLUE CROSS LABORATORIES PVT LTD.

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

LT COL HARIPAL KAUSHIK VIR CHAKRA (1934-2018)

Great Olympian, exemplary fighter

Haripal Kaushik was born on 2 February 1934. He went on to be a decorated army officer and a medal winning Olympian. In 1955 the Sikh Regimental Hockey team (SRC) was scheduled to play in the semi finals of the All-India Dhyan Chand Hockey tournament, at National Stadium, Delhi, against Hockey Club, Bhawalpur (Pakistan). The other semi-final was between Punjab Police and Aryan Club, Lahore. At that time Punjab Police boasted of eight Olympians in their playing ranks. Prestige was at stake, all round.

The SRC, left forward was injured, as replacement the Sikh Regiment was able to coax young Haripal, then a student in DAV (Dayanand Anglo Vedic) College, Jalandhar, to play for them. His cool demeanor, skilful artistry in building an attack, came to the fore and the Sikh Regiment won the finals, defeating Aryan Club Lahore 2-0.

Haripal Kaushik's performance was outstanding and he was selected for the Melbourne Olympics. Since his name appeared on the selection list from the Armed Forces, the SRC had no other option but to take young Haripal on its rolls. Thus, Kaushik was commissioned in 1st Sikh regiment in 1959.

Lt Col Haripal Kaushik, who represented India in hockey and was the vice captain of the team. He was a superb athlete and an exceptional hockey player and rose through various services and national-level hockey competitions to become the vice captain of the "unbeatable" Indian Olympic hockey team. The team won in 1956 (gold medal), 1960 (silver medal) and 1964 (gold medal). He was assistant captain of the team that won the gold medal in the 1966 Asian Games, and was later a field hockey administrator and television commentator. He received the Arjuna Award for excellence in athletic competition in 1998.

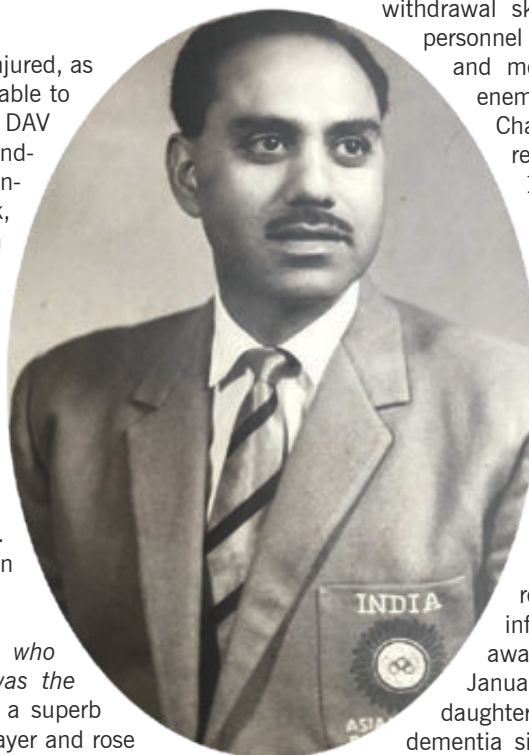
As an army officer, in the 1962 Indo-China conflict, Lieutenant Haripal Kaushik was commanding a Company holding the Tongpengla position in N.E.F.A. (North East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh). At 05.30 am on 23 October 1962 the Chinese started attacking with a Regiment on the Bumla axis with the intention of breaking through to Tawang. His company's position was first attacked by a Chinese Battalion, but the attack was repulsed, with heavy losses, by his forward platoon.

After the fall of the forward platoon, a second Battalion of the enemy attacked on a wide front trying to overrun the Company's position. Lieutenant Kaushik moved from one section position to another and inspired his men to continue fighting with great determination. Eventually under heavy enemy pressure he was ordered to withdraw. What followed was 14 days of ordeal, without food, clothing, water, medicine and with a lurking enemy. Physically battered but spirits intact, Lt. Haripal, evaded enemy ambushes. He handled the withdrawal skilfully and managed to clear, all his personnel and weapons including heavy mortars and medium machine guns, in the face of enemy fire. Kaushik was awarded the Vir Chakra for "exemplary courage and self-disregard" on the battlefield. Soon after the 1962 war, he went on to win the Olympic hockey gold in 1964. He rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

As Adjutant of the IMA (1970-1972), the first from the Sikh Regiment, he left an indelible mark. It was during this tenure that all his life's toil in terms of gold and silver sports medals were stolen from his residence.

His wife, Prem Bala had passed away leaving a young child. He resigned his commission to bring up his infant daughter on his own. He passed away at his residence in Jalandhar on 25 January, 2018 at age 83. According to his daughter Veronica, Kaushik was suffering from dementia since 2015 and was in the last stage. "He was a fighter throughout his life and struggled hard against the disease."

The Haripal Stadium, named in honour of the officer, is a sprawling multipurpose sports field in the Indian Army's Mechanised Infantry Regimental Centre in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra.



From the databank of Late Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma

Sad demise

We regret to inform you of the sad demise of Brig. Suresh Chandra Shama (retd) in June 2023, who had been profiling martyred soldiers in the Great Indian section of our magazine, since more than a decade. His daughter Renu Prakash will for the next few months continue to contribute the profiles left behind by Brig. Sharma.

SHARADA RAJAN IYENGAR (1933-2023)

Unconventional voice, distinctive texture

Sharada Rajan Iyengar, nee Sharada was a well-known Indian playback singer, song writer and music director, who sang songs in Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, English, and Hindi.

She was born in Kumbakonam, Madras Presidency, British India, into a middle-class Tamil Brahmin Iyengar family. She showed an early interest in music and her mother engaged a tutor to train her in basic Carnatic music. She was known for her unorthodox distinctive vocal texture and versatility of style. She demonstrated her abilities by taking part in a variety of school activities.

Sharada got introduced to the world of playback singing by accident. She performed at a party in Teheran in early 1960s that was thrown in Showman Raj Kapoor's honour. Soundara Rajan, her husband, worked for Iran Air at that time. After evaluating her voice, Kapoor gave her one of her career's high points, the chart-topping song Titli Udi, Udi Jo Chali from Suraj (1966), with music by Shankar Jaikishan. She then received training from Shankar. Jaikishan instructed her on how to emphasise the word titli, which enhanced the song.

Later, she worked with the renowned duo and contributed to a number of successful songs for movies including Around the World, Diwana, An Evening in Paris, Seema, Pehchan, Gumnaam, Sapno Ka Saudagar, and Kal Aaj aur Kal. She also sang Leja Leja Leja Mera Dil, Woh Pari Kahan Se Laun, Masti Aur Jawani Ho Umar Badi Mastani Ho, Tum Pyar Se Dekho, etc. In the 1980s, she performed her farewell song in the movie Kaanch Ki Deewar.

Along with Usha Khanna, Ravi, Dattaram, Iqbal Qureshi, and others, she also recorded with Rafi, Asha Bhosle, Kishore Kumar,

Yesudas, Mukesh, and Suman Kalyanpur. She lent her vocal abilities in films to leading females like Vyjayanthimala, Saira Banu, Hema Malini, Sharmila Tagore, Mumtaz, Rekha, and even Helen.

It so happened that, until 1966, there was just one category (either male or female) for the prestigious Filmfare award for best playback singer.

However, for the first time ever, Titli Udi and Mohd Rafi's song Baharo Phool Barsa were tied for best song. Sharada didn't receive the honor, but she wrote history as after that Filmfare began presenting two prizes for best playback vocalist, one for male vocalist and one for female vocalist.

For her lavish crooning of the seductive cabaret single Baat zara hai aapas ki in *Jahan Pyar Mile* (1970), she later won the Filmfare Best Female Playback Singer Award. Sharada's unusual, childlike voice was a welcome contrast in that era. She was then nominated four times in a row (1968–1971), and during the Mangeshkar sisters' heyday, she took home two Filmfare awards.

Sharada made her debut as a music director and lyricist in the mid-70s, for a number of low-budget movies like Kshitij, Hazaar Haath, Maila Aanchal, Garibi Hatao, Mandir Masjid, Maa Behen Aur Biwi, Tu Meri Main Tera.

The song *Ek Chehra Jo Dil Ke Kareeb*, composed by Shankar for the movie *Garam Khon* and which Lata Mangeshkar sang, was written by Sharada under the pen name Singaar. Mohammad Rafi received a nomination for the Filmfare Best Male Play back Singer Award for his performance of the Sharada composed song *Achcha Hi Hua Dil Toot Gaya* from *Maa Behen Aur Biwi*.

She was the first Indian female vocalist to record her own pop album, 'Sizzlers', released in 1971 by HMV. In 2007 the album *Andaaz-E-Bayan Aur*, based on Mirza Ghalib's ghazals featured her own compositions and music.

Away then from the limelight for long, she was active on Twitter, managed a website TitliUdi.com and took singing and puppetry lessons for kids, till her mid-80s. Sharada, passed away at her Mumbai Napean Sea Road residence after a long battle with cancer aged 89, survived by her children, Shammi and Sudha.



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

GUFU PAINTAL (1944 – 2023)

The making of Shakuni Mama!

S Sarabjeet Singh Paintal *nee* Gufi, was an Indian actor, film director and casting director.

Born in a middle-class Sikh family in Lahore, Pakistan, his father relocated to Delhi, where he owned a small studio and was a veteran cameraman of his time. As per his father's desire Gufi graduated in engineering and joined the TELCO in Jamshedpur, Bihar and thereafter got a transfer to Bombay.

As his uncles were in the armed forces, he too joined as a gunner during the Indo-China war in 1962, when the government gave a call to young men to stand up for the country and also served during the 1965 war with Pakistan. There was no TV and radio for entertainment at the border, so he and his fellow army men often enacted *Ramleela* in their leisure time and he used to play Sita, thus kindling his interest in acting. A soldier playing Ravana, would kidnap him on a scooter!

After seven years in the Army, he shifted to Mumbai where his younger brother comedian Paintal had started making strides in the film industry. His success spurred the latent dream in Gufi and he first took up modelling and in 1978, Gufi joined B.R. Films first as technical head, ads division and later as an associate director, casting director and production designer. His first assignment was the 1980 *The Burning Train*.

Soon he faced the screen as well. Beginning with the 1975 film *Rafoo Chakkar*, he worked in films like *Dillagi*, *Des Pardes*, *Suhaag*, *Maidan-E-Jung: The Revenge: Geeta Mera Naam*, *Kaalo*, *Mahabharat Aur Barbareek*, *Daava* and *Samrat & Co.*, his last film in 2014. He also directed a film on Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the 16th-century Lord Krishna devotee.

His television forays included *CID*, *Hello Inspector*, the crime series *Kanoon*, *Sauda*, *Akbar Birbal*, *Om Namah Shivay*, *Mrs. Kaushik ki Paanch Bahuein*, *Karn Sangini*, *Bahadur Shah Zafar*, *Mahabharat*, *Sssshhh Koi Hai*, *Dwarkadheesh Bhagwaan Shree Krishn*, *RadhaKrishn*, *Bharat Ka Veer Putra-Maharana Pratap*, *Karmaphal Daata Shani*, etc. He directed Vinod Khanna in a teleseries on *Maharana Pratap*. Last he was seen in the mythological TV show *Jai Kanhaiya Lal Ki*, on Star Bharat, which was a huge hit.

As casting director, Gufi had actually no plans of starring himself, but impressed with his acting skills, B.R. Chopra, on the basis of the complex character of Sir Thomas Metcalfe, the British resident of Delhi played by Gufi in Chopra's tele-series *Bahadur Shah Zafar*, zeroed on him for the role of *Shakuni mama*, the manipulative uncle of the Kauravas in his popular tele series *Mahabharat*.

It made him a household name, and so associated was he with this character, that he even presented a satirical news show on Sahara Samay Rashtriya channel in the get-up of the sinister uncle dressed in black outfits. It was Gufi's idea to add a limp to Shakuni's signature walk which made his appearance ominous.

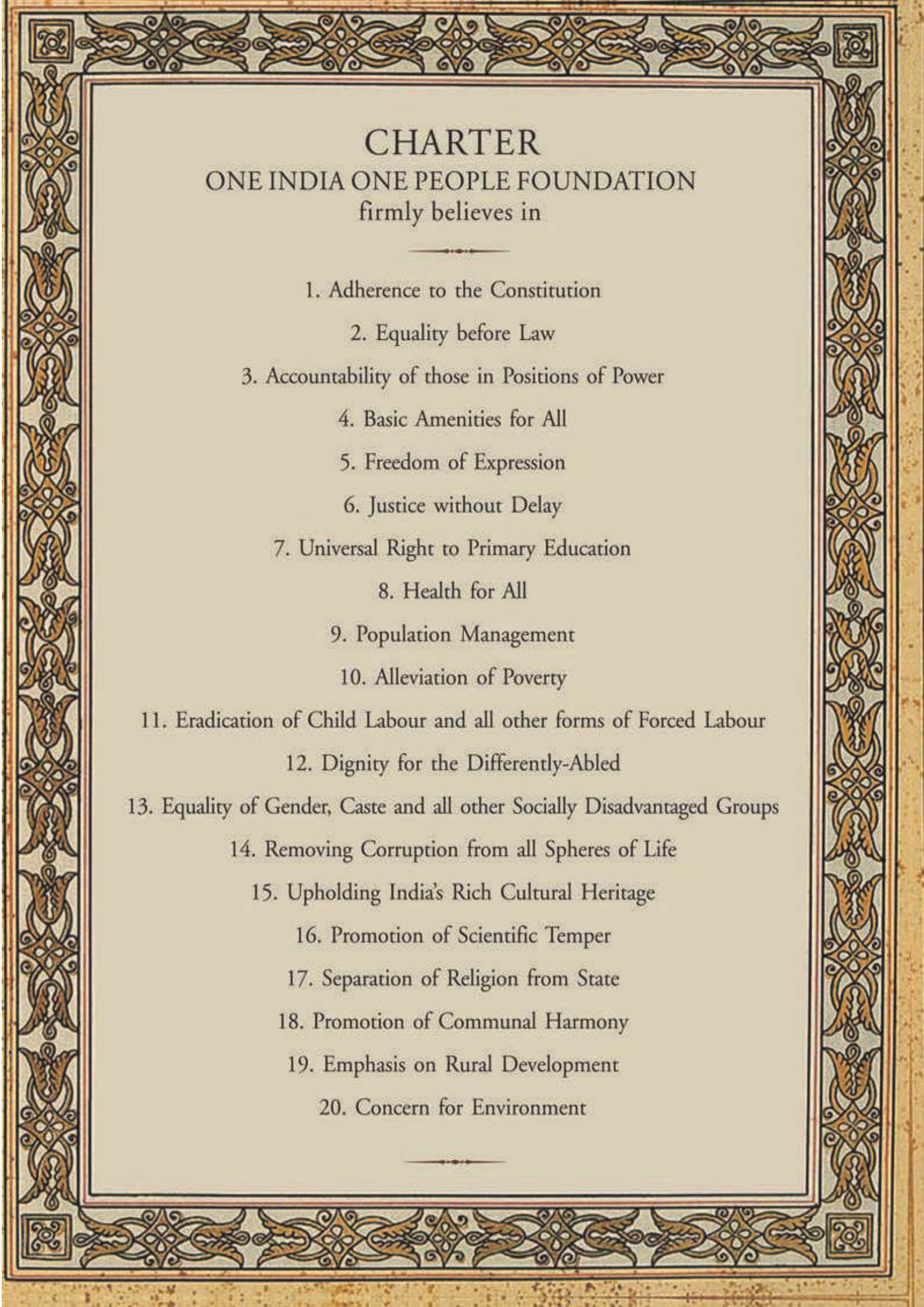
Backed by the layered writing of Rahi Masoom Raza, he managed to show that there was more to Shakuni than just a master of who operates with conceit and envy. In the fight for dharma, here was a brother standing up for the rights of his sister. Shakuni became his calling card, and finding its depth loaded the dice of destiny in Gufi's favour. He recalled how once when he and Mukesh Khanna, who played Bhishma had to travel by local train, he was denied a seat!

He had once described B.R. Chopra as a very educated man, a deep thinker, who made pictures 20 years ahead of their time. In 2010, he was appointed head of faculty at the Abhinay Acting Academy, Mumbai.

Gufi passed away in Mumbai due to heart failure, aged 79. A widower, he is survived by his son, daughter-in-law, and a grandchild.



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



CHARTER

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

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

WHO AM I?



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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