

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

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## Crimes & Criminal Justice



ANATOMY OF CRIMES IN INDIA

THE POWER PLAY IN CRIME

THE FAULT LINES IN POLICING

**Know India Better**

HISTORY, BEACHES, TEMPLES AND  
CUISINE RULE AT RAIGAD!

**Face to Face**  
SHANTANU PANDIT



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OCTOBER 2023

Vol. 25/02

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Printed & Published by  
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for  
**One India One People Foundation,**  
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,  
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## Anatomy of crimes in India

*Tracing the history of crimes and dwelling on the administration of justice, **Anushka Singh** argues with facts and figures that India has made significant efforts and achievements in controlling certain crimes over the years but it also faces a number of challenges and limitations. There is a need to constantly review and revise its strategies and policies in accordance with the changing trends and patterns of crime and to prevent the abuse of law.*



***There is an urgent need for the Legislature to enact laws that are comprehensive, consistent, progressive, and adaptable to evolving crime trends***

Crime has existed in human societies since ancient times. It is defined as an act or omission that violates the law of the state and causes harm to individuals or society. The history of crime in India can be traced back to the ancient period, when the laws were based on the religious scriptures and customs of different communities. The earliest codified law in India was the *Manu Smriti*, which prescribed different punishments for different crimes according to the caste and gender of the offender and the victim.

The Mauryan and Gupta empires also had elaborate systems of administration and justice to deal with crime and maintain law and order. The medieval period saw the invasion of foreign rulers, such as the Turks, Mongols, Mughals, etc., who brought their own laws and practices to India.

The colonial period in India witnessed the imposition of British laws and institutions, which were often oppressive and discriminatory towards the native population. The Indian Penal Code (IPC), which is still the main criminal law in India, was enacted in 1860 by the British government.

## Independent India

The post-independence period saw the emergence of new challenges and opportunities for India as a sovereign democratic republic. The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms to all citizens and established a federal system of governance with a separation of powers among the executive, legislature and judiciary.

The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which regulates the procedure for investigation, trial and punishment of crimes, was enacted in 1973. The Indian Evidence Act, which governs the admissibility and relevance of evidence in criminal cases, was enacted in 1872.

The crime scenario in India has undergone significant changes over the years due to various factors, such as population growth, urbanisation, industrialisation, globalisation, technological advancements, social changes, etc.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which collects and publishes annual statistics on crime in India, the total number of cognizable crimes (i.e., crimes that can be reported to the police and investigated without a warrant) registered in India increased from 23.58 lakh in 1953 to 60.96 lakh in 2021. The crime rate (i.e., number of crimes per lakh population) also increased from 160.5 in 1953 to 445.9 in 2021.

However, there was a decline of 7.6 per cent in the registration of cases in 2021 as compared to 2020 (66.01 lakh cases), which could be attributed to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown on crime reporting and recording.

## Patterns in crime

The types and patterns of crime in India have also diversified and evolved over time. While traditional crimes, such as murder, rape, robbery, theft, etc., still constitute a major share of crime in India, new forms of crime, such as cybercrime, human trafficking, environmental crime, economic crime, etc., have emerged and increased in recent years.

For instance, cybercrime cases registered under the Information Technology Act increased from 217 in 2001 to 56,891 in 2020. Human trafficking cases registered under various laws increased from 2,848 in 2009 to 6,616 in 2019. Environmental crime cases registered under various laws increased from 5,835 in 2014 to 34,671 in 2019. Economic crime cases registered under various laws increased from 1.16 lakh in 2014 to 3.22 lakh in 2019.

The victims and perpetrators of crime in India have also varied across different sections of society. Some groups are more vulnerable to crime than others due to various reasons, such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, marginalisation, etc.

For instance, women, children, senior citizens, Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, and foreigners are often targeted by criminals for various offences. According to the NCRB data for 2020, a total of 3.71 lakh cases of crime against women were registered, which accounted for 10 per cent of the total IPC crimes. In the same year, a total of 1.48 lakh cases of crime against children were registered and 25,324 cases of crime against senior citizens were registered. A total of 45,935 cases of crime against Scheduled Castes and 7,257 cases of crime against Scheduled Tribes were registered in 2020.

## Prevention and protection

The state has a primary responsibility to prevent and control crime and protect the rights and interests of the citizens. The state has adopted various measures and strategies to deal with crime and maintain law and order in India.

In terms of legislative measures, the state has enacted various laws and amendments to define, prohibit, and punish different types of crimes and to protect the rights and interests of different sections of society. For instance, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005; the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2018; the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019; the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019; etc.

At the same time, various institutions and agencies have been established as part of administrative measures to implement, enforce, and monitor the laws and policies related to crime prevention and control. For instance, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, etc., at the central level; the State Police, the State Crime Records Bureau,

the State Commission for Women, the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, etc., at the state level; and the District Magistrate, the District Superintendent of Police, the District Legal Services Authority, etc., at the district level.

There is also an established hierarchy of courts and tribunals to adjudicate and dispose of criminal cases and to provide justice to the victims and punish the offenders. For instance, the Supreme Court, the High Courts, the District Courts, etc., at different levels; and the National Green Tribunal, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Women, etc., at specialised forums, as part of the judicial measures.

The state has deployed various forces and personnel to maintain law and order, prevent and detect crime, investigate and prosecute offenders, and assist the courts in criminal matters. This includes the various police forces, investigative agencies, etc.

In today's digital age, technological measures for crime prevention and protection are very important. The state has adopted various technologies and tools to enhance its capacity and efficiency in crime prevention and control. For instance, the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), which is a nationwide online database for sharing information on crime and criminals; the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which is a central agency for collecting, compiling, and analysing crime statistics; the National Forensic Science Laboratory (NFSL), which is a central facility for providing scientific support in criminal investigations; the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), which is a biometric system for identifying criminals based on their fingerprints; etc.

## The social aspect

There are several programmes and schemes in place to address the root causes and consequences of crime and to promote social welfare and development. The Victim Compensation Scheme, for example, is a statutory scheme that provides financial assistance to victims of violent crimes; the Witness Protection Scheme is a legal framework that provides security and protection to witnesses in criminal cases; etc.

The state is also collaborating with various stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, media, academia, private sector entities, etc., to enhance its effectiveness and accountability in crime prevention and control. It is also engaging in international cooperation and dialogue with other countries and organizations to combat transnational and organised crimes and to share best practices and experiences in this field.

India has made significant efforts and achievements in controlling certain crimes over the years but also faces many challenges and limitations. There is a need to constantly review and revise its strategies and policies in accordance with the changing trends and patterns of crime and to prevent the abuse of law.

**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.**

## The power play in crime

**Ruchi Verma** cites examples to show how the law is misused and its loopholes are exploited to the hilt for personal and political gains. The bottom line: The high and mighty propagate crime and encourage breeding of anti-social elements in society. She makes out a case for judicial reforms and stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure that justice is not denied or delayed for the victims of such crimes.



**Indrani Mukerjea accused of killing her daughter Sheena Bora leaving the court premises after being granted bail by the Supreme Court of India, in 2022**

**P**owerful people and their relatives often misuse laws for personal and political gains. Many such families propagate crime and encourage breeding of anti-social elements in society.

One of the most notorious examples of such crimes is the Uphaar Cinema fire, which claimed the lives of 59 people and injured 103 others in 1997. The fire was caused by a faulty transformer that was installed and maintained by the Delhi Vidyut Board (DVB), a public sector undertaking.

The owners of the cinema hall, the Ansal brothers, were accused of negligence and violation of safety norms, such as blocking the emergency exits and reducing the number of seats to accommodate more people. The victims and their families had to fight a long and arduous legal battle for justice, which was marred by delays, corruption, and manipulation.

The Ansal brothers, who were influential businessmen

with political connections, tried to evade responsibility and accountability by using their money and power. They allegedly tampered with evidence, influenced witnesses, and bribed officials. They also challenged the compensation awarded to the victims by the Delhi High Court, which was reduced by the Supreme Court in 2011.

The case is still pending in the courts, as the victims' association has filed a review petition against the Supreme Court's order that granted relief to the Ansal brothers. The association has also demanded a fresh trial, alleging that the CBI, which took over the investigation in 2015, did not conduct a fair and impartial probe.

The Uphaar Cinema fire is not an isolated incident, but a reflection of a larger problem of fire safety in India. According to a report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there were 17,700 cases of fire accidents in India in 2019, resulting in 12,748 deaths and 4,252 injuries.



## The murder mystery

Another shocking case of crime involving a powerful family is the Sheena Bora murder case, which came to light in 2015. Sheena Bora, a 24-year-old executive, was allegedly killed by her mother Indrani Mukerjea, her step-father Sanjeev Khanna, and her driver Shyamvar Rai in 2012. Indrani Mukerjea was a former media executive who was married to Peter Mukerjea, the ex-CEO of Star India.

The motive behind the murder was said to be Indrani's fear of losing her wealth and status, as Sheena was her daughter from a previous relationship with Siddhartha Das. Indrani had introduced Sheena as her younger sister to her family and friends, and had opposed her relationship with Rahul Mukerjea, Peter's son from an earlier marriage. Sheena had also threatened to expose Indrani's lies and secrets, which could have jeopardised her marriage and business interests.

The case was initially handled by the Mumbai Police, but was later transferred to the CBI due to its complexity and sensitivity. The CBI filed three chargesheets against Indrani, Peter, Sanjeev, and Rai, accusing them of murder, abduction, conspiracy, destruction of evidence, forgery, and cheating. The trial began in 2017, but has been stalled due to various reasons, such as Indrani's ill-health, change of judges, lack of witnesses, and Covid-19 pandemic.

The case has also exposed the dark side of the media industry and the high society circles in Mumbai, where Indrani and Peter were well-known figures. Their greed, ambition, deception, and betrayal led them to commit such a heinous crime against their own daughter. The Sheena Bora murder case is not an aberration, but a symptom of a deeper malaise that afflicts many powerful families in India.

## A tragic tale of honour killing

The Aayushi Chaudhary murder case is one of the most shocking and controversial cases of honour killing in India. It involves the brutal murder of a 22-year-old woman, Aayushi Chaudhary, allegedly by her own parents, who disapproved of her inter-caste marriage. The case also exposes the failure of the police to investigate the crime properly and to protect the victim's rights. Aayushi was a bright and ambitious student who was pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer application from a private college in Delhi. She had a dream of becoming a software engineer and had a happy married life with her husband, Amit Kumar, whom she had secretly married in 2019.

Aayushi's parents, Nitesh Kumar Yadav and Brajbala, were reportedly unhappy with their daughter's marriage and wanted her to marry someone from their own caste. They also feared losing their social status and wealth if their daughter left them. They tried to persuade Aayushi to leave Amit and return to them, but she refused.

On 17 November 2020, Aayushi's father allegedly shot her in the head with a licensed revolver at their home in Badarpur,

Delhi, after an argument over her marriage. He then wrapped her body in plastic and stuffed it in a red suitcase. He and his wife then drove to Mathura, about 150 km away from Delhi, and dumped the suitcase near the Yamuna expressway. They returned to Delhi and pretended as if nothing had happened.

The next day, Amit filed a missing complaint with the police, as he had not heard from Aayushi since the previous night. He also told the police that he suspected foul play by Aayushi's parents, who had threatened him and his wife several times in the past. However, the police did not take his complaint seriously and did not register an FIR.

On 20 November 2020, some villagers spotted the suitcase near the expressway and informed the police. The police opened the suitcase and found Aayushi's body inside. They also recovered some documents and a mobile phone from the suitcase, which helped them identify the victim.

The police traced Aayushi's parents and arrested them on 21 November 2020. They recovered the revolver used in the crime from their home and sent it for forensic examination. The police claimed that they had confessed to killing their daughter in a fit of rage over her inter-caste marriage. However, Aayushi's parents later retracted their confession and claimed that they were innocent. They said that they had been coerced by the police to admit to the crime. They also alleged that they had been tortured and harassed by the police during custody.

The case has raised several questions about the role of the police in handling such cases of honour killing. The police have been accused of negligence, incompetence, and bias in investigating the crime.

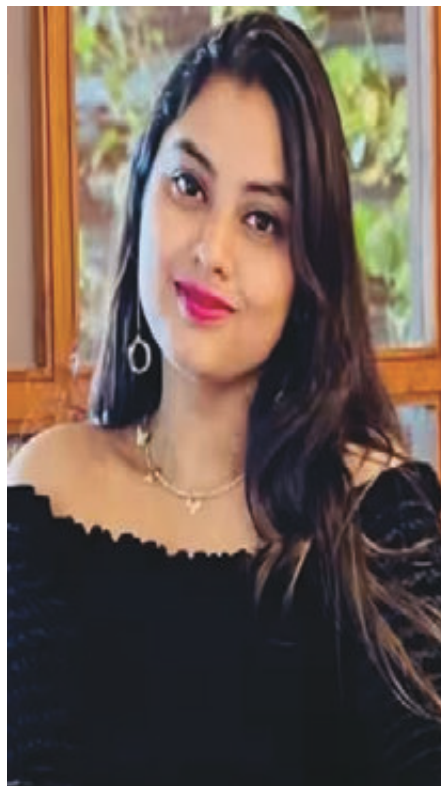
There is a lack of a specific law to deal with honour killing in India. Although the Supreme Court of India has declared honour killing as a "barbaric and feudal practice" and has directed the states to take preventive and punitive measures to curb it, there is no separate legislation to define and punish it. The existing laws, such as the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, are inadequate and ineffective to address the complexities and challenges of honour killing.

Powerful people and families often misuse laws in India for personal and political gains. They propagate crime and encourage breeding of anti-social elements in society. There is a need for judicial reforms and stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure that justice is not denied or delayed for the victims of such crimes.

**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.**

## Crime prevention and eradication

*Combating crime is a daunting task given its magnitude and gravity, points out **Kriti Kalra** and lists several activists in the country who have been leaving no stone unturned through multiple methods and strategies to raise awareness, provide support, and demand accountability to reduce or eliminate the causes that lead to crimes. She pleads that victims of crime get justice and support to heal from their trauma and rebuild their lives.*



**Lawyer Pallavi Purkayastha was killed in her rental flat in Mumbai by the Society security guard Sajjad Mughal in 2012, while Air hostess Rupal Ogrey was murdered in her rental flat by house-keeping staffer Vikram Atwal on 3 September 2023**

**Manisha Mashaal -- Anti-caste activist, lawyer, community leader and founder of Swabhiman Society**

**C**rime is a serious problem that affects the lives and rights of millions of people in India. Crime prevention, detection and eradication are the three main aspects of combating crime and ensuring justice and security for the citizens. There are, however, several lacunae and a pressing need for reforms in the criminal justice system.

Several activists in India who are working in this area have been using various methods and strategies to raise awareness, provide support, and demand accountability, especially in the context of terror attacks and attacks on girls and women living alone in hostels, as paying guests, etc., with examples like the 2012 murder of lawyer Pallavi Purkayastha, the 2023 murder of Mumbai's Marine Drive hostelite by security guard who later killed himself and the more recent killing of 24-year-old air hostess Rupal Ogrey at her Marol flat by Vikram Atwal, a housekeeping staffer.

Crime prevention is the process of reducing or eliminating the factors that cause or facilitate crime, such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, corruption, lack of education, etc. Crime prevention also involves creating a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law, and empowering the vulnerable

vulnerable groups to protect themselves from violence and exploitation. groups to protect themselves from violence and exploitation.

### Preventing crime

Kirti Bharti is a 29-year-old activist who has stopped 900 child marriages in the last four years and annulled 150 marriages involving underage boys and girls. She founded Saarthi Trust in 2012, a non-profit organisation that protects victims of child marriages. She has also documented cases of enforced disappearances and investigated unmarked graves in Kashmir. She has faced several death threats from villagers, caste councils and local politicians for her work.

Ashok Row Kavi, a 69-year-old journalist and activist who is dubbed as the father of India's gay community, founded India's first gay magazine, Bombay Dost in 1990. He has also been a representative at the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam and was among the first people to speak openly about gays and gay rights in India.

A 32-year-old activist Manisha Mashaal fights against





**Santosh Hegde, Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India; Pramila Nesargi , Eminent lawyer and women`s rights activist ; Dr. Binayak Sen, Paediatrician and national vice-president of PUCL**

caste-based violence and discrimination, especially against Dalit women. She is the founder of Swabhiman Society, a grassroots organisation that provides legal aid, counselling, education and livelihood opportunities to Dalit women who have faced atrocities such as rape, murder, acid attacks, etc. She has also organised several rallies and campaigns to demand justice for Dalit victims.

Crime detection

Crime detection is the process of identifying and apprehending the perpetrators of crime, using various techniques such as forensic science, surveillance, interrogation, etc. Crime detection also involves ensuring that the evidence collected is reliable, admissible and sufficient to prove the guilt or innocence of the accused.

Santosh Hegde is a 79-year-old former judge and anti-corruption crusader who has exposed several scams and scandals involving politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, etc. He was a member of the Lokpal Bill drafting committee in 2011. He has also served as the Lokayukta (ombudsman) of Karnataka from 2006 to 2011, where he investigated cases of illegal mining, land grabbing, tax evasion, etc.

A 40-year-old lawyer and environmentalist Afroz Shah has led the world’s largest beach cleanup project at Versova beach in Mumbai since 2015. He has also filed several public interest litigations (PILs) in courts to protect the environment and wildlife from pollution, encroachment, poaching, etc. He has won several awards and recognition for his work, including the UN Champion of the Earth award in 2016.

Harsh Mander, a 66-year-old social activist and writer has worked on various issues such as communal violence, human rights, hunger, homelessness, etc. He is the founder of Aman Biradari (Peace Brotherhood), a campaign for secularism, peace and justice. He has also been involved in fact-finding missions and legal interventions in cases of mass violence such as the Gujarat riots in 2002.

Crime eradication

Crime eradication is the process of eliminating or reducing the recurrence or impact of crime, using various measures such as punishment, rehabilitation, restitution, compensation, etc. Crime eradication also involves ensuring that the victims of crime receive justice and support to heal from their trauma and rebuild their lives.

Pramila Nesargi is a 74-year-old lawyer and women’s rights activist who has fought for several landmark cases involving rape, dowry deaths, domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc. She is also a former chairperson of Karnataka State Commission for Women.

Doctor and human rights activist Binayak Sen has worked for the health and welfare of the tribal and rural communities in Chhattisgarh. He is also a co-founder of People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), a civil liberties organisation. He has been arrested and charged with sedition and links with Maoists, but has been released on bail by the Supreme Court.

Bezwada Wilson is a 54-year-old activist and leader of the Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA), a movement to eradicate

manual scavenging, a practice of cleaning human excreta by hand. He has campaigned for the implementation of the laws banning manual scavenging and providing rehabilitation and compensation to the workers. He has also filed several PILs in courts to seek justice for the victims of manual scavenging.

Important cases reflecting lacunae

In the past and more recently also, several crimes have occurred that highlight the lacunae in the system. Attacks on women have been particularly blaring, more so because some of them were committed by those who were responsible for their security in the first place.

In 2012, a 25-year-old advocate Pallavi Purkayastha was killed by the security guard of her building in Wadala, Mumbai. The guard was later arrested from a village near Srinagar. He jumped parole in February 2016 from Nashik jail and was absconding. According to police officers, the security guard changed his appearance and had been on the move.

More recently, in 2023, a girl living in a hostel at Mumbai’s Marine Drive was killed by the security guard of the hostel. The body of the 18-year-old girl was found naked in her hostel room. The watchman, a native of Uttar Pradesh was later found dead on railways tracks near the hostel.

Police clearance is especially important for security guards, watchmen, servants, maids, drivers and workers who work in residential complexes and housing societies in Mumbai. Mumbai is one of the most populous and cosmopolitan cities in India, which attracts a large number of migrants from different parts of the country and abroad. Mumbai also has a high crime rate, as per the National Crime Records Bureau report for 2021.

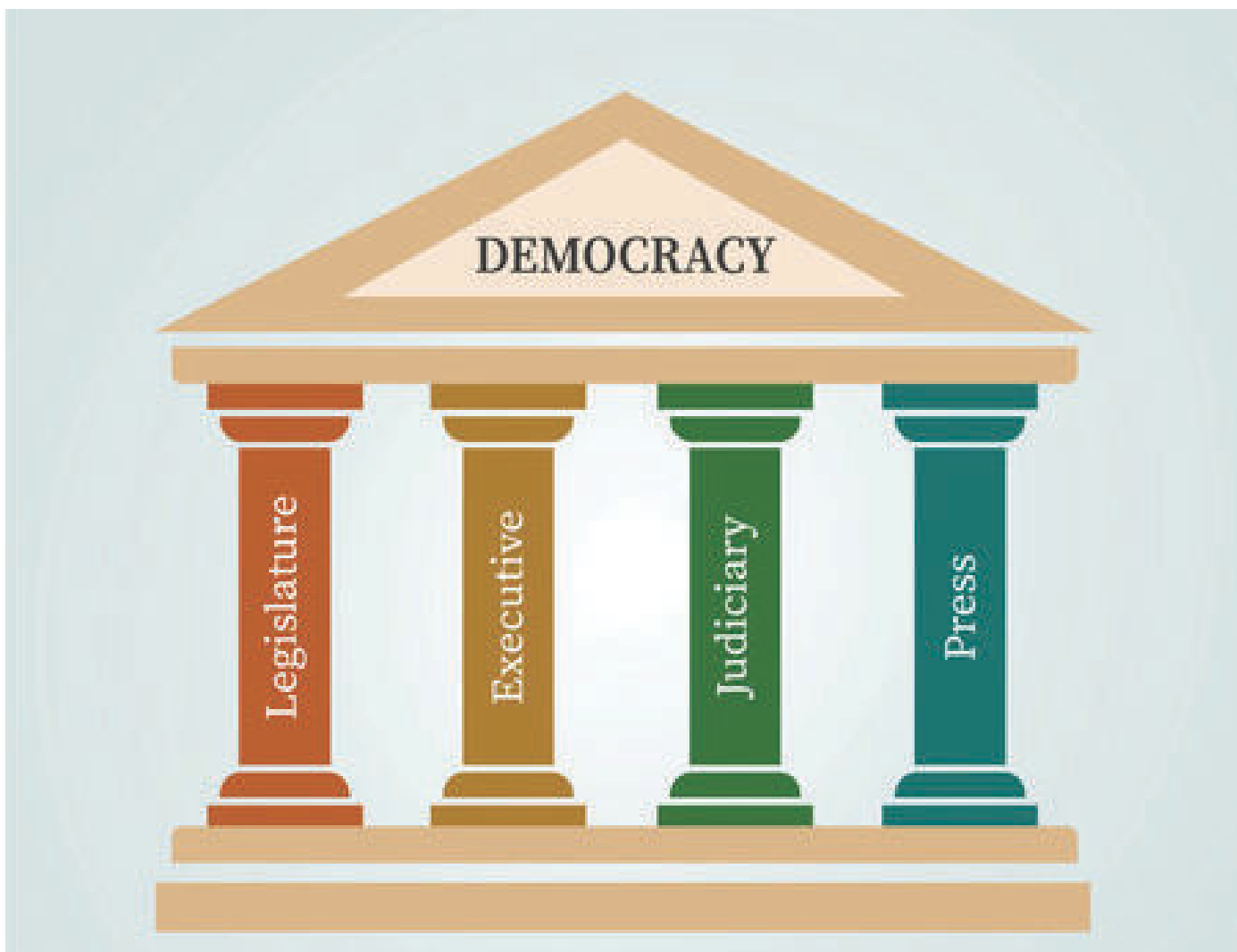
According to the report, Mumbai registered 63,689 cases of various crimes in 2021, which was a 27 per cent increase from 50,158 cases in 2020 and 40,684 cases in 2019. The report also showed that Mumbai ranked 11th among urban centres in terms of crime rate, which is the number of cases registered per lakh population.

It is imperative that the residents of housing societies ensure police clearance for their servants, maids, drivers and workers before hiring them or allowing them to work in their premises. Police clearance can help to prevent or reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime by verifying the identity and background of the person. Police clearance can also help to deter or discourage the person from committing any crime in the future by creating a record of his or her details and history.

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

## Swearing by democratic credentials

*Democracy is faced with an array of challenges, crime and violence being one of them and impacting significantly the lives of millions. **Nandini Rao** observes that criminal activities are influenced by a complex maze of social, economic, political, cultural, and psychological factors and their consequences corrode public trust in the state and its institutions, fosters fear and insecurity, disrupts social harmony, and impedes economic development and social well-being.*



### **The four pillars of democracy**

India, often lauded as the world's largest democracy, stands as a shining example of democratic principles, secularism, federalism, and human rights. Its illustrious history of democratic principles, secularism, federalism, and human rights. Its illustrious history of democratic movements, from the battle for independence against British colonial rule to contemporary struggles for social justice, underscores the profound importance of democratic values. These values are enshrined in the Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, forming the bedrock of the nation's identity.

However, democracy in India transcends the mere act of periodic elections and formal institutions; it thrives on a continuous commitment to vigilance, active participation, and

decisive actions from both its citizens and the government. Yet, this vibrant democracy grapples with an array of multifaceted challenges, with one of the most pressing being the pervasive issue of crime and violence, which significantly impacts the lives of millions.

Criminal activities are influenced by an intricate interplay of social, economic, political, cultural, and psychological factors. The consequences of crime extend far beyond its immediate victims; it corrodes public trust in the state and its institutions, fosters fear and insecurity, disrupts social harmony, and impedes economic development and social well-being. So, it is imperative to effectively prevent and control crime, a collective responsibility borne by the four pillars of democracy - legislature,

executive, judiciary, and media.

## The respective roles

The Legislature represents the legislative body entrusted with the responsibility of enacting laws, serving as a conduit for the people's will through their elected representatives. The legislature crafts laws that define, prohibit, and penalise various criminal activities while safeguarding the rights and interests of diverse sections of society.

It also exercises control over budgets and resources allocated for crime prevention, conducting evaluations of the performance of relevant agencies and programmes. Moreover, the legislature engages in deliberations and debates on matters concerning crime, and it is responsive to public feedback.

The Executive, as the branch charged with executing and enforcing laws formulated by the legislature, the executive arm, under the leadership of the President and Prime Minister, ensures the efficient implementation of legislation. The executive formulates comprehensive plans, policies, and strategies for crime prevention and control, fostering collaboration with various stakeholders, including civil society, media, academia, and the private sector. International cooperation and dialogues with other nations and organisations to combat trans-national organised crime fall within the purview of the executive.

By safeguarding the principles of justice and equality, the Judiciary interprets the Constitution, ensures the compliance of other branches of government, and safeguards citizens' rights while upholding the supremacy of the rule of law. The judiciary adjudicates disputes and cases linked to criminal activities, delivering justice to victims and administering punishments to offenders. Additionally, the judiciary reviews the validity of laws and policies pertaining to crime and plays an instrumental role in educating and raising public awareness about legal rights and responsibilities.

The fourth pillar, the Media, assumes the role of a vigilant watchdog, holding those in positions of power accountable by disseminating accurate and unbiased information to the citizens. It empowers individuals to make informed decisions and actively participate in the democratic process. The media's investigative, analytical, and reporting functions raise awareness about issues related to crime, compelling action. Furthermore, it creates platforms for dialogue, discussion, and debate among various stakeholders.

## The need for efficiency

These four pillars operate in harmony, forming an interdependent system that ensures the effective functioning of the nation's governance and the prevention and control of crime. However, each pillar faces its unique set of challenges and limitations.

The Legislature may grapple with issues such as corruption, criminalisation, polarisation, defection, and disruptions, which can undermine its functionality and credibility. The Executive may confront challenges such as the abuse of power, lack of transparency, accountability, and coordination, potentially affecting its effectiveness and credibility.

The Judiciary might encounter problems including case backlog, delays, issues of accessibility, and affordability, which can impede its efficiency and credibility. The Media may grapple with concerns like censorship, bias, sensationalism, and commercialisation, which can impact its credibility and societal influence.

To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of these pillars in crime prevention and control, several measures can be implemented. For example, the Legislature should enact laws that are comprehensive, consistent, progressive, and adaptable to evolving crime trends.

By drafting comprehensive laws that encompass a wide range of criminal activities, leaving no significant loopholes, the Legislature can ensure that no criminal behaviour goes unaddressed. The laws must be consistent in their application and penalties. This means that similar crimes should result in similar punishments, regardless of location or social status. Consistency helps build public trust in the legal system.

There is also a need for progressive legislation which evolves to reflect changing societal norms and circumstances. As society evolves, new forms of crime may emerge (e.g., cyber-crimes), and laws must adapt to address these new challenges effectively.

Laws should be flexible enough to adapt to changing crime trends. This means that they should not be overly rigid but rather capable of being updated and amended as new criminal tactics and technologies emerge. For instance, the legislature should be ready to update laws related to data breaches or online harassment as technology advances.

## Proactive approach

The Executive must execute laws and policies proactively, leveraging innovative approaches to address the root causes of crime. Instead of solely reacting to crimes after they occur, the executive branch should take proactive measures to prevent crime. This can include community policing, early intervention programs, and efforts to address underlying socio-economic factors that contribute to criminal behaviour.

Innovative approaches can go a long way. The executive should continually seek innovative solutions to tackle the root causes of crime. For example, addressing poverty, improving education, and providing job opportunities can help reduce criminal behaviour. Initiatives like restorative justice and diversion programs can also be innovative approaches that focus on rehabilitation rather than punitive measures.

Collaboration with various stakeholders, including community organisations, civil society, and experts in criminology, is crucial. These partnerships can bring fresh perspectives and ideas to crime prevention efforts.

The Judiciary should expedite the resolution of cases related to crime, ensuring timely justice for victims and due punishment for offenders. The judiciary should implement efficient case management systems to expedite the legal process. Delays in court proceedings not only burden the justice system but also frustrate victims and can lead to a sense of impunity among offenders.

By establishing specialised courts for specific types of crimes, such as domestic violence or cybercrime, can help streamline the judicial process and ensure that cases are handled by judges with expertise in those areas. Encouraging alternative dispute resolution methods, such as mediation or arbitration, can alleviate the burden on the courts, particularly for non-violent or less serious offenses.

## The role of Media

The Media should deliver accurate, unbiased, and responsible reporting, fostering dialogue and discussion among stakeholders. Media outlets should prioritise fact-checking and verification to ensure the information they disseminate is accurate and reliable. Inaccurate reporting can have serious consequences, including misinformed public opinion and damage to individuals' reputations.

Media should strive for impartiality and avoid taking sides in crime-related stories. Balanced reporting ensures that the public can form their own opinions based on a fair presentation of the facts.

Responsible reporting entails considering the potential impact of stories on individuals and society. This includes avoiding sensationalism, respecting the privacy of individuals involved in criminal cases, and refraining from incendiary language that could fuel tensions or prejudice.

Crime, which jeopardises peace, harmony, and development, can be successfully combated through the concerted efforts of the four pillars of democracy, preserving the intricate fabric of Indian 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.**



# A festering wound called road rage

*Dwelling on the phenomenon of road rage, **Gayathri S** says it is no longer sporadic and isolated but a disquieting fixture in the collective psyche of the nation. As the number of vehicles on roads multiply, honking horns and perpetual traffic snarl are endemic of road rage. The road, once a means of transportation, has transformed into a battleground where the battle is not against fellow commuters, but against the mounting stress of urban life itself.*



**There is an alarming uptick in road rage incidents in India**

Road rage, once regarded as an affliction primarily afflicting the Western world, was a distant spectre for India. It was the stuff of Hollywood movies, an anecdote in travellers' tales, and an issue that seemed alien to our nation's diverse tapestry. However, in recent times, a disconcerting shift has unfurled across India's vast network of roads, thrusting road rage into the very heart of our national narrative.

In the quiet moments before the sun's rays sweep across India's diverse landscapes, a peculiar and disconcerting phenomenon unfolds—the simmering anger of commuters. It's an anger that takes root in the early light of dawn, gains momentum as the sun climbs to its zenith, and festers in the gridlocked hours of the evening.

Gone are the days when road rage was a sporadic and isolated occurrence; today, it has evolved into a disquieting fixture in the collective psyche of the nation.

## Changing dynamics of Indian roads

Over the past few decades, the country has witnessed an extraordinary transformation in its infrastructure and the proliferation of vehicles. The days of leisurely drives along relatively uncongested roads have given way to an era characterised by chaotic, horn-blaring, and bumper-to-bumper commutes that have the potential to unravel even the most composed individuals.

The exponential growth in the number of vehicles on Indian roads is staggering. While this surge is indicative of economic development and improved living standards, it has also brought with it an array of challenges.

Roads designed to accommodate a fraction of the current traffic are now strained beyond capacity. The consequent congestion, long hours spent idling in traffic, and the constant jostling for space have created a breeding ground for frustration. Beneath the cacophony of honking horns and the perpetual snarl of traffic lies the underlying root cause of road rage – Stress. India's urban centres, characterised by their breakneck pace and relentless pursuit of deadlines, have conspired to transform the mild-mannered commuter into a potential road warrior.

The road, once a means of transportation, has transformed into a battleground where the battle is not against fellow commuters, but against the mounting stress of urban life itself. In such an environment, even minor inconveniences can trigger disproportionate reactions. A traffic signal turning red, a fellow driver changing lanes without signalling, or being caught in a snarl of vehicles can become catalysts for outbursts of rage.

## Disregard for traffic discipline

In the midst of this chaos, the symptoms of road rage manifest themselves as a blatant disregard for traffic discipline. The casual dismissal of traffic rules and regulations is akin to awakening a dormant dragon. In a world where lanes are mere suggestions, and stop signs are often ignored, confrontations between motorists have become an inevitability.

Lane discipline, a fundamental aspect of safe driving, has deteriorated as drivers swerve between lanes without signalling or regard for the vehicles around them. Tailgating, a perilous practice is all too common, as is the incessant use of horns as a means of expressing frustration. The very fabric of road etiquette seems to have unravelled, replaced by a culture of impatience and entitlement.

The disregard for basic traffic norms is not just a result of individual behaviour but also a reflection of the broader societal attitude toward road safety. The lax enforcement of traffic regulations and the leniency shown towards traffic violations have contributed to a sense of impunity among drivers. This, in turn, fosters an environment where aggressive behaviour becomes the norm rather than exception.

The alarming uptick in road rage incidents in India can be attributed to a complex interplay of factors, including the changing dynamics of Indian roads, the stress-laden urban lifestyle, and the pervasive disregard for traffic discipline.

## Implications of road rage

Beyond the immediate, adrenaline-fueled conflicts that play out on the road, road rage carries grave implications that reverberate throughout society.

Foremost among these concerns is the tangible threat road rage poses to road safety. The aggression exhibited by enraged drivers endangers not only themselves but also fellow commuters. Reckless driving manoeuvres, abrupt stops, and high-speed chases are often the harbingers of accidents waiting to happen.

However, it's not just drivers who are at risk; pedestrians, cyclists, and other innocent bystanders often find themselves caught in the crossfire of this vehicular fury.

The complex causes of road rage in India are deeply rooted in the daily struggles of traffic congestion, impatient driving habits, and escalating provocations. Beyond the immediate road conflicts, the broader implications of road rage on road safety and societal harmony underscore the urgency of addressing this issue comprehensively and effectively.

## Legal consequences

For those who succumb to the dangerous allure of road rage, the legal hammer looms large. It wields a potent array of sanctions, each designed to deter and penalise those who allow anger to guide their actions.

Fines, the most immediate and perhaps the mildest of penalties, demand a financial reckoning. These fines, imposed for aggressive driving behaviours or physical altercations on the road, serve as an immediate consequence.

License suspensions, on the other hand, carry more significant weight. Depriving an individual of their driving privileges can be a harsh wake-up call, forcing them to contemplate the gravity of their actions.

Without a valid license, the convenience and freedom of personal mobility are stripped away, underscoring the importance of responsible and composed driving.

In the most severe cases, road rage can lead to incarceration. Legal authorities take a dim view of violence on the road, recognising that it not only endangers the lives of those involved but also poses a broader threat to societal order.

Those who engage in physical altercations, especially with the intent to harm, can find themselves facing criminal charges that may result in imprisonment.

This ultimate consequence serves as a stark and sobering reminder that the consequences of road rage extend far beyond the immediate moment of anger.

## Mental health impact

While the legal consequences of road rage are tangible and immediate, the psychological scars it leaves can be even more enduring and insidious. The silent suffering of both the aggressor and the victim often goes unnoticed but can cast a long shadow over their lives.

Stress, anxiety, and trauma become unwelcome companions on the journey of those touched by road rage. These emotions can manifest as anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), especially if individuals were involved in a serious altercation or accident.

Anxiety about future encounters on the road, nightmares, and even reluctance to drive can be among the enduring effects of such experiences.

The surge of road rage in India is an unwelcome intruder demanding swift eviction. As we tread the tumultuous path of modernity, comprehending the causes, implications, and remedies for road rage is not merely a matter of civic duty; it is the safeguarding of our collective sanity.

By weaving together the threads of responsible driving, stress management, and effective conflict resolution, we can mend the fabric of our roads, creating safe and harmonious highways for all.

**Gayathri S is a researcher with [www.thewomansurvivor.com](http://www.thewomansurvivor.com) – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.**



## The fault lines in policing

*While the men in khaki resiliently brave the mammoth task of maintaining societal order, the global landscape of the criminal justice system reveals a mosaic marred by age and inefficiency, avers **Nimisha Lakhia** and says the system is showing signs of wear and fracture, leaving both victims and the accused in its unforgiving shadows. An overburdened criminal justice system is one of the root causes.*



***A modern police force is necessary for a modern nation. Urgent and comprehensive reforms are not only necessary but also a moral imperative***

**P**olice force serves as a vital thread, weaving together the fabric of law and order. Their role, as custodians of public safety - guardian of law and order, bearing the responsibility of preserving peace, thwarting criminal activities, and upholding the sanctity of justice - cannot be overstated.

Their role transcends the confines of mere law enforcement, extending into the realm of societal protection and the preservation of civil harmony. However, as with any institution, the police force is not immune to scrutiny and reform.

Police are the first responders to situations and their role extends far beyond the badge and uniform. They are also the guardians of the courtroom and bridge the gap between the crime scene and the courtroom. Beyond their law enforcement duties, police officers bear the responsibility of community engagement, fostering robust relationships with the very public they are sworn to protect.

### Age and inefficiency

While the police force valiantly shoulders the Herculean task of maintaining societal order, the global landscape of the criminal justice system reveals a mosaic marred by age and inefficiency. The system is showing signs of wear and fracture, leaving both victims and the accused in its unforgiving shadows.

One blemish tarnishing the criminal justice system's image is the backlog of cases that congest the very arteries of justice. Overworked judges and a deluge of pending matters create a labyrinth where justice is indefinitely postponed. Victims yearn for closure, their agony prolonged by endless delays, while the accused languish in legal limbo, unable to move forward or find resolution.

The very essence of justice becomes a distant mirage, eroding public trust and rendering the concept of timely and



equitable justice a cruel illusion.

The police in India are subject to the control and influence of the political executive, which often misuses its power to interfere in the functioning of the police. This affects the autonomy, impartiality and integrity of the police force.

For instance, political leaders may transfer, suspend or appoint police officers according to their whims and interests, or use the police to harass their opponents or favour their supporters. This undermines the morale and professionalism of the police personnel and erodes public trust in them.

## The bias in the police

Marginalised communities bear the brunt of biased policing, profiling, and a skewed distribution of justice. The principle that all citizens should enjoy equal protection under the law remains an elusive ideal for many. This threatens to corrode the very foundations upon which society's belief in the justice system is built.

These disparities in access to justice are not confined to the courtroom alone. At every juncture of the criminal justice journey, from encounters with law enforcement to sentencing and rehabilitation, individuals from marginalised backgrounds often find themselves disproportionately burdened by the weight of bias and systemic inequality. The scales of justice, meant to balance the rights and interests of all, are often tipped in favour of privilege and power.

The consequences of this inequality are far-reaching, extending well beyond the individuals directly affected. It undermines the public's faith in the criminal justice system, breeding cynicism and disillusionment. It perpetuates cycles of crime and victimisation, as marginalised individuals are denied the opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

## Need for reforms

The fractures in the criminal justice system in India are undeniable, but they are not impossible to mend. Urgent and comprehensive reforms are needed to mend these lacunae and restore the system's integrity.

Law enforcement agencies must invest in community policing initiatives and comprehensive training programmes that emphasise cultural sensitivity, de-escalation techniques, crime prevention, and bias reduction. Accountability mechanisms should be established to address and rectify instances of biased policing and corruption.

Resource scarcity poses a significant threat to the effectiveness of the police force. Within its ranks, forensic labs often languish due to insufficient funding, hindering the timely analysis of critical evidence. Valuable evidence remains unexamined, criminals evade apprehension, and the innocent sometimes bear the burden of wrongful convictions.

Beyond resource constraints, the training deficiencies within the police force exacerbate the challenges they face. Police officers serve as the frontlines of law enforcement, necessitating comprehensive training to navigate the multifaceted nature of their roles effectively.

This should encompass modules to enable diffusion of high-pressure situations without resorting to excessive force, cultural sensitivity to engage respectfully with diverse communities, the ability to handle mental health crises with compassion and competence, and training to emphasise on crime prevention.

In its absence, instances of excessive force and bias can emerge, eroding public trust and nurturing allegations of police misconduct. These incidents not only compromise

individual rights but also hurt the principles of a just and equitable society.

Another major issue affecting the police force is corruption. Appropriate provisions must be made in law and regulations to curb the rampant practice that undermines justice and creates disillusionment in the common man.

## The path forward

Streamlining case management through digitalisation and modernising court procedures are imperative steps to initiate reforms in the criminal justice system. These reforms hold the potential to dramatically reduce case backlogs, ensuring that justice is not delayed.

Moreover, technology-driven solutions for evidence collection and analysis can expedite and make efficient investigative capabilities, enhancing the quest for truth and justice. Bolstering community policing initiatives is essential in rebuilding trust and fostering cooperation between law enforcement and the public.

Implementing transparency measures and holding law enforcement authorities accountable for their actions is crucial. Independent oversight and civilian review boards can help in this regard. Furthermore, efforts to diversify police forces should be intensified to better reflect the diverse communities they serve.

Ensuring equitable access to legal representation, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable populations, stands as a pivotal reform. Legal aid programmes can level the playing field, guaranteeing that justice is blind and not swayed by one's socio-economic status.

## Pursuit of justice

The deficiencies in the criminal justice system are not insurmountable. Urgent and comprehensive reforms are not only necessary but also a moral imperative. By addressing these challenges head-on, society can rekindle the torch of justice, reaffirming its commitment to fairness, equality, and the rule of law for all.

The police force stands as a wall against chaos, ensuring society's safety and well-being. However, the flaws in the criminal justice system cannot be ignored. Urgent reforms are not just a necessity but a need of the hour to uphold justice and restore democracy.

A modern police force is necessary for a modern nation. India's Home Minister Amit Shah has tabled in the Parliament a set of reforms in the criminal justice system that includes amendments in the basic legal framework in terms of the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act.

There is a concerted effort by the government to adopt an integrated code of law, encompassing needs of modern India and now something that was inherited as part of the country's colonial legacy. The new amended laws are touted to ensure a uniform system of law and order management within the country. As part of these, the police will have to be more professional and effective in handling law and order and ensure that is done in an impartial manner – protecting the law-abiding citizens and deterring the ones breaking the law and prevent abuse and misuse of law.

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## Crimes on the celluloid canvas

*The Indian cinema has an old history of portraying the complex world of crimes. It has portrayed it for entertainment and societal awareness as narrative device, points out **Ritika Seth**. According to her, beyond entertainment, films also serve as a lens through which to examine the intricate interplay between law, order, and the human condition. Besides, crimes are also a subject for creating engaging and compelling stories.*



Posters of film: *Pink*

Cinema is one of the most powerful and popular forms of art and entertainment that has the ability to influence and shape the minds and hearts of the masses. Cinema force plays a critical role, but systemic issues have hindered its ability to fulfil its duties effectively.

The current centralised structure of police administration often results in bureaucratic delays and lack of accountability. Implementing measures to decentralise decision-making, empower local police stations and establish oversight mechanisms can enhance the responsiveness of the police force and hold officers accountable for their actions.

is also a reflection of society, as it depicts the realities, issues, and challenges that people face in their everyday lives. One of the most prevalent and pertinent themes that cinema explores is crime. Indian cinema, in particular, has a rich tradition of delving into the complex world of crime, both in specific cases and as a broader societal issue. These films not only entertain but also serve as a lens through which to examine the intricate



*Article 15*

interplay between law, order, and the human condition.

One of the earliest and most influential Indian films that dealt with crime was *Mother India* (1957), directed by Mehboob Khan. The film is considered to be one of the greatest Indian films of all time and a milestone in Indian cinema. The film tells the story of Radha (Nargis), a poor peasant woman who struggles to raise her sons amid poverty, drought, and oppression by a cruel moneylender.

Another landmark Indian film that explored crime was '*Sholay*' (1975). Directed by Ramesh Sippy, it is widely regarded as one of the greatest Indian films ever made and a cult classic. The film follows the adventures of two petty thieves, Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) and Veeru (Dharmendra), who are hired by a retired police officer, Thakur (Sanjeev Kumar), to capture a notorious dacoit, Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan).

The film combines elements of action, comedy, romance, drama, and tragedy. It also portrays the themes of friendship, loyalty, revenge, and courage.

(Continued on page 28)





# History, beaches, temples and cuisine rule at Raigad!

*A past steeped in history is not the only stake to Raigad's claim to fame. It has many UNESCO heritage sites and is made proud by historic temples, exquisite landscapes and its rich flora and fauna. As a place that holds huge tourism potential, it has been a site for sore eyes with places like Elephanta Caves, Ashtavinayaka, Murud Janjira Fort, not to speak of its majestic seashore expanse. Visitors can soak in its mystique and partake of its traditional, signature dishes that give Raigad a distinct identity of its own.*





### *Picturesque Sahyadri Hills in Raigad*

**R**aigad is a district in the state of Maharashtra, India. It is located in the Konkan region, along the Arabian Sea coast and popular for its scintillating historical places, pristine beaches, picturesque landscapes and diverse flora and fauna of the Western Ghats.

Raigad is also home to a range of religious places, such as Ashtavinayak Temples, Elephanta Caves which are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and have cave temples dedicated to Lord Shiva, etc. These and more are testimonies to the zone's rich history and cultural past.

Raigad has a great tourism potential, as it offers a variety of attractions and experiences for visitors. There's something for everyone, whether it is history, culture, nature, adventure or spirituality. The zone can also be easily accessed from Mumbai and Pune by road or by ferry. It can also be explored in different seasons, as each season brings out a different aspect of its beauty.

One of the best-known places to visit, extremely popular among domestic and foreign tourists are the Elephanta Caves. They are located on Elephanta Island aka Gharapuri, in Raigad. While the island is home to three villages and 1,400 residents, it's the caves that draw visitors from all over.

The Elephanta Caves have rock-cut stone sculpture scarved out of solid basalt rock. The most famous being Trimurti Sadashiva (three-faced Shiva). Many sculptures were damaged when Portuguese soldiers would use them for target practice.

### **Carved out of rock**

Kondana Caves are a group of ancient Buddhist caves that are carved out of the rock at the base of Rajmachi Hill in Raigad. The caves date back to the 1st century BC and are among the oldest examples of rock-cut architecture in India. The caves are situated in a serene and scenic location, surrounded by lush greenery, waterfalls, and streams. The caves are also a popular destination for trekkers and nature lovers who come to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of the place. The Kondana Caves are located 33 km north off Lonavala and 16 km northwest off Karla Caves in a village called Kondana.

The caves consist of 16 chambers that are divided into two groups: Chaitya (prayer hall) and Vihara (monastery). The Chaitya group has one large cave that has a stupa (a dome-shaped structure that contains relics of Buddha) and a wooden facade that resembles a horseshoe. The facade has carvings of animals, humans, and floral motifs.



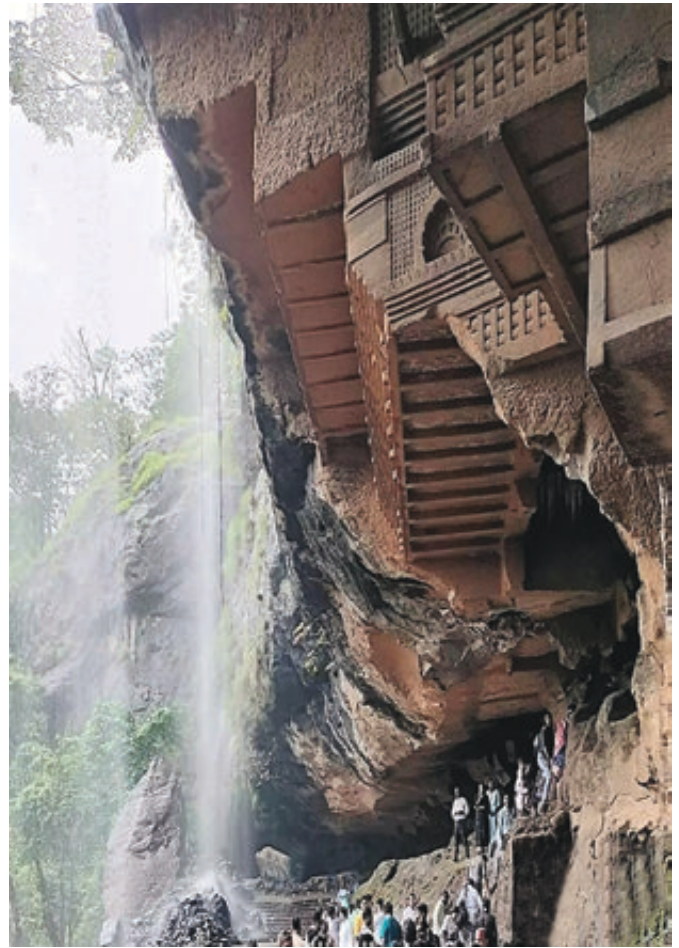


***Harihareshwar Temple***

The Chaitya cave also has paintings on the ceiling and walls that depict the life and teachings of Buddha. The paintings are faded and damaged due to weathering and vandalism, but they still show the artistic skill and religious devotion of the ancient craftsmen.

The Vihara group has 15 caves that were used as living quarters and meditation rooms by the Buddhist monks. The Vihara caves have stone beds, benches, pillars, windows, and doorways that show the simplicity and austerity of the monastic life. The Vihara caves also have sculptures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas (enlightened beings who help others to attain enlightenment) in various poses and expressions. Some of the sculptures are damaged or missing, but they still convey the grace and serenity of the Buddhist philosophy.

Kondana Caves are a historical and cultural treasure that showcase the rich heritage and legacy of Buddhism in India. The caves are a testimony to the skill and dedication of the ancient artisans who created these magnificent structures with minimal tools and resources. The caves are a place that can transport anyone to a different era and a different state of mind.



***Kondana Caves***



***The path leading to the serene Awas beach***





***Nagoba Temple in Awas***

## Dedicated to Ashtavinayaka

Shri Ballaleshwar Ashtavinayaka, a temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha, is located in Pali village, in Raigad. The temple is one of the eight temples that form the Ashtavinayaka circuit, which are the most sacred and revered temples of Ganesha in Maharashtra. Here, the idol is dressed like a Brahmin, a unique feature.

The temple is believed to be the only temple where Ganesha is worshipped by the name of the Lord's devotee, Ballal. According to legend, Ballal was a young devotee of Ganesha who was tortured by his father for worshipping Ganesha. Ganesha was pleased by his devotion and appeared before him and healed his wounds. The elephant-headed God also granted him a boon that he would be known by his name in this temple. Hence, the temple is called Ballaleshwar, which means "the lord of Ballal".

The temple has a beautiful wooden architecture that dates to several centuries old. The temple has a shikhara (spire) and has carvings of peacocks and elephants. It was designed and

constructed east facing in such a manner that during sunrise, the first rays of the sun fall on the idol of Lord Ganesha.

The temple is also home to one of the famed bells that were brought back by the famous Peshwa Chimaji Appa after he defeated the Portuguese in Vasai and Sasti. The primary hall of the temple is twelve meters long and six meters wide. There are eight pillars, an inner sanctum, outer sanctum and the premises has two lakes.

The temple is visited by thousands of devotees throughout the year, especially during festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Magh Chaturthi, and Bhadrapad Chaturthi. Devotees perform various rituals and ceremonies such as abhishek (bathing), aarti (prayer), prasad (offering), etc.

Shri Ballaleshwar Ashtavinayaka showcases the faith and devotion of the people towards Lord Ganesha. The temple is also a tribute to the rich history and culture of Maharashtra. It is a source of inspiration and blessings for those who visit it with an open mind and heart.





*Elephanta Caves*

## The perfect beach getaway

Varsoli Beach offers the perfect getaway for those who want to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of nature. The beach is located near Alibaug town, in Raigad district. It is one of the most beautiful and clean beaches in Raigad.

The beach has white sand and clear water that sparkle in the sunlight and is ideal for relaxing and enjoying the sea breeze, as it is not very crowded and noisy. The beach also offers various water sports activities, such as jet skiing, banana boat ride, parasailing, etc., for those who want to have some fun and adventure. It also has many coconut and casuarina trees that add to its charm and provide shade and shelter.

The beach is also a good place to witness the sunrise and sunset, as it offers a spectacular view of the horizon. It has a lighthouse that stands tall and proud on the shore. A few stalls and shops sell snacks, drinks, souvenirs, etc., for those looking to take home mementos.

Apart from Varsoli, there are several other beaches in the



*A local woman selling Vada Pav*





**An idol of Kalbhairava in one of the many temples in Raigad**

zone. Many including Awas, Kihim, and Alibaug are frequented by tourists from Mumbai. While Awas offers the rare tranquil beach experience and is mostly visited by families, Kihim and Alibaug are more popular among those looking for fun and adventure sports on the beach.

## Blessed by Lord Shiva

Harihareshwar Temple is a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, who is also worshipped here as Harihareshwar or the lord of Hari (Vishnu) and Hara (Shiva). The temple is located on the shore of Harihareshwar beach, about 200 km from Mumbai, in Raigad and is considered to be one of the holiest places in Raigad, as it is believed to be blessed by Lord Shiva himself. It is also known as the Kashi of the South.

The temple has a history that dates back to the 16th century, when it was built by a local king named Harihar. Later renovated and expanded by the Peshwas, who were the prime ministers of the Maratha Empire. Shiva and Parvati in the form of 'linga' is the clan deity or *kuladaivat* of the Peshwas. In 1723, Bajirao Peshwa I renovated the temple after it was destroyed in a fire.

Harihareshwar Temple has a main shrine that houses a black stone idol of Lord Shiva. The idol is adorned with gold and silver ornaments and flowers and surrounded by other idols of Lord Vishnu, Brahma and Goddess Parvati in the form of a linga. The temple offers a beautiful view of the Arabian Sea and the Harihareshwar beach - one of the most pristine beaches in Raigad. Harihareshwar Temple is a place that showcases the

faith and devotion of the people towards Lord Shiva.

Apart from the main temple, there are two more temples - Lord Kalbhairav (the idol faces North in this temple, as opposed to most others where it faces South) and Goddess Yogeshwari. As per tradition, one must visit and pay tribute first to Kalbhairav, then go to Lord Shiva and then again return to the Kalbhairav Temple.

## Exotic architecture

Kanakeshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva - the supreme god of Hinduism - is an old temple located on a hill near the village of Mapgoan which is about 13 km from Alibaug. The temple is known for its architecture and the many steps that lead to the top of the hill. The steps were built by Govind Rangdas, the Diwan of Sardar Raghoji Angre.

The beautiful temple was constructed with the Hoysala style of architecture - the building style in Hindu temple architecture developed under the rule of the Hoysala Empire between the 11th and 14th centuries. The temple has a *garbhagriha* or the sanctum sanctorum and the *sabhamandapa* along with a water tank that is called the Pushkarni.

This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and most of the rituals are performed accordingly by members of the Gurav family. At the base of the hill, on the way up, there is Naropant Pradhan's tomb, then Nagobacha Tappa, Devachi Payari and the Gaimandi which is the footprint of a cow on a cliff surrounded by five shivlinga.



### *Murud Janjira Fort*

## An engineering marvel

Murud Janjira Fort is an engineering and an architectural marvel that rightly is known as the sea fort. The fort is located on an island off the coast of Murud village, in the Raigad district of Maharashtra and is accessible by a boat that takes about 20 minutes from the shore.

Among other things the fort is known for its impressive record of being undefeated by any enemy. The fort has a hexagonal shape and is surrounded by high walls. The fort has several bastions that are equipped with cannons and guns. The fort also has three huge gates that face different directions: the main gate faces the land, the west gate faces the sea, and the east gate faces the open sea.

The fort also has a mosque, a palace and a tomb within its premises. The mosque, located near the main gate has a dome and minarets, was built by the Siddis as a symbol of their faith and devotion. The palace is located near the west gate and has two storeys and a courtyard. The palace was the residence of the Siddi rulers and their families. The tomb is located near the east gate and was the burial place of the Siddi rulers and their

nobles.

Siddis or the Habshi, were originally from Africa and came to India as fighters, slaves, etc. centuries ago. They later ruled a significant portion of Maharashtra's coastline and lived in Janjira, their capital. To limit their movement and overtures, the Marathas constructed several sea forts like Kanderi, Underi, Padmadurga, etc.

The fort also has many other attractions, such as water tanks, granaries, warehouses, prisons, etc., a secret passage that leads to the mainland, which was used as an escape route in case of emergency. The fort also has a lighthouse that stands tall and proud on the shore.

Raja Ramrao Patil, the chief of the native fishermen community i.e., the Kolis, set up his local community first on this island to shield his people from trespassers, pirates, invaders, etc. He was the Patil of Janjira island. He is known to construct this fort. Many armies tried to capture this fort but failed. Indigenous and foreign rulers, European naval forces, and more tried but could not capture this sea fort.





**Fun activities at Alibaug beach**

## Adventure sports and cuisine

There are many adventure activities in Raigad that are quite popular among tourists and adventure seekers. One can experience Bungee jumping - the thrill of jumping from a height of 40 meters at Kolad, located around 110 kilometres from Mumbai and one of the many popular spots for adventure activities in Raigad.

Tourists can also try rappelling down the steep slopes of the Sahyadri mountains at various locations in Raigad, such as Kondana Caves, Tamhini Falls, etc. On the other hand, one can

enjoy rafting on Kundalika river, which is one of the fastest flowing rivers in India.

One of the most popular activities in the hills of Raigad is trekking. One can explore the natural and historical wonders of Raigad by trekking to various forts, caves, waterfalls, etc. Some of the popular trekking destinations are Raigad Fort, Prabalgaad Fort, Sagargad Fort, etc., all nestled in the beautiful Sahyadri Hills.

Raigad has a delicious cuisine that reflects its coastal and rural culture. It is famous for its seafood, such as fish, prawns, crabs, etc., that are cooked in various ways, such as curry, fry, masala, etc. The zone is also known for its vegetarian dishes, such as *bhaji*, *pithla*, *vada*, etc., that are made from local vegetables and spices.

Sweet items such as modak, puran poli, shrikhand, etc., that are made from rice flour, jaggery, coconut, etc., are also quite popular among tourists who often visit the zone to satisfy their taste buds.

**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

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**September 2023**



**August 2023**



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**May 2023**



**April 2023**



*“I wonder why adults encourage/force children to take up hobbies only to drop them later.”*

A rebel with a cause but without pause is what describes **Shantanu Pandit** succinctly. An ardent votary of what he eminently believes is “outdoor education”, this hardboiled adventurer strives to popularize activities like hiking, rock climbing, rafting, canoeing, nature walks, and community service. Exposed to rigorous environment-friendly practices, he was able to cultivate the art of having lifelong friendships with many clients and business associates. His blogs are parts of his advocacy efforts.

In a tete-a-tete with **A.Radhakrishnan**, he talks about a life well lived.

#### Tell me a little about yourself

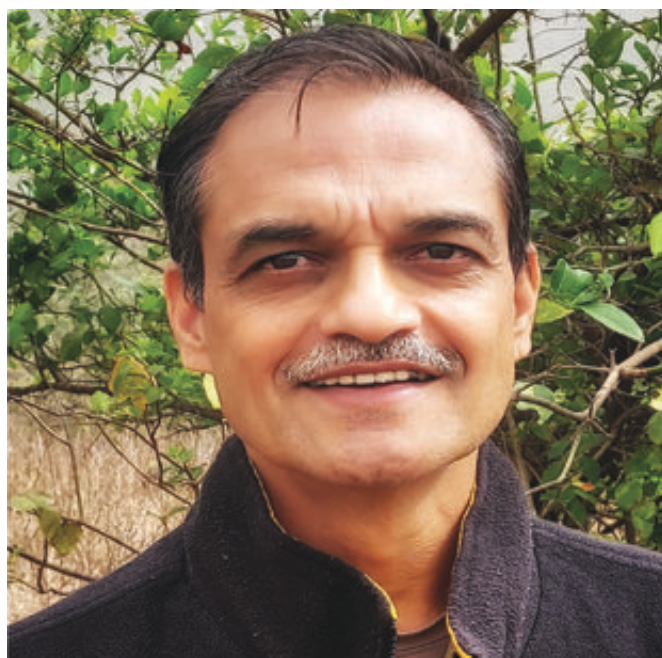
I have always been a sort of a rebel. After formal education, why was I expected to stop ‘playing’ and become ‘serious’? Have a ‘career’ and stop pursuing amazing hobbies like sketching, hiking, bird watching, reading and playing?. I wonder why adults encourage/force children to take up hobbies only to drop them later. I guess my character-building was incomplete as I continued with my hobbies into adulthood!

#### What were the activities you pursued as an adult?

The foundation of what I do probably was in the rough-and-tumble games I played as a child which have virtually disappeared from urban settings today. School time activities continue for me till today. During college days, a rock climbing course and a Himalayan camp got me into adventure. Basic mountaineering course and a big mountaineering expedition in 1988 changed my life.

In my mid-twenties, I quit my job to explore the outdoors, and co-founded a Trust that conducted outdoor education programmes for school children, while in tandem being a tour manager on Himalayan hikes for a British company. In 1993, I co-founded an adventure travel company. Writing our company brochures, using my sketches and photographs as illustrations, we explored exciting outbound training programmes for corporates and adventure events for TV channels!

But the pull of outdoor education was too strong for me. Moving away from business in 2000, I undertook the instructor course at National Outdoor Leadership School, U.S.A. (NOLS) and have gradually widened my area of work. Today I also offer consultancy to outdoor organisations, teach outdoor leadership and wilderness first aid, and do voluntary work for enhancing safety in adventure programmes.



Shantanu Pandit

#### What are experiential learning-based programmes?

They are designed for a specific set of objectives, for a specific group and usually in a specific organisational context. It's an approach, a method to teach topics/subjects, guided by a ‘facilitator’ offering participants maximum chances of learning.

Based on the concept of ‘learning cycle’, having many formats, they can be residence and/or journey based, have short or extended duration, and use reflection as a powerful tool when appropriate to learner-profile.

#### What is outdoor education?

Outdoor education involves learning in and from the outdoors (the natural environment and adventure activities); teaching outdoor skills, using it as a medium to address personal development objectives, and expeditioning, designed and guided by facilitators with one or more activities like hiking, rock climbing, rafting, canoeing, nature walks, and community service.

#### Describe being an instructor on outdoor education programmes for school children.

An extremely rewarding experience, it sensitised me to the quality of work needed to make outdoor experiences enjoyable and valuable. Seeing the changes in children even in a one-week programme, I got insights that formed the foundation for what I could do later on. Crucially I learnt the value of constantly learning and enhancing one's own capability.

#### What was your experience in adventure tourism - first as a tour manager and then as a co-founder in your own company?

As tour manager with the British hiking company, I saw how





### **Shantanu Pandit conducting a Risk Management Class**

enjoyable and environment friendly it was to hike in small groups, get introduced to many regions in the Himalayas and develop long standing relationship with locals (e.g., guides, cooks, muleteers, home-stay owners and hotels).

Being co-founder of the adventure travel company, gave me meticulous environment friendly practices, and lifelong friendships with many clients and business associates.

### **What did adventure events for TV channels & 'Work at height operations' entail?**

Events for TV channels had a single purpose: entertainment. E.g., footage of VJs undertaking adventure activities was used as fillers between songs in a feature broadcast on one channel.

'Work at height' projects involved people working in non-outdoors industries. My work was to develop a system for hauling material on construction sites and write standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the same. I also wrote SOPs and 'hazard identification and risk assessment' (HIRA) for a project that was working on freshly excavated hillsides.

### **What was this instructor course of National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) in U.S.A.?**

The one-month course in Wyoming, U.S.A. qualified me as a hiking instructor in 2000. Broadly, two components: outdoor leadership and outdoor skills. We were taught, mentored and evaluated to be 'ticked off' to work for NOLS. I taught a one-month 'outdoor leadership course', primarily aimed at U.S.A university students. Students earned college credit on a course. I worked two courses per year for more than a decade.

### **What work do you now do for business corporates?**

'Outbound training programmes' for objectives related to 'people skills' like leadership and effective teamwork and Management games and adventure activities which act as simulations and help

address objectives. I design and facilitate programmes customised to objectives stated by an organisation.

I have started undertaking one-on-one coaching assignments for employees of corporates, covering areas of leadership like effective teamwork and delegation.

### **Why has outdoors and adventure appealed to you?**

Being amidst nature made the world come alive for me, in many ways. The stuff that I had read about in books became real through immersive contact with the natural elements. Adventure made me feel intensely alive, involving my whole being at a mental, emotional and physical level. The feeling of sheer comfort I felt in the outdoors, come rain come shine, finally decided it for me - this is where I wanted to be the most.

### **Your most exciting mountaineering expedition**

In 1988, I was a member of an expedition attempting India's highest and the world's third highest mountain, Kangchenjunga. The venture was a big learning and life changing experience for me and others. Preparation and actual climbing took more than two years.

I used my sketching and writing skills, was one of the 'official' photographers, climbed up to 24,000 ft. and was involved in our public liaison effort throughout. There were a couple of intensely risky episodes that I went through on the mountain. Big mountain, big excitement, big memories!

### **On your experience in writing**

Writing was just an extension of reading for me. I started formally writing when it was needed for our outdoor education programmes. Our adventure company's clients loved the content in our brochures. Eventually I found myself editing and proof reading documents wherever I got involved. Then, for a lark, I edited a book! It is fun.





**Shantanu on a personal trek**

**On your blogs and its content**

My blog has many posts with information and practical tips for hiking and camping, based on my own experiences. I try to create conceptual clarity about things for outdoorsperson to take appropriate decisions. Some posts are about what I went through in some experiences. A few posts have nothing to do with the outdoors but where I have given free rein to my flights of fancy and sense of humour!

**A bit on your advocacy efforts**

As I had become intensely aware of aspects related to safety of people and our environment, through my own training, especially at NOLS, I knew appropriate practices that addressed it remarkably.

Voluntary projects like our outdoor education project and mountaineering expeditions were possible due to the help received from well-wishers and have had significant impact on all people involved. I myself have continually changed the way I function. So it is natural that I am motivated to extend the benefits of outdoors to others and contribute to the conservation of our environment.

As my own experience grew, I learnt a lot about ‘documentation’ for organisations. So when some of us got together to work along with government authorities trying to bring in a Government Resolution (GR) for safety in adventure programmes, I pitched in by writing and editing a lot of content that we generated for our organisation ‘Maha Adventure Council’ (MAC). I led a team writing a 600+ page document based on the concept of ‘safety management system’ with detailed safety guidelines for adventure activities for adventure programmes.

Though a journey of more than eight years, we were successful in considerably influencing the content of the GR and our safety guidelines were accepted by the authorities. Our work has been found to be very much at par with similar developments in other countries.

**Advice to new entrants to adventure sports**

There is a difference between ‘adventure’ and ‘conducted adventure’. ‘Adventure sports’ probably refer to the latter where it is the organiser/leader/instructor who is primarily responsible for managing risk (though there is also a clearly defined responsibility of the participant).

‘Adventure’ is a long journey of skill and competence building, spanning years of learning from one’s experiences and seniors. It is hard work requiring, inter alia, seeking experience, consistency, perseverance, risk taking and being happy about it all!

New entrants therefore have to be clear about which category they are getting into.

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

## New releases

A more recent Indian film that tackled crime was Drishyam (2013). Directed by Jeethu Joseph, it is a thriller that revolves around Georgekutty (Mohanlal), a cable TV operator who lives with his wife and two daughters.

When his elder daughter accidentally kills the son of a police inspector who tries to blackmail her with a video of her in a compromising situation, Georgekutty devises a clever plan to cover up the crime and protect his family from the law.

Raatchasan (2018), directed by Ram Kumar, is a psychological thriller about a police officer who hunts down a serial killer who targets school girls. Mumbai Police (2013), directed by Rosshan Andrews, is a mystery thriller about an amnesiac police officer who tries to unravel the truth behind his colleague's murder.

Kaun? (1999), directed by Ram Gopal Varma, is a suspense thriller about a woman who is trapped in her house with a stranger who claims to be a serial killer. Baazigar (1993), directed by Abbas-Mustan, is a crime drama about a man who seeks revenge against a business tycoon by seducing his daughters.

These films also raise important questions about the causes and consequences of crime and its impact on individuals and society. These challenge the stereotypes and assumptions about crime and criminals and offer different perspectives and insights into human nature and behaviour.

## A narrative device

Crime is a phenomenon that violates the law of the state and causes harm to individuals or society. Crime can take various forms, such as murder, rape, robbery, theft, fraud, cyber-crime, etc. Crime can also be influenced by various factors, such as social, economic, political, cultural, psychological, etc. Crime is also a potent narrative device that can be used to create engaging and compelling stories in cinema.

Indian cinema, spanning multiple languages and regions, has embraced crime as a narrative device. Whether it's the quintessential "whodunit" thriller, a gritty gangster saga, or a socially relevant commentary, crime has woven itself into the fabric of storytelling.

Films like Gangs of Wasseypur, Haider, Section 375, and Kahaani have artfully used crime as a backdrop to explore themes of power, revenge, and justice.

## Tackling social issues

Indian cinema doesn't merely stop at the surface of crime; it delves deep into its sociological implications. Films such as 'Pink' confront societal attitudes towards sexual assault and consent. 'Article 15' takes on the caste-based crimes that continue to plague India.

These films not just highlight issues at hand but also trigger dialogue and change that emboldens a robust democracy. They serve as a reminder that cinema is not just about escapism; it's a powerful tool for raising awareness and challenging the status quo. 'Satya' humanises its gangster protagonist, exposing the underbelly of Mumbai. 'Maqbool' reimagines Shakespeare's Macbeth in the Mumbai underworld, blurring the lines between hero and villain.

These films force the audience to confront the ambiguity of crime, where perpetrators are not always one-dimensional villains, and victims are not always entirely innocent.

## Relevance to society

Justice is the principle that ensures that crime is prevented and controlled and that the rights and interests of the victims and the offenders are protected and respected. Justice can take various forms, such as retributive justice, restorative justice, procedural justice, distributive justice, etc. Justice can also be influenced by various factors, such as law, morality, culture, religion, etc.

Indian films have also explored the role of justice in relation to crime, depicting the challenges and complexities of the criminal justice system and its impact on individuals and society. Justice, or the lack thereof, is a recurring theme in Indian crime films.

Talvar (2015), directed by Meghna Gulzar, dissects the infamous Aarushi Talwar murder case, exposing the shortcomings and biases in the investigation and legal process. The film presents multiple perspectives on the case, highlighting the contradictions and inconsistencies in the evidence and testimonies. It also portrays the ordeal of the parents who are accused of killing their daughter and their struggle to prove their innocence.

Raman Raghav 2.0 (2016), directed by Anurag Kashyap, explores the mind of a serial killer and the cat-and-mouse game with law enforcement. The film is inspired by the real-life case of Raman Raghav, a notorious psychopath who terrorised Mumbai in the 1960s.

The film depicts the twisted relationship between the killer (Nawazuddin Siddiqui) and a corrupt cop (Vicky Kaushal) who are both obsessed with each other. It questions the morality and sanity of both characters and their actions.

The relevance of these films to contemporary Indian society cannot be overstated. They mirror the challenges and complexities of a nation in transition, grappling with issues of crime, justice, and morality. As India navigates its path towards progress, these films serve as a scale that measures the triumphs and tribulations of its journey.

These films also serve as a catalyst for social change, as they can raise awareness, question norms, and inspire action. These foster dialogue and debate among various stakeholders on issues and policies related to crime prevention and control. These films can also empower citizens to participate actively in democratic processes and demand accountability from those in power or authority.

Indian cinema's exploration of crime goes beyond mere storytelling; it is a reflection of society's collective conscience. They remind us that cinema is not just entertainment; it's a tool through which we can confront the pressing issues of our time.

**Ritika Seth 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.**



## Gandhi versus Gandhi

*Mahatma Gandhi's political and personal life has always been a subject chewed by the theatre for its interesting trappings. **Shoma A. Chatterji** takes an in-depth look at the plays across languages that delve into the life of the "Father of the Nation" and his troubled relationship with eldest son.*



**A scene from the Bengali version of the play 'Mahatma Bonam Gandhi' that explores Gandhi's tragic relationship with his eldest son Hirilal**

**G**andhi is venerated as the "Father of the Nation". But how was he as the biological father of his four sons? Did he do his duty as a father towards them? Or did he sacrifice/surrender his natural fatherhood in the service of the nation? His wife Kasturba Gandhi accused him of not being a good father but did not go against him in his struggle for freedom and thereafter. She remained beside him right through his phase in South Africa and even cleaned toilets much against her wishes.

Of the four sons, it was the eldest, Harilal, who stood against him right through, accusing him of bias against his own children and placing his service to the nation before them. However, it is interesting to note his relationship with Harilal, the eldest son, through some writings and several plays right across the global map.

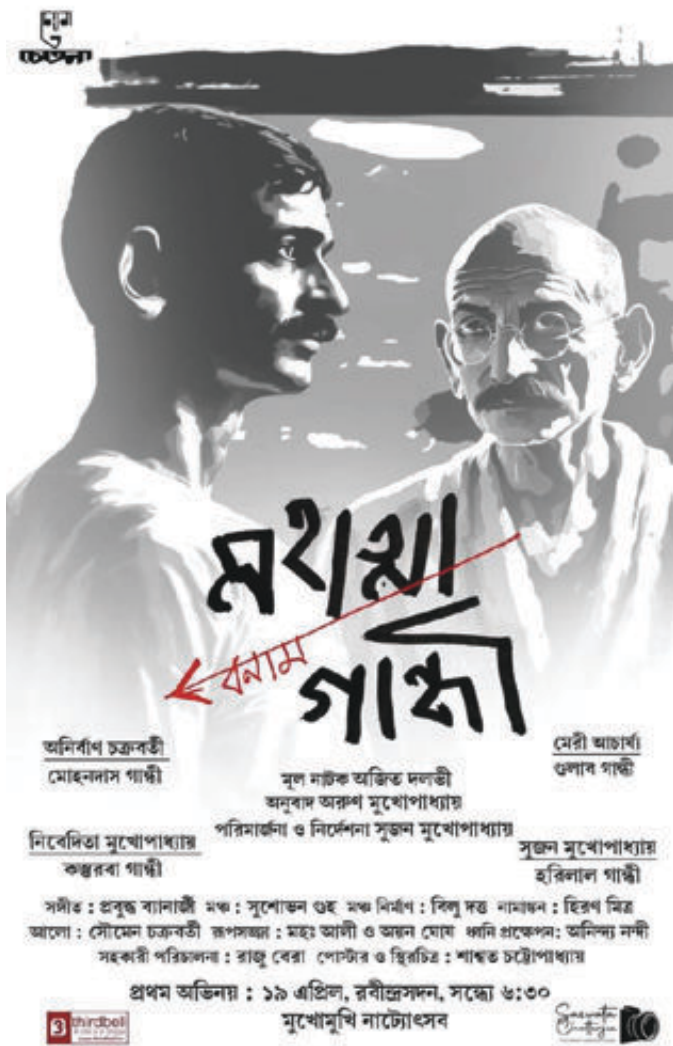
The year 1970's catalogue of copyright entries in the Library of Congress in Washington DC lists a staggering 20 more

plays on Gandhi, including one titled *The Skinny Brown Man In The White Loin-Cloth*. 1969 marked Gandhi's birth centenary, but there appears to be no records of any of these efforts on the professional stage, according to an article by Vikram Phukan titled *Gandhi – A Stage Favourite* (The Mint, 20th August, 2016).

The 1979 opera *Satyagraha* composed by Philip Glass was drawn from the *Bhagavad Gita*, sung in Sanskrit. It was a meditation on Gandhi's formative years in South Africa, where he developed his philosophy of non-violent resistance. The best staging is the 2007 version by the English National Opera and Improbable theatre company, in association with the Metropolitan Opera (The Met) in New York.

Howard Brenton's *Drawing The Line*, was staged at the Hampstead Theatre in London in 2013. Here, Gandhi's character, played by Tanveer Ghani, was partly caricatured. In this play, Gandhi's character is a figure of abdication, possessed





### Poster of Mahatma Bonam Gandhi

of predilections for goat's milk and consorting with female aides. It had nothing to do with Gandhi's conflict with Harilal. Nothing, whatsoever, to do with his phenomenal work towards India's struggle for freedom.

On 13 August 2016, the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai, opened Danesh Khambata's *Gandhi—The Musical*, co-produced with Silly Point Productions. The play featured commonly known milestones from the life of the Mahatma. But the needless glitz and glamour and the romanticising of the production of known milestones from Gandhi's life were marred by the garish Broadway-style production.

Somewhere in the shadows of the great man lived his son, roaming the streets of India like a beggar. He converted to Islam and became Abdullah Gandhi as a rebellion, then reconverted to Hinduism as a penance, finally drinking himself to death.

"Mahatma Gandhi could transform the soul of a nation but could not save the soul of his own son," said Feroz Abbas Khan who directed a very emotionally moving film on this same story entitled *Gandhi, My Father* (2008) which also provided source material for *Mahatma Bonam Gandhi*. The film was produced by Anil Kapoor.

In India, it was only with the dramatisation of Dinkar Joshi's 1988 novel, *Prakash No Padachhayo* (In the Shadows of Light) on the life of his son Harilal, that Gandhi was finally seen as much for his flaws as for his greatness. The definitive adaptations included Chandrakant Kulkarni's 1995 Marathi version, *Gandhi Viruddh Gandhi*, written by Ajit Dalvi, and *Mahatma v/s Gandhi*, the 1998 Feroz Abbas Khan production featuring Naseeruddin Shah as Gandhi. The actor lost weight, learnt how to spin the charkha, and delivered a touchstone performance opposite a brilliant Kay Kay Menon as a recalcitrant Harilal, whose foibles served as a contrast to Gandhi's own intransigence as a father. Khan's play has been performed extensively in India and abroad, even prompting a cinematic adaptation by Khan himself.

Way back in 1995, this writer happened to be audience to a Marathi language play, *Gandhi Virudh Gandhi* in a Mumbai theatre directed by Chandrakant Kulkarni based on a dramatisation by Ajit Dalvi, a noted professor of Political Science, from Dinkar Joshi's 400-page 1988 novel in Gujarati, *Prakash No Padachhayo*, (In the Shadows of Light) on the life of Gandhi's eldest son Harilal. The play was presented in five Indian languages— Marathi, Hindi, English, Gujarati, and Kannada. Kulkarni directed three of them.

Atul Kulkarni made his stage debut as Gandhi while Kishore Kadam played Harilal. Chandrakant repeated Atul in the Hindi and Gujarati versions though Atul did not know Gujarati at all. Bhakti Inamdar played Kasturba in the Marathi version. The audience in the full house was stunned into silence, so overpowering was the play enhanced and enriched by the performances of the lead actors. This writer is yet to witness a more finely nuanced production that explores the psychological pinnings that underline Gandhi's explosive and tragic relationship with his eldest son.

Arun Mukherjee of Chetana, a group he founded fifty summers ago, has recently translated Ajit Dalvi's English to Bengali and this is the version being performed right now across Kolkata and beyond. It is directed by his son Sujan Mukhopadhyay who plays Harilal and Anirban Chakraborty, a noted theatre actor, plays Gandhi. *Mahatma Bonam Gandhi* opens in the dark with the sound of three gunshots piercing the silence followed by the utterance of 'Hey Ram'. Silence. The darkness begins to thin out and the stage gets slowly lit throwing up a huge charkha in the backdrop of the proscenium. Sujan Mukherjee of Chetna who directed the play, drew some of his inspiration and ideas for *Mahatma Bonam Gandhi* from Feroz Abbas Khan's film.



**Sujan Mukhopadhyay plays Harilal, Gandhi`s eldest son**

The entire play is built around the continuous debates between Mahatma Gandhi and the eldest of his four sons, whose constant argument was based on his understanding that his father, while committed to his Nation was unfair to his personal family, specially to his wife Kasturba Gandhi and the eldest son Harilal. Harilal marries Gulab without informing his parents but Gulab becomes an ideal daughter-in-law though she remains constantly disturbed by the conflict between her husband and his father. Kasturba is trapped between husband and son but as the mother, she is extremely pained and often identifies with Harilal`s troubled mind. She tries to persuade Mahatma to understand Harilal`s desire but Gandhi is as stubborn as his son is. It is there in their genes.

After Gulab Gandhi`s painful death, Harilal loses his mental balance almost and gets sucked into a life filled with women and alcohol. He has returned to India by then and first embraces Islam. Sujan Mukhopadhyay, who also directed the play, performs Harilal, the mentally battered, emotionally disturbed son of Mahatma Gandhi, an embarrassment to the entire Gandhi clan so much so that no one came to his bedside when he lay dying a few months after Gandhi`s assassination on 30 January 1948 in a Bombay hospital.

Sujan has brought across the emotional trauma he goes through as the son who loves his father deeply but cannot understand why he does not care for his own children and his wife. Harilal`s slow but steady metamorphosis from a young man full of dreams of studying law in London to a devoted follower of his father`s movements and belief more to gain his love than to fulfill his dreams, to a slowly emotionally battered person who craves to just lie down on the lap of his mother when his life is

almost at an end is brought out beautifully by Sujan Mukhopadhyay. His change comes across through his shift in his dress habits, his body language and his gait – from an erect stature he slowly bends under the pressure of his own doubts and failures. A great performance indeed.

If Harilal is the hero, is Mahatma the villain? Not necessarily. But despite the Mahatma`s dedication to the world and to men and women who have placed their complete faith in him, one begins to question the arguments presented by Harilal, who considers himself completely neglected by his father right through his growth and his life. The entire story of Harilal`s growth into adulthood comes across constantly anchored by the father-son debate with Harilal accusing his father of always placing the nation before his family. Harilal dreamt of going to London to become a barrister but Gandhi gives the vacant position to another young man as he has no faith in Harilal`s abilities to focus on his education. Harilal engages himself in his father`s movement to arouse the nation but though he does gain some popular backing there, he is ultimately forced out of this position too. The closure shows father and son, both long dead, walking towards the river Jamuna to complete their discussion which began soon after the curtains came up.



**Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for ‘commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues’ among many awards.**



## Folk poet who sings for justice

*Meet Bundelkhand's unusual activist who sings not for entertainment but to propagate the cause of development and justice. **Bharat Dogra** sketches the picture of a landless Dalit Mata Dayal, who overcame poverty and illiteracy to pitchfork himself into a social movement that seeks to help the underprivileged class.*



**Mata Dayal**

**M**ata Dayal is a popular singer in Bundelkhand region. Over the years, he has written and composed nearly 50 songs on development and justice and preserved them for posterity in his diary. He also sings folk-songs/songs written by others, as long as these have some message of justice, environment protection and creating a better world. "While writing new songs, I keep in mind some folk tunes being hummed for long, and this is one reason why these songs find a ready response among villagers here", he told this writer at one of the village gatherings.

Dayal's achievement is remarkable given the fact that he was illiterate till the age of 30. He was born in a landless Dalit family of Bundelkhand and his family had moved from Pindaran village in Baberu area to Harijanpur village in Manikpur block when he was young. But the relocation was like going from one life of relentless poverty to another. His family had a land 'patta' here but could not cultivate most of it. The yield too was not substantial.

It was in Harijanpur that he came in contact with a leading social activist of the area named Gopal Ji, who was director of ABSSS, a voluntary organisation known for its award-winning water conservation work in the area. Gopal ji was working on a water conservation project in Harijanpur and ABSSS was also working for landless farmers having land 'pattas' to enable them to cultivate their land. Many families including Dayal's benefited from

his social campaign.

Recognising the hidden potential in Mata Dayal and his wife Ramkali (also illiterate), Gopal encouraged them to participate in social and cultural programmes and also to learn to read and write.

Both made best of the opportunities provided to them. In due course, Ramkali became a social activist with the well-known social programme for empowerment of women called 'Mahila Samakhya'. Mata Dayal gained popularity with his songs on social justice for the poor and underprivileged.

Dayal subsequently worked with several voluntary organisations of the region including the ABSSS, the Vigyan Shiksha Kendra and the Vidyadham Samiti. He also got involved with a small but national-level organisation of forest workers called Akhil Bhartiya Van Jan Shramjivi Union and is now its Vice-President.

During a recent chance encounter, he introduced me proudly to his grand-daughter who had just completed her B.Sc. and was planning to study further. His grandson too was receiving higher education. Dayal also told me about his continuing work in Manikpur in trying to mobilise the poorest so that they can cultivate their land 'pattas'. His work has enabled several families to obtain food security. Clearly, Mata Dayal has not forgotten his roots, the poverty and struggle during his childhood, and is now doing whatever he can to help the underprivileged families. At the same time, he continues to compose and sing songs that push the cause of justice.

**The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Navjeevan and A Day in 2071, short story collections in Hindi and English.**

## Bitten by the dieting bug!

**Rashmi Oberoi** rips into the obsession for dieting, the hypocrisy behind it and concludes that diets are passé. They do more harm than good in the long run as most diets are anything but steady. Her verdict: Exercise, not diet, and be healthy.



**Regular exercise is the mantra to good health**

I hardly ever attend these glitzy parties that Delhi is so famous for... In fact, I stay miles away from them as I stick out like a sore thumb in such situations. I couldn't get out of attending a recent lunch party, and that was undeniably a great revelation for me. I was educated on a fact that I was clueless about... That mostly everyone present was on a diet!! And as the minutes unfolded, I noticed people sipping water in wine glasses, slurping 'Diet' drinks by the gallons and knocking back soda and lime-juice like there was no tomorrow!

And then much later I noticed little pouches filled with cut pieces of fruit mysteriously appearing that had been hidden in designer handbags and purses... No, the pouches were not designer – just regular ones for both my friend and I got as close to the plastic pouch as we could to do an in-depth study. We exchanged glances every few minutes and controlled the guffaws building up inside.

Contrary to the starving ones present, we had a good time and ate and drank to our heart's content. But the hostess was not a happy one at all... And rightly so don't you think? I think it is highly rude to carry your fads to parties.

Entertaining is mostly fun and invigorating but can also turn out to be a bane for some... It's true, no matter how many people you call at home for cocktails or a meal, you invariably end up going to great lengths and at times even out of your way

to ensure that you are a good host. It could be just one guest or it could be a dozen, the effort that goes in is much the same. Starting with the rituals of cleaning, dusting, tidying the house...then moving into the kitchen where the menu fixed gets into 'action stations' with chopping, grinding, marinating, cooking and finally decorating the fare and then moving on to the art of laying the table...the right cutlery, crockery, linen etc. Table-setting is another art form that involves the right cutlery and crockery which works in accordance as per the menu. It's often the 'silver-ware' used and the centrepiece that sets it apart from all other decorations. Exquisite placemats, doilies and fine linen add to the 'eye candy'.

A well-planned menu that boasts of a richness of flavours, a balance of essences and spices, authentic gourmet delights and not just a 'run-of-the-mill' kind of dishes is always a hit. You don't need a millionaire's income to prepare a delicious meal and also enjoy the fruits of your labour. The icing on the cake of course is the dessert that can either make or break your repast. No matter how much you may have over-eaten there will always be place for pudding!

The flip side to entertaining is of course dealing with messy, obnoxious guests who at times outstay the warm welcome extended, the ones that don't turn up at all having accepted or the ones mentioned above who are on a perpetual diet... Shocking and unfathomable but it is absolutely true. And



last but not the least, the crux of dining etiquette is to... Well eat what your host and hostess have prepared for you.

Now here are some golden words: Diets are passé... They do more harm than good in the long run. They are counter-productive and most diets are anything but steady. They are merely short-term excursions from our everyday lives. Here in lies the problem, the connotation behind the word diet - the quick fix and the fact that none of them truly work and have catastrophic effects on your skin, your body and mental well-being. Your dieting cycle can lead to high-risk disorders, malnutrition, impaired quality of life and well-being, bone diseases, anaemia, metabolic abnormalities, hormone deficiencies and heart problems. This is literally straight from the horse's mouth... A doctor's wife passing on these gems. So be

be wise – exercise not diet and eat healthy. À VOTRE SANTÉ...  
To your health!

Rashmi Oberoi, an army officer's daughter and army wife is passionate about writing and has authored two story books for children – *My Friends At Sonnenshine* and *Cherie: The Cocker Spaniel*. Her third and latest book – *"Blues, Hues & All Things Wonderful"* has short anecdotes. She continues to write articles and middles regularly.





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## KASINADHUNI VISHWANATH (1930-2023)

### A pioneer in fusing parallel and mainstream cinema

**K**asinadhuni Viswanath popularly called Kalatapasvi (sage of the arts) was an Indian film director, screenwriter, lyricist, sound designer, and actor active in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Hindi films.

He was a pioneer who produced movies that were years ahead of their time and was known for fusing parallel cinema with mainstream cinema.

He was a guru, a legend, and a mentor to many. Vishwanath directed 53 full length features over the course of six decades dealing with caste, colour, disability, gender, sexism, drunkenness, and socio-economic difficulties. But they included all popular components such as humour, romance, action, pathos, and drama.

His actors' performances served as evidence that he was an unmatched director. He emphasised the value of music in movies and infused classical music with life in many of his productions. He altered what constitutes commercial cinema and subtly presented creative plots that placed exactly the proper focus on the intended message. For decades, viewers were captivated by the many genres.

He depicted our traditional and rural society with seeming effortlessness. To him cinema was a medium to educate people and bring positive societal change. Music and dance played a crucial role too as they helped in narrating the story in a more impactful way. A good film was one that touched the heart and soul of the audience. While being a work of art, it had to be commercial, as otherwise it would not reach the masses.

Viswanath, a BSc graduate was born in Repalle, Guntur district, now Andhra Pradesh. He began as a sound recordist with Vauhini Studios, in Madras. In 1951, he worked as K V Reddy's assistant on the Telugu-Tamil film Pathala Bhairavi. Following that, he produced women-centric films like Chelleli Kapuram (1971), Aatma Gowravam (1965), Sarada (1973), O Seeta Katha (1974), and Jeevana Jyoti (1975), among others. In 1965 with the Telugu film Aatma Gowravam, he turned director. However, with Siri Siri Muvva (1976) the creative element of his work first became apparent. Shankarabharanam (1980), highlighted how traditional Indian music was being neglected under the increasing influence of Western music; Sagara Sangamam (1982 or 83) was about the failure of a

dance maestro; Swathi Muthyam (1986) about the humanism of an autistic man who marries a widow to rescue her from her difficulties and

Siri Vennela (1986) about the platonic love between a blind singer and a rich call girl, all of which touched the human emotions and turned out to be huge hits.

Viswanath also directed Hindi films such as Shubh Kaamna, Sargam, Kaamchor, Jaag Utha Insaan, Sanjog, Sangeet, Dhanwan, Sur Sangam and Eeshwar, some of which were super box office hits. He also acted in over 30 Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada films starting in 1995.

Viswanath's record of honours demonstrates his versatility and brilliance. At the French Besancon Film Festival 1981, he received the Prize of the Public; in 1992, he received the Padma Shri and the Andhra Pradesh State Raghupathi Venkaiah Award; in 2017 the Dadasaheb Phalke Award: He received 10 South Filmfare Awards, 1 Hindi Filmfare Award, 5 National Awards, and 7 AP State Nandi Awards, commencing with Best Picture for his very first film, Atma Gowravam.

Sagara Sangamam (1983) and Sankarabharanam (1980) were listed by CNN-IBN, among the top 100 Indian movies ever made. In the year that it was released, Swathi Muthyam served as India's official submission for Best Foreign Film at the Oscars.

Viswanath passed away in Hyderabad, Telangana aged 92, after a brief illness. He is survived by a daughter and two sons.

A true doyen of Indian cinema, he has left his legacy as a lesson for everyone.



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

## BINDESHWAR PATHAK (1943-2023)

### Pioneer of public toilets in India

**B**indeshwar Pathak was an Indian sociologist, social reformer and social entrepreneur. He was the founder of Sulabh International, a pioneering non-profit India-based social service organisation promoting human rights, environmental sanitation, hygiene, non-conventional sources of energy, waste management and social reforms through education.

Born in village Rampur Baghel, Bihar in an orthodox Brahmin family, he graduated in Sociology in 1964, earned his Master's degree in 1980 and his PhD on Liberation of scavengers through Low Cost Sanitation in 1985.

When 5 or 6 years old, an incident left an indelible impression. He had accidentally touched the hand of a domestic Dalit maid. His grandmother insisted he had been polluted, and to purify him, made him drink the panchagavya (a mix of curd, milk, ghee), and cow's urine and dung and also poured Ganga-jal on him.

1968 was a turning point when he joined the Bhangi-Mukti (scavengers' liberation) cell of the Bihar Gandhi Centenary Celebrations Committee at Patna as a translator, and later, as publicity in-charge and was influenced by Gandhi's ideals. Living with scavenger families, he was disturbed to see them risk their lives, cleaning human waste from the pit latrines and carrying it for disposal.

He eventually felt that academics alone would not solve social problems. On 5 March 1970, he established the non-profit Sulabh (public bathrooms) Swachchh Shauchalaya Sansthaan, renamed in 1980, as Sulabh International taking a loan of ₹ 50,000.

He developed a two-pit pour-flush ecological compost toilet technology, the Sulabh Shauchalaya System which could be conveniently built in Indian villages. By tying them to fermentation plants, he produced odour-free biogas and released clean water rich in phosphorus, etc. important constituents of organic manure, ensuring cleanliness and preventing greenhouse gas emission.

Initially adverse economic conditions made him even contemplate suicide. However, in 1973, an order to build two private toilets at Arrah district, Bihar for which he received ₹ 500 proved to be a catalyst. Soon the system spread to neighbouring states.

maintaining the community toilets and bath. In 1994, the Sulabh International Museum of Toilets was set up to show development of toilets through the ages. A vocational center in Alwar, Rajasthan, in 2003 trained scavengers in various trades.

His family and fellow Brahmins found his obsession with building public restrooms disgusting, but Bindeshwar was keen on realising Gandhi's dreams. Today thanks to Sulabh International, over 1.5 million household Shauchalayas constructed across India, generate around ₹ 500 crores every year and more than 20 million people use them. His 50,000 employees maintain over 10,000 public toilets across the country, in slums and at public, religious and tourist places without burdening the public exchequer.

Bindeshwar was conferred with several national and international awards like the Padma Bhushan in 1991, the Energy Globe Award 2007, Stockholm Water Prize 2009, the Indira Gandhi Priyadarshini Award for Environment and the Gandhi Peace award in 2019. In 2006, Pathak was one of the recipients of 'One India One People Outstanding Indian Award' instituted by OIOP Foundation. April 14th, 2016 was declared the Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak Day by New York City. In 2019, he was as a guest contestant on Kaun Banega Crorepati to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

A prolific writer and speaker, Bindeshwar Pathak was also an author, specially known for his book *The Road to Freedom*. On 12 July 2017, Pathak's book *The Making of a Legend*, on the life of Narendra Modi, was launched. In 2020, *Namaste, Bindeshwar Pathak*, an inspiring book detailing his work was published. His net worth as a sociologist was ₹ 306 crores.

He was a visionary who made significant contributions to societal advancement and the uplift of the underprivileged and a cleaner India. He died of cardiac arrest in New Delhi aged 80 survived by his wife and three children.



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



## HAVALDAR K PALANI VIR CHAKRA (1980-2023)

### The brave hero of Galwan

**H**avaldar K. Palani was born on 3 June 1980 and hailed from Kadukkaloor village in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu. His parents came from a humble family of farmers. An active sportsman during his school days, Palani always aspired to join the armed forces.

After his schooling, Palani joined the Army at age 18, on 29 April 1999 and was enlisted in 81 Medium Regiment, Artillery. He later completed his graduation while in service through distance education. He got married to Vanathi Devi and had a son and daughter. He served in various operational areas under challenging work conditions. His family had moved into their own house in Kazhugoorani (Ramanathapuram district) in June 2020, just few days before his martyrdom. Sadly, Palani did not get to live there.

In June 2020, Hav. K Palani's unit was deployed in eastern Ladakh close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as part of Operation Snow Leopard. Since early June the tension along the LAC was mounting due to construction work in Galwan valley.

The Chinese objected to the construction of a bridge across the Galwan river into the Aksai Chin area. The area held strategic importance for India and China as it dominated the road from Leh to Daulat Beg Oldie, an airstrip of great military significance to India. There had been many rounds of talks between senior military officials from both sides to defuse the tensions.

On 15/16 June 2020 night, hectic Chinese activities were noticed across the bridge in Galwan valley. Considering the gravity of the situation, Colonel Santosh Babu the Commanding Officer of 16 Bihar battalion deployed in the area decided to lead the negotiations. On the night of 15 June 2020, Havildar K Palani was part of a joint patrol near LAC.

The Indian Army decided to take up the matter with Chinese forces to ask them to respect the LAC and adhere to the position as agreed earlier during the talks. However, an altercation led to a scuffle which turned into a violent clash with the Chinese soldiers attacking Col. Santosh Babu and his men with deadly clubs and rods. The Chinese attack seemed preplanned.

As the clashes escalated, Hav K Palani, who fought valiantly, was outnumbered and circled. He, however, stood his

ground and defended his comrades bravely.

Havildar Palani was given the gallantry award, 'Vir Chakra' on 26 January 2021 for his exceptional courage, devotion to duty and supreme sacrifice. He is survived by his parents, wife, son Prasanna and daughter Divya. His younger brother, Idayakani also serves in the Indian Army.

Major (Retd) Madhan Kumar, a geopolitical analyst and co-founder of Armour of Care, an NGO, said: "Havildar Palani had a choice to stay back as he was due to retire. But he chose to join his colonel in resisting China's attempt to occupy our territory."

The mortal remains of the slain soldier were laid to rest with State honours at his native village on 18 June 2020. As a token of gratitude for his supreme sacrifice, Governor Banwarilal Purohit handed a solatium of ₹ 20 lakhs to the widow. Additionally, the Tamil Nadu government awarded a solatium of ₹ 20 lakhs to Palani's widow in the same month.

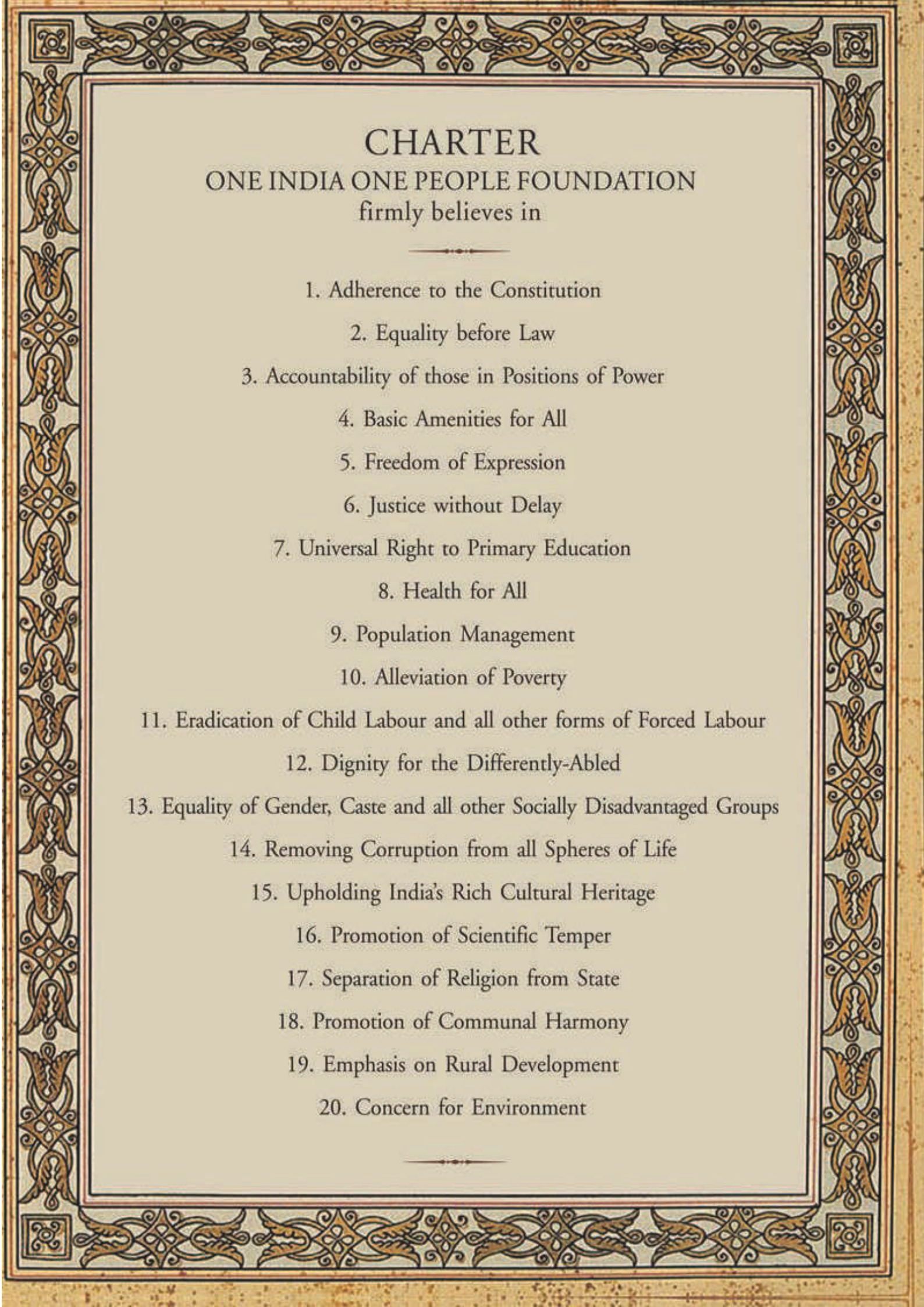
To honour his sacrifice, his bronze bust was later unveiled at the Allahabad cantonment in Uttar Pradesh. The newly-built in-campus quarters for the jawans of his regiment has been named 'Palani Block'.

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami handed over the appointment letter for a government job to Vanathi Devi. She works as a clerk in a college located in Ramanathapuram district. His son Prasanna, expressed his desire to follow the martyr's footsteps and join the Indian Army.



**Contributed by Renu Prakash from the data bank of Late Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma.**





# CHARTER

## ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

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



# WHO AM I?



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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