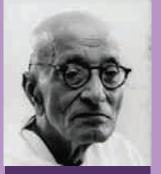
Vol 25/02 January 2023

ONE INDIA DNE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined













Bharat Ratnat Ratna

Jewels in India's Crown

THE ARCHITECTS OF CHANGE

SHAPING INDIA'S SCIENTIFIC LANDSCAPE

CHAMPIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Know India Better

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DIVIDED BY GEOGRAPHY, TIED BY KNOTS OF DESTINY!

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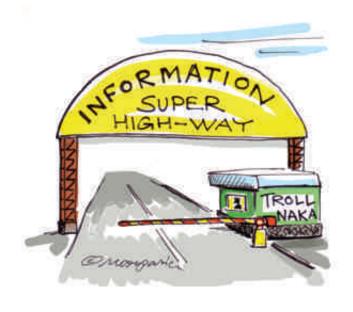
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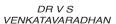














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Bharat Ratna

Bharat Ratna: The Jewel of India

Tracing the genesis of India's highest civilian award, **Nandini Rao** also looks at the other civilian awards and points out that Bharat Ratna is awarded to a person in 'any field of human endeavour' to encompass all the areas and ways by which men and women serve their country. She also cites instances of foreign individuals who were recognised and conferred with the top award.



Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu C. Rajagopalachari, first Vice President of India S. Radhakrishnan and Nobel Prize Laureate and Physicist C. V. Raman were the first recipients of the Bharat Ratna in 1954



Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa are the non Indians to receive the Bharat Ratna

he highest civilian award conferred by the Republic of India is the Bharat Ratna. The award was instituted on 2 January 1954 by the Government of India. In the same year, in addition to the Bharat Ratna, the Indian government had instituted another civilian award, which were the Padma Awards, and these had three categories.

Bharat Ratna is awarded in recognition of exceptional service or performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour and is treated on a different footing from the Padma Awards. It is the President and the Prime Minister of India who

make the recommendations for the Bharat Ratna and there is no mandatory requirement of a formal recommendation process.

In one year, a maximum of three persons can be given the Bharat Ratna award. From its inception till now, 48 persons have been conferred the prestigious Bharat Ratna award, of which, 14 were awarded posthumously. Upon translation, Bharat Ratna means the Jewel of India.

The Bharat Ratna recipients are given a certificate, which is also known as the Sanad. The certificate is signed by the



Bharat Ratna Award

President of India. The recipients are also given a medallion which is designed in the shape of a leaf (peepal) rimmed in platinum and 'Bharat Ratna' inscribed in Devanagri script. On the other side of the medallion, 'Satyamev Jayate' is inscribed under an emblem. The inscriptions are made in bronze. The Bharat Ratna does not carry any monetary grant or award.

The evolution

The Bharat Ratna, in its early editions, was limited to accomplishments in a few fields that included public service, literature, science and arts. Later, in 2011, more fields were included to broaden the criteria of the award. Today, Bharat Ratna may be awarded to a person in 'any field of human endeavour' to encompass all the areas and ways by which men and women serve their country.

It must be noted that there is no citizenship restriction when it comes to nomination and reception of the award. The first person who was not an Indian citizen to receive the Bharat Ratna was Pashtun leader and politician Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He was born in the Peshawar Valley and was conferred the award in 1987. He was born in British India and was later a citizen of Pakistan.

Khan was popularly known as Frontier Gandhi as he was also a believer of non-violence. He was an active member of the Indian Independence movement and participated in the Khilafat movement. He was an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Another non-Indian to receive the Bharat Ratna was President of South Africa Nelson Mandela in 1990. He was the leader of the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa. Mandela was highly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals. He was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

In 1980, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu aka Mother Teresa was conferred the Bharat Ratna for her humanitarian work for the upliftment of the poor and the destitute. She was a naturalised Indian citizen. Born in Skopje (now the capital of North Macedonia) she lived most of her life in India. She was a Catholic nun and was the founder of a Catholic religious congregation called Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata. Till date, she remains the only naturalised Indian citizen to receive the Bharat Ratna.

The firsts

In 1954, for the first time Bharat Ratna awards were given and the recipients were the last Governor-General of the Dominion of India and the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu - C. Rajagopalachari, the second President and the first Vice President of India - Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Nobel Prize Laureate and Physicist C. V. Raman.

Bharat Ratna initially didn't include awards in the posthumous category. It was only in 1955 that amendments were made in the statute, and posthumous Bharat Ratna awards were being conferred. The first individual to be honoured with the Bharat Ratna posthumously was Former Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, in 1966.

The first singer to receive Bharat Ratna was classical vocalist M. S. Subbulakshmi (1998) and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and actor M. G. Ramachandran (1988) was the first actor. Sachin Tendulkar was the youngest recipient of the award when he received it in 2014, at the age of 40 years. He was also the first sportsperson to be bestowed this honour and, till now, remains the only sportsman to have received it.

On his 100th birthday, social reformer Dhondo Keshav



The first individual to be honoured with the Bharat Ratna posthumously was former Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri

Karve aka Maharshi Karve was awarded the Bharat Ratna in a special ceremony organised on 18 April 1958. Born in 1858 in Ratnagiri district, Karve was a staunch advocate of women welfare and promoted widow education. In 1916, he founded the SNDT Women's University, the first women's university in India. He passed away in 1962 at the age of 104 years.

Controversies

Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of India, has been the subject of several controversies over the years. One of the first that dominated national discourse was regarding the conferral of the award to sitting Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955. At this time, the appropriateness of the action of awarding to an individual who was still in the top office was questioned.

On many occasions, allegations of political influence on the entire process and on the selection of the recipients have been levelled as well. Also, when the decision to confer the Bharat Ratna posthumously was made, there were a few sections that opposed the move vehemently.

The Bharat Ratna award was suspended on at least two occasions in its history. The first time, from July 1977 till January 1980 and on the second instance from August 1992 till December 1995. On the first instance, the suspension was a result of the change in the government at the centre while the second suspension was a result of litigatory roadblocks as a few PILs had questioned the constitutionality of the highest civilian awards of India.

Apart from these, the conferral on several recipients was opposed or criticised for various reasons. These include the posthumous bestowals of Iron Man of India Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in 1991 and of freedom fighter and scholar Madan Mohan Malaviya in 2015.

Equivalents around the world

Many countries around the world have their own highest civilian awards which are similar to the Bharat Ratna in India. Here are a few examples:

- United States: The Presidential Medal of Freedom
- United Kingdom: The Order of Merit and the Order of the Companions of Honour
- France: The Legion of Honour
- Japan: The Order of the Chrysanthemum
- Germany: The Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany
- Canada: The Order of Canada
- Australia: The Order of Australia
- Brazil: The Order of the Southern Cross
- Russia: The Order of St. Andrew

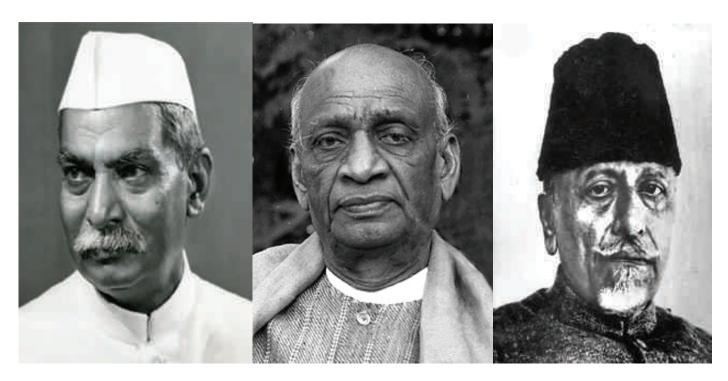
These awards are given in recognition of a variety of achievements that include contributions made in the fields of arts, sciences, politics and humanitarian causes. These awards are an expression to honour the individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the country and / or humanity.

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.

Bharat Ratna

The architects of change

Ruchi Verma takes a look at the titans on whom the country's highest civilian award of Bharat Ratna was conferred and explains the stellar role they played in shaping India's socio-political landscape and how they dedicated their lives to social causes and humanitarian work. They embodied the spirit of the award and their legacy continues to serve and guide future generations in the nation's progress.



Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad were the prominent politicians who were awarded Bharat Ratna for their contribution to the nation

he Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, has been bestowed upon many distinguished individuals who have made significant contributions to the nation. Bharat Ratna was constituted in 1954.

The first recipients of this prestigious award were C. Rajagopalachari, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and C. V. Raman, who were honoured in 1954. These individuals played a pivotal role in shaping India's socio-political landscape and dedicated their lives to social causes and humanitarian work, in their own way.

The statesman

The last Governor-General of the Dominion of India and the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu - C. Rajagopalachari was a statesman, independence activist, historian, writer and lawyer. He was the founder of the Indian political party, the Swatantra Party.

His contributions to the Indian independence movement and his efforts in establishing a democratic

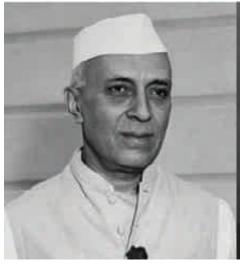
government in India post-Independence have been instrumental in shaping the political landscape of the country. The statesman had strongly objected to the use of nuclear weapons and vehemently advocated for disarmament and world peace.

He was one of the earliest supporters of Mahatma Gandhi and later joined the Indian National Congress to further the freedom struggle. He was actively involved in the agitations against the Rowlatt Act, the Non-Cooperation movement and the Civil Disobedience movement.

A scholar and educator

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan served as India's first Vice-President (1952-62) and second President (1962-67). A philosopher and a scholar, Radhakrishnan was a strong advocate of education. His birthday, 5th September, is today celebrated as 'Teachers' Day' to honour his contributions to the field of education and philosophy that have greatly impacted the society.

He was India's second ambassador to the Soviet Union, a



Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India was given the Bharat Ratna in 1955



Indian jurist and social reformer Babasaheb Ambedkar was awarded the Bharat Ratna more than three decades after he passed away



Social reformer and spiritual leader Vinobha Bhave best known for the Bhoodan Movement was awarded the Bharat Ratna

position he served from 1949 to 1952. Additionally, he was also the Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University from 1939 to 1948 and the second Vice Chancellor of Andhra University from 1931 to 1936.

Born in Tiruttani of North Arcot district in the erstwhile Madras Presidency (now in Tiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu), his family hailed from Sarvepalli village in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. He was a strong proponent of a secular vision of India.

He had also supported and sponsored the Peoples' World Convention (PWC) along with Albert Einstein. The PWC was held in Palais Electoral, Geneva, Switzerland in 1950-51. He served as a member of UNESCO's Executive Board and headed the Indian delegation from 1946 to 1951 and became a member of the Indian Constituent Assembly during this period.

The Raman Effect

Renowned physicist C. V. Raman who was widely known for his work on the scattering of light and the discovery of the effect, better known as Raman Scattering or Raman Effect was also bestowed with the Bharat Ratna in 1954.

He mainly worked in the field of atomic physics and electromagnetism and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930. He was the first Asian to receive a Nobel Prize in any branch of science. His scientific contributions have not only put India on the global scientific map but also inspired many young minds to pursue science.

Born in 1988 in a Tamil Brahmin family, Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman was a prodigy as he completed his higher secondary education at the age of 13 years. While he was still a graduate student, his first research paper on diffraction of light was published in 1906. At the age of 19, he joined the Indian Finance Service in Calcutta as Assistant Accountant General.

Politician and statesman

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, was a central figure in Indian politics before and after Independence. He was a key player in the Indian independence movement and the drafting of the Indian Constitution. He was given the Bharat Ratna in 1955.

Bhimrao Ambedkar, popularly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer and was awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1990, more than three decades after he passed away.

Dr Ambedkar campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables (Dalits) and supported the rights of women and labour. As the principal architect of the Constitution of India, he ensured that social justice was enshrined in the constitution.

Vallabhbhai Patel, also known as Sardar Patel, played a key role in the country's struggle for Independence. He was instrumental in the integration of over 500 princely states into the Indian Union. His uncompromising efforts towards consolidation of the country earned him the title 'Iron Man of India'. Sardar Patel was the first Deputy Prime Minister of India and passed away in 1950. He was given the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1991 as a tribute to his contribution to the nation.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the first President of India. An influential leader in the Indian Independence Movement, Prasad was a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. He was highly respected for his notable contributions to the Constituent Assembly. He was given the prestigious award in 1962, the same year he retired from public life because of his deteriorating health.

Social uplift

Lal Bahadur Shastri, the second Prime Minister of India, played a pivotal role in shaping India's political landscape. His slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan' during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 echoed the importance of soldiers and farmers to the nation's progress. His tenure witnessed significant agricultural growth, leading to India becoming self-sufficient in food grain production.

He was in Mughalsarai on 2 October 1904, studied in East Central Railway Inter College which he left to join the Non-cooperation Movement. In 1928, he became an active member of the Indian National Congress when called upon by Gandhi. He died in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (then Soviet Union) on 11 January 1966, only a day after signing a peace treaty to end the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. He was awarded India's highest civilian honour posthumously in 1966.

Vinoba Bhave, a social reformer and spiritual teacher, is best known for the Bhoodan Movement. He worked tirelessly for land rights for the poor and was instrumental in persuading landowners to voluntarily give a portion of their land to landless farmers.

He was an advocate of non-violence and human rights and was often called Acharya. An eminent philosopher, he translated Gita into Marathi language titled 'Geetai'. He was born Vinayak Bhave on 11 September 1895 in a small village called Gagoji (present-day Gagode Budruk) in Kolaba in the Konkan, Maharashtra. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1983.

These early recipients of the Bharat Ratna have left an indelible mark on India's socio-political landscape. Their contributions have not only shaped the nation but also significantly impacted the lives of the common man.

They dedicated their lives to the service of the nation and humanity, embodying the spirit of the Bharat Ratna. Their legacy continues to inspire future generations to strive for excellence and contribute to the nation's progress.

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.

Bharat Ratna

Shaping India's scientific landscape

India leaves its stamp not just for its rich cultural heritage but also for its individuals who put it on the world's science and technology map. Nandini Rao delves into their profiles, their exceptional work and service, saying how they have not only enriched India's scientific landscape but how it earned them the coveted civilian honour of the country - the Bharat Ratna.



Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam –The Missile Man of India was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1997

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1961 for his extraordinary contributions in the field of medicine and his tireless efforts towards the development of West Bengal

Bharat Ratna Dr. Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman laid the foundation for several significant developments in the field of light physics

ndia, a country known for its rich cultural and scientific heritage, has been home to numerous individuals who have significantly contributed to the fields of science and technology. Their exceptional work and service have not only enriched India's scientific landscape but have also earned them the highest civilian honour of the country - the Bharat Ratna.

One of the earliest recipients of the Bharat Ratna in the field of science was Dr. Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. A physicist by profession, Dr. Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930 for his ground-breaking work on the

scattering of light.

His research laid the foundation for several significant developments in the field of light physics. Dr. Raman's work has had a profound impact on India's progress in the field of scientific research in physics and chemistry and has inspired generations of Indian scientists.

Missile Man of India

Another notable recipient of the Bharat Ratna in the field of science and technology is Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam who made

significant contributions to India's satellite and missile programs. He played a pivotal role in the development of India's first Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III) and the operationalisation of strategic missiles. As the 11th President of India from 2002-2007, he also promoted scientific thinking and innovation among the youth.

Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam was born on 15 October 1931 in Rameswaram (then in the Madras Presidency), Tamil Nadu. His father owned a boat in the small town. After studying aerospace engineering in Madras Institute of Technology, Kalam joined the Aeronautical Development Establishment of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as a scientist

Kalam joined the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in 1969 where he was the project director of India's first Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III). After ten years of hard work, the SLV-III successfully launched the Rohini satellite into orbit in July 1980. This achievement established India as a self-reliant and exclusive member having its indigenous technology of launching satellites.

Dr. Kalam's contributions to India's missile and space technology not only elevated India's stature but also inspired countless aspiring scientists and engineers to pursue their dreams. His visionary leadership significantly advanced India's space technology. His work in missile technology earned him the title of the 'Missile Man of India'.

His ground-breaking work in missile technology and his role in the successful Pokhran-II nuclear tests established India as a nuclear-armed state. His leadership also played a pivotal role in the successful Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998. Dr. Kalam's contributions have had a lasting impact on India's defense technology and space research. Kalam received the Bharat Ratna in 1997 for his contribution to the scientific research and modernisation of defence technology in India.

Promoting quality scientific research

In the field of science and engineering, Professor C.N.R. Rao is a Bharat Ratna laureate who has made significant contributions. An eminent scientist and honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry, London, Prof. Rao's work in the field of materials research has put India on the global scientific map.

He has contributed significantly to the development of the country's scientific infrastructure and has been instrumental in promoting quality scientific research in India. His work has had a profound impact on India's progress in the field of materials research.

Professor Chintamani Nagesa Ramachandra Rao, commonly known as C.N.R. Rao, is an Indian chemist who has made significant contributions to the field of solid-state and structural chemistry. He is recognised globally for his work in materials research, particularly in the development of novel synthetic methods and structures, electron transport and magnetic properties.

Born on 30 June 1934 in Bangalore, India, Professor Rao completed his BSc from Mysore University, MSc from Banaras Hindu University and earned a PhD from Purdue University. He joined the Indian Institute of Science in 1959 as a lecturer and later served as its Director from 1984 to 1994. He also founded the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) and the International Centre for Materials Science.

One of his notable contributions to the field of materials research is the synthesis of two-dimensional oxide materials such as La2CuO4. His work led to a systematic study of compositionally controlled metal-insulator transitions. These studies have had a profound impact in application fields such as

colossal magnetoresistance and high-temperature superconductivity.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of science, Professor Rao has received numerous awards and honours. He was conferred the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, in 2014. This made him the third scientist after C.V. Raman and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to receive this prestigious award. He has received honorary doctorates from 84 universities worldwide.

Pioneering technology

Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya was born on 15 September 1861 in Muddenahalli, Kingdom of Mysore (now Karnataka). He served as the 19th Dewan of Mysore from 1912 to 1918 after appointment by Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV. He was a visionary civil engineer, administrator and statesman.

Visvesvaraya studied in Bangalore and earned a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree from the University of Madras. Later, he enrolled in College of Engineering, Pune (then College of Science at the University of Bombay) and graduated with a Diploma in Civil Engineering.

He is best known for his pioneering work in civil engineering, particularly in the construction of the Krishna Raja Sagara dam in Mandya district of Karnataka. This dam, one of the largest reservoirs in India at the time, helped convert nearby wasteland into fertile land and became the primary source of drinking water for many neighbouring cities.

In 1915, for his work in public welfare, he was knighted as a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (KCIE) by King George. For his services to the Kingdom of Mysore and the Republic of India, he was awarded the Bharat Ratna by the Government of India in 1955. Interestingly, his birthday, 15th September, is celebrated every year as Engineer's Day in India – to honour his contributions to the field of engineering.

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy was an eminent educationist, physician and statesman. He served as the Chief Minister of West Bengal from 1948 till 1962 when he died. Born on 1 July 1882 in Bankipore, Patna, he was born to Prakash Chandra Roy, an excise inspector and a social worker Aghorkamini Devi.

For his extraordinary contributions in the field of medicine and his tireless efforts towards the development of West Bengal, Dr. Roy was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1961.

Every year, on 1st July, which is both Dr. Roy's birth and death day, India celebrates National Doctor's Day to remember his significant contributions to the country. His legacy continues to inspire future generations of doctors and public servants in India and around the world.

The contributions of these Bharat Ratna laureates serve as a testament to India's scientific prowess. Their exceptional work in their respective fields continues to inspire generations of scientists, keeping India's scientific legacy alive and thriving. Their work has not only pushed the boundaries of scientific knowledge but has also had a significant impact on India's progress in the fields of science and technology.

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Bharat Ratna

Champions of cultural heritage

Ritika Seth illustrates and profiles those who have enriched the country's cultural landscape with outstanding work and in the process have been recognised with the country's most prestigious award. Literature, Music and Film-making are the areas where these stalwarts have left their imprint and have given India their distinctive cultural identity.



M.S. Subbulakshmi was the first musician ever to receive the Bharat Ratna in 1998. India's nightingale Lata Manageshkar and Bhupen Hazarika were two other prominent people from the music industry to have received Bharat Ratna



Classical vocalist Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, shehnai player Ustad Bismillah Khan and sitarist Pt. Ravi Shankar were other prominent recipients from the music fraternity to receive the Bharat Ratna

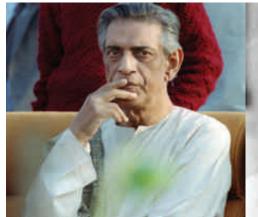
ndia, a country known for its rich cultural heritage, has been home to numerous individuals who have significantly contributed to the fields of literature, music, art and other artistic realms. Their exceptional work and service have not only enriched India's cultural landscape but have also earned them the highest civilian honour of the country - the Bharat Ratna.

In the field of literature, several Bharat Ratna laureates have left an indelible mark. One of the first names that come to mind is that of C. Rajagopalachari, or Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji, an activist of the Indian independence movement and a prolific writer who touched lives of thousands of individuals.

His books, Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which retold the two great Indian epics, are still widely read and loved by avid readers. Mahabharata was first published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1958 and the book is an abridged English retelling of Vyas' Mahabharata. Ramayana was first published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1957 and is the abridged English retelling of the Valmiki Ramayana.

Rajaji founded the Salem Literary Society and wrote in English and his mother tongue, Tamil. He published Siraiyil Tavam (Meditation in jail) in 1922 which documented his days in jail. He also wrote several books on other scriptures and ancient scrolls including on the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, etc. For his retelling of Ramayana - Chakravarti Thirumagan, he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958.

He also translated the Thirukkural (a classic Tamil language text consisting of 1,330 kurals, of seven words each) into English, as well as wrote on works of Socrates (a Greek philosopher from Athens) and Marcus Aurelius (a Roman



Satyajit Ray, one of the most acclaimed film maker was conferred the Bharat Ratna in 1992



C. Rajagopalachari, an activist of the Indian independence movement and a prolific writer was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1954



Sanskrit scholar, historian and academician Pandurang Vaman Kane was awarded Bharat Ratna in 1963

emperor and a Stoic philosopher) in Tamil.

Later, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan published his book 'Hinduism: Doctrine and Way of Life' in 1959. His contributions to literature and public life were recognised with the Bharat Ratna in 1954.

Pioneer of Indian music

The field of music has seen the conferral of the Bharat Ratna on two exceptional artists. M.S. Subbulakshmi or Madurai Shanmukhavadivu Subbulakshmi, a pioneer in the world of Carnatic music, was the first musician ever to receive the Bharat Ratna in 1998.

She was born on 16 September 1916 in Madurai (then Madras Presidency) in a family of musicians. She was born to Veena player Shanmukavadiver Ammal and Subramania Iyer and her grandmother Akkammal was a violinist. At a very young age, her training of Carnatic music started and later she learnt Hindustani music as well.

She travelled to many countries as India's cultural ambassador giving music performances in USA, Canada, UK, Russia, etc. including a performance at the UN General Assembly on UN day in 1966. She passed away in 2004 but her soulful renditions continue to captivate audiences, keeping the tradition of Carnatic music alive.

Another recipient in the field of music was Assamese singer and music director Bhupen Hazarika. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 2019. He wore many other caps as he was a lyricist, poet, actor, filmmaker, educator and a politician. He was popularly known as *Sudha Kontho* which translates to 'one with nectar in throat'.

Born in 1926 in Assam (British India), Bhupendra Hazarika's music was as prolific as him and the songs he created and sung were thematically based on higher values of brotherhood and humanity.

Hazarika started his professional life by working in the All India Radio in Guwahati. He had finished his master's degree and soon after went to Columbia University for the doctoral studies. After a brief teaching stint, he moved to Kolkata to embark on a career in music. He not only composed and sung songs that time but also made films.

The list would be incomplete without the mention of India's nightingale Lata Mangeshkar who received the Bharat Ratna in 2001. In a career spanning eight decades, she received love, accolades and innumerable awards including the Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan and Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Born on 28 September 1929 in Indore (British India) to Deenanath Mangeshkar, a Marathi and Konkani classical singer and Shevanti (later renamed Shudhamati), a Gujarati from Thalner in the-then Bombay Presidency, Lata Mangeshkar started her singing career at a very young age and moved to Mumbai in 1945 to train under the tutelage of Ustad Aman Ali Khan.

Her enduring legacy and her role as an inspiration for aspiring singers are undeniable. The Bharat Ratna bestowed upon her is rightfully acknowledged as a well-deserved recognition of her outstanding achievements in the field of arts and her invaluable contributions to Indian music. Her voice and musical prowess have left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of India, making her a revered figure in the world of music.

Taking art worldwide

One of the most acclaimed and influential artist and filmmaker of all times, Satyajit Ray was conferred the Bharat Ratna in 1992. He held many talents including being a film director, screenwriter, author, lyricist, calligrapher, etc. His films are classics that have inspired generations of filmmakers and cinephiles.

Born in 1921, Satyajit Ray was also very instrumental in putting Indian cinema and India on the world map. His films and

works have been received and admired across the world. He is considered by many as one of the greatest filmmakers in the world.

Ray's directorial debut was in 1955 with the Bengali film Pather Panchali that went on to garner international acclaim and awards. His other works include The Apu Trilogy, The Music Room, etc.

In an illustrious career spanning a decade, Satyajit Ray was recognised by many organisations and he received many awards in India and across the world. These include 36 National Film Awards given by the government of India and an Academy Honorary Award in 1992. He passed away in 1992 and the same year he was honoured with the Bharat Ratna by the government of India.

The International Film Festival of India (IFFI) that is celebrated every year in Goa also honoured the great director in its own way. On the occasion of his birth centenary, in 2021, IFFI renamed its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award to Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award.

A multi-talented artist, Ray also composed music for many of his films and wrote the screenplay as well. He also wrote other books and novels. His influence on Indian cinema and his contribution of taking it to the world are still celebrated today. His legacy continues to inspire several filmmakers around the world.

Promoting India

Born in Ratnagiri (Bombay Presidency) in 1880, Pandurang Vaman Kane was a Sanskrit scholar, Indologist, historian and an academician. For his outstanding contribution he was given the Bharat Ratna in 1963.

He is best known for his five-volume treatise on law in ancient and medieval India, known as History of Dharmaśāstra, for which he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956. He served as the University of Mumbai Vice Chancellor and was an honorary member of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. He was also rewarded with the highest title for a teacher, Mahamahopadhyaya.

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was a prominent classical singer from India. He was born in 1922 in Karnataka and as a child, was fascinated with music. He received many awards in his lifetime including the Padma Shri, Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Padma Vibhushan, Karnataka Ratna and the Bharat Ratna in 2009.

Ustad Bismillah Khan was an Indian musician who popularised shehnai around the world. He was born in 1916 in Dumraon, Shahabad district (Bihar and Orissa Province of British India). His father, and before him two grandfathers, were musicians in the Maharaja Keshav Prasad Singh's court of Dumraon Estate in Bihar. He was conferred the Bharat Ratna in 2001.

Acclaimed sitar player and composer Ravi Shankar was one of the most popular faces of Indian classical music in the world. He was born Ravindra Shankar Chowdhury in 1920 in Benares State of British India. After a rigorous training, he started performing in Europe and USA and with it began the popularisation of Indian classical music in the 1960s. He received several prestigious awards in India and in other nations; and the Bharat Ratna in 1999.

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Bharat Ratna

Jewels in India's sports crown

Although Sachin Tendulkar remains the only proud recipient of the Bharat Ratna award in the sports category, **Anushka Singh** says the country boasts of several sportspersons who have left their mark through glittering performances and have won exemplary awards. Today, Sports is not mere an entertainment but a cultural phenomenon that unites the nation, inferring it fosters a competitive spirit and inspires future generations.



Among sports personalities, legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar is the only one to have been conferred the Bharat Ratna

he Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India, conferred for exceptional service or performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour. The award was instituted in 1954 and has been given to 48 individuals so far, including 14 posthumously.

Among them, only one person has received the Bharat Ratna for his or her contribution to sports and that is Sachin Tendulkar - the legendary cricketer who is widely regarded, globally, as one of the greatest batsmen of all time. He was conferred the Bharat Ratna in 2014.

Sachin Tendulkar was born on 24 November 24, 1973 in a middle-class Maharashtrian family of Mumbai, Maharashtra – descendant of the famous poet and playwright Vijay Tendulkar. His father, Ramesh Tendulkar, was a Marathi-language novelist and poet who wrote under the pen name Suresh Joshi. His mother, Rajni Tendulkar, worked in the insurance industry and was very supportive of her son's cricketing career.

A prodigy

Tendulkar took up cricket at the age of eleven and soon became a prodigy. He showed exceptional talent and passion for the game and impressed everyone with his batting skills. He made his debut for the Indian national team at the age of 16 and went on to play 200 Tests and 463 One Day Internationals (ODIs), scoring a phenomenal number of runs and breaking multiple records across all formats.

He holds several records such as most runs in cricket career in Test matches (15,921), most Test matches played (200), most player-of-the-match awards (76), etc. He is also the recipient of many awards and honours for his outstanding performance and contribution to Indian cricket.

Among the many prestigious Indian awards conferred

upon Sachin Tendulkar, a few are as follows:

- The Khel Ratna Award (1998), which is India's highest sporting honour given by the President of India
- The Arjuna Award (1994), which is given by the Government of India in recognition of outstanding achievement in sports
- The Padma Shri (1999), which is India's fourth-highest civilian award given by the President of India $\,$
- The Maharashtra Bhushan Award (2001), which is Maharashtra state's highest civilian award
- The Padma Vibhushan (2008), which is India's second-highest civilian award given by the President of India

An all rounder

Sachin Tendulkar's achievements are not limited to cricket alone. He has also excelled in other sports such as tennis, badminton and table tennis. Sachin Tendulkar's legacy transcends sports and inspires millions of people across India and beyond. He is widely admired for his humility, generosity, passion and perseverance. He is also known for his philanthropic work through his charitable trust. He has supported various causes such as education, health care, rural development and environmental protection.

Sachin Tendulkar's Bharat Ratna award was a fitting recognition for his remarkable career that spanned over two decades and brought immense pride to India. The Bharat Ratna award is not only an honour for him but also an inspiration for all aspiring cricketers who dream of following his footsteps.

Tennis tales

Tennis was one of Tendulkar's favourite sports as a child. He was inspired by American tennis player John McEnroe and was a huge fan of his style. Tendulkar used to wear tennis wristbands and headbands, carry a tennis racquet with him, and watch tennis matches on TV, in the hope of looking like his icon

Sachin also played tennis with his friends and family members at various courts in Mumbai. He even had a chance to play with some professional players. He religiously followed tennis stars Vijay Amritraj and Ramesh Krishnan when he was much younger and later keenly followed and observed the games of Indian tennis legends Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes.

Sachin maintains that as a child he was confused which sport to choose – cricket or tennis. Today, he likes Indian players who have brought laurels to the nation like Sania Mirza and feels proud of them. He says he is in love with other racquet games such as squash, table tennis and badminton.

Other sports awards

Sports in India have transcended beyond mere entertainment, evolving into a cultural phenomenon that unites the nation. Recognising and celebrating excellence in sports is a pivotal aspect of fostering a competitive spirit and inspiring future generations.

The Arjuna Award, named after the legendary archer Arjuna from the Indian epic Mahabharata, is a testament to sporting prowess. Awarded by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, it recognises outstanding achievements in sports. Athletes across various disciplines, from cricket to wrestling, vie for this prestigious honour, showcasing the diverse talent that contributes to India's sporting legacy.

It is the second-highest sporting honour of India, after the highest awards which is the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award. From year 2001 onward, this award is given only in the following disciplines - Olympic Games, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, World Cup, World Championship Disciplines and Cricket, Indigenous Games and Sports for the Physically Challenged.

The Khel Ratna Award, also known as the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award is the highest sporting honour of India that is awarded annually by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of India. Here, the recipients are selected by a committee constituted by the Sports Ministry. The recipients are chosen who exhibit exceptional performance in international sports events such as the Olympics, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and other equivalent tournaments, over a period of four years, at an international level.

In the realm of sports, coaching is the backbone of success. The Dronacharya Award – for Outstanding Coaches in Sports and Games, akin to the masterful teacher Dronacharya from ancient Indian mythology, acknowledges exceptional coaching contributions. Coaches who have sculpted champions and elevated the standards of Indian sports receive this esteemed accolade, emphasising the critical role mentors play in shaping athletic destinies.

Honouring cricket legends

The Polly Umrigar Award for international cricketer of the year, named after one of India's cricketing legends, is one of the BCCI Awards, awarded to Indian cricketers for outstanding performance in international cricket. In 2007, the award was given for the first time and the recipient was Sachin Tendulkar.

This award honours the best cricketer in international cricket. Batsmen and bowlers who consistently deliver outstanding performances across formats are acknowledged with this coveted award, symbolising their consistent excellence in the dynamic world of cricket. Other recipients include Virat Kohli, Virendra Sehwag, Rahul Dravid, Gautam Gambhir, etc.

The Olympic Games stand as the pinnacle of sporting events globally, and Indian athletes strive to leave an indelible mark on this grand stage. The Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar is a sports honour given by the government of India. It is an annual award given by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to recognise the involvement and contribution of organisations and entities including sports control boards, voluntary groups, etc. in the field of sports over a period of three years prior to giving the award.

As the nation continues to produce sporting heroes, these awards stand as beacons, guiding the way for aspiring athletes to reach new heights.

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Bharat Ratna

Expounders of political evolution

Political leaders in the country through their vision, dedication and relentless efforts, have made yeo-man's contributions to the nation-building process, governance, and the political evolution of India.

Neeti Prakash gives them an honourable mention and says their legacy continues to inspire and guide India towards progress and prosperity.



Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former President of India Pranab Mukherjee, former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh Gobind Ballabh Pant, political activists Aruna Asaf Ali and Nanaji Deshmukh are some of the political leaders to have been conferred the Bharat Ratna

ndia has been shaped by numerous leaders, who have been conferred with the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of the Republic of India, to honour their work and role in nation-building, governance and the political evolution of India.

In addition to the initial recipients of the award that included Dr. S Radhakrishnan, C. Rajagopalachari and Jawaharlal Nehru, who played a pivotal role in India's Independence movement and shaped India in its initial years as a free nation, there have been many political leaders over the years who have contributed immensely to nation-building and make India what it is today.

Governance and public administration

The first Chief Minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh in independent India, Govind Ballabh Pant was a prominent freedom fighter and a tall political leader in the new Indian government. He was also the Union Home minister and served in that position from 1955 till 1961. It was during his tenure as the minister that he was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1957.

Pant played a crucial role in making Hindi language a prominent one in the country. He was born on 10 September

1887 in Khoont village which now lies in Uttarakhand. In 1921, Pant was elected to the Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, aka the United Provinces, and that kick-started his political career that led to him contributing immensely in strengthening national unity.

In 1950, when he became the first CM of Uttar Pradesh, he brought in several reforms that included abolition of the zamindari system, promotion of women rights, etc. His gave the region stable governance and the reforms he initiated improved the economic condition of the state in a big way. He was also an astute lawyer and an active participant in the Independence movement for which he was arrested and imprisoned by the British. After Independence, he made significant contributions in improving governance and public administration in India.

Another political and social leader who helped promulgate judicious reforms in India and made significant contributions in the formation of the Constitution was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar – a jurist, social reformer and politician. His was the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly which drafted the Constitution of India and the first Law Minister of independent India.

Ambedkar fought fiercely against social discrimination

and for the rights of the marginalised communities. As the Law Minister, he played a crucial role in eradicating social inequalities in the country. He believed that social morality is the main focus of political philosophy. He ensured there's formulation of an inclusive development policy in India.

Political stalwart

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was one of the most popular leaders of the country. He was not only popular among the adults and the elderly but the youth of the nation as well. He was a politician and a poet and his fiery poetry-laced speeches in the Parliament created ripples and influenced the masses in a big way. He was given the Bharat Ratna in 2015.

Vajpayee was born on 25 December 1924 in Gwalior State of British India, now Madhya Pradesh. His father was a school teacher and the family had roots in Uttar Pradesh. He soon entered public life in Gwalior when he joined Arya Samaj's youth wing, the Arya Kumar Sabha and became its general secretary. He was also a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which he joined as a swayamsevak and climbed up the ladder very soon.

A senior leader of the BJP, he was the Prime Minister of India for three terms of - 13 days, then 13 months and the last term he served was for the entire duration. Vajpayee became the first Prime Minister in India who did not belong to the Congress Party and served the entire term in office.

One of India's most loved leaders, Vajpayee's life was marked with several landmarks. He was a great orator and one of India's most prominent diplomats. At the 32nd United Nations General Assembly, he had given a speech that is remembered till today.

As the Prime Minister, Vajpayee brought in many positive changes in the nation. In May 1998, in a very bold move, India successfully conducted nuclear tests in Pokhran, Rajasthan against all odds. Chief Scientific Adviser and DRDO Director Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and Director of the Department of Atomic Energy Dr. R. Chidambaram led the mission under Vajpayee's leadership. To evade suspicion from American spies, the team disguised themselves as Indian army officials.

Leading by example

Since its inception, the Bharat Ratna has been awarded to a diverse group of individuals who have made significant contributions to society. In 2019, the award was conferred posthumously upon politician and activist Nanaji Deshmukh along with singer-composer Bhupen Hazarika, also posthumously, and the former President of India and politician Pranab Mukherjee.

Nanaji Deshmukh, original name Chandikadas Amritrao Deshmukh, was born in 1916 in a small town in Hingoli in Maharashtra called Kadoli. He was from a very modest background and supported himself for his education. He was an active member of the RSS and with them worked in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. His idol was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 2019.

Political activist and educator, Aruna Asaf Ali was a very active member of the Indian Independence movement. She was born in 1909 in Kalka (now in Haryana). Her father, Upendranath Ganguly, a restaurant owner, was from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) who settled in the United Province. She belonged to an illustrious family of filmmakers, academicians and politicians. She married Asif Ali who was also a Congress party leader.

Aruna was a prominent member of India's freedom struggle. She joined the Indian National Congress and actively participated in processions and marches. She was arrested and imprisoned for these activities. After India became independent, she became Delhi's first mayor.

When the All-India Congress Committee passed the Quit India resolution at the Bombay session in 1942, there was knee jerk reaction by the British government that arrested all major leaders of the Congress Working Committee to stall the movement. At that time, a very young Aruna presided over the session and hoisted the flag at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay which then marked the beginning of the movement.

For her bravery, she was called the Heroine of the 1942 movement and later as the Grand Old Lady of the Independence movement. She was conferred the Bharat Ratna in 1997.

The Bharat Ratna serves as a symbol of the highest civilian honour in India. It recognises and celebrates the exceptional service and contributions of individuals from all walks of life. The award stands as a testament to the diverse ways in which individuals can serve their country and make a significant impact on society.

India's political leaders, through their vision, dedication and relentless efforts, have significantly contributed to the nation-building process, governance, and the political evolution of India. Their legacy continues to inspire and guide India towards progress and prosperity.

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

Politics

Of amending Article 370 and more

Gajanan Khergamker dwells on some of the significant amendments and points out they have not only affected the governance and administration of the country, but also the lives of the common man. They have aimed to promote the welfare and interests of the citizens, and to protect their rights and freedoms. They have also tried to balance the diverse and sometimes conflicting demands of different sections of the society, and to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation.

he Supreme Court's recent verdict on the constitutional validity of the abrogation of Article 370, which gave special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, was the latest case in point of the basic structure of the Constitution not being violated. The abrogation was done by the central government on 5 August 2019, through a presidential order that superseded the 1954 order that had specified the provisions of the Indian Constitution that applied to the state. The presidential order was followed by another order that made all the clauses of Article 370 except clause 1 inoperative, and by the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which led to the state's bifurcation into two union territories: Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The abrogation of Article 370 was challenged by several petitions in the Supreme Court, on the grounds that it violated the basic structure of the Constitution, the federal principle, the rule of law, and the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The petitioners also argued that Article 370 was a permanent and irrevocable feature of the Constitution, and that it could not be abrogated without the consent of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir, that ceased to exist in 1957.

The Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment delivered on 11 December 2023, upheld the abrogation of Article 370 by a 5-0 unanimous ruling. The bench comprised of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, and Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gavai, and Surya Kant. CJI Chandrachud and Justice Kaul wrote two separate but concurring opinions, while the other three judges agreed with both the opinions.

The court rejected the petitioners' arguments and held that Article 370 was a temporary and transitional provision, and that it could be abrogated by the President in exercise of his powers under Article 370(1) (d), with the concurrence of the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, who was the successor of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir as the constitutional head of the state. The court also held that the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir had not limited the power of the President to abrogate Article 370, and that its dissolution did not affect the operation of Article 370.

'J&K had no internal sovereignty'

The court further held that Jammu and Kashmir did not have any internal sovereignty, and that it had fully and finally surrendered to the Union of India through the Instrument of Accession of 1947, which was ratified by the state's Constituent Assembly in 1954. The court noted that although Maharaja Hari Singh, the erstwhile ruler of the princely state, had issued a proclamation in 1948 that he would retain his sovereignty, his successor Karan Singh had issued another proclamation in 1952 that the Indian Constitution would prevail over all other laws in the state. This, the court ruled, had the effect of a merger like every other princely state that joined India.

The court emphatically concluded that Jammu and Kashmir has always been an integral part of India, and that there was no scope for any secessionist or separatist claim. The court cited Section 3 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution itself, apart from Article 1 and 370 of the Indian Constitution, to support this conclusion. Section 3 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution reads: "The State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India." The state's Constitution also provided that this provision cannot be amended.

Upholding Article 370 Was Historic

The court's verdict has been hailed as a historic and landmark judgment by the central government and its supporters, who have claimed that it has paved the way for the integration and development of Jammu and Kashmir, and for the restoration of peace and normalcy in the region. However, the verdict has also been criticised and condemned by the opposition parties and the civil society groups, who have argued that it has violated the constitutional and democratic rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and that it has aggravated the alienation and resentment among them.

(Continue on pg 29)



India-Sri Lanka

Divided by geography, tied by knots of destiny!

Sri Lanka is India`s closest neighbour separated only by Palk Straits. The relationship between the two countries can be traced to seven thousand years ago when the ancient Indian epic Ramayana took place. Since then, both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interaction with just geographical barriers in between. In a comprehensive essay, **Katie Sahiar** convincingly establishes this connect, consolidating her views, mentioning tell-tale scriptures. Her fascinating treks across the island spins and sums up the country's most durable epic which she conjures up with a prosaic and chronological description.

Text and photos: Katie Sahiar



A close up of the roof of the chariot shed in the compound of the Muneshwar Temple of Shiva at Chilaw

am is not just a name, but the symbol of an ideal.Ideal son, ideal brother, ideal husband and a king who abides by Dharma".

Swami Vivekananda

"No matter how wise a person like Ravana; Even if he is a ten-headed intelligent one; If he is devoid of Dharma, then destruction is certain".

Ramayana

The sands of time inter everything over which they flow, but some occurrences resist the tide and remain steadfast in memory. Events of the Ramayana, occurred seven thousand years ago, but live in word and deed even today, in both India and Sri Lanka binding both countries in an indestructible historical bond. Equally strong are the ties of worship. The shared pantheon, mythologies and rituals particularly in the worship of Shiva and Vishnu, to whom both countries have raised fantastic temples that still endure. The same festivals are celebrated, similar clothes are

worn, similar food is eaten and a language, Tamil, is also shared. Surely, in a bygone age the two were one!

Imagination spurred, I was gripped with a fever to experience Sri Lanka and rewind the drama of the Ramayana, most of which was played out in Sri Lanka and whose sites endure even today. With sights set upon this adventure we boarded the flight to Sri Lanka.

The contemporary bond between the two countries is cricket: Our flight – full to the gills with the cricketing crowd, as Sri Lanka was to play against India the next day – touched down in Colombo in the dead of night and as the plane came to a halt, the cricketing crowd poured out like molten lava, while we disembarked unhurriedly, gained the airport, retrieved our luggage and emerged into a deserted airport lounge. Our guide and driver Tarake awaited us. He welcomed us with garlands of orchids and then escorted us to the waiting area, while he went



The backwaters of Chilaw, a small fishing town in Puttalam District, Northwestern Province of Sri Lanka

to fetch the car. All around was dark and still; few lamps were lit for the traveler. Colombo slept soundly.

Shortly after, a Hundai van drove up; our luggage was stacked in the boot and we took off, heading out of the city straight for Chilaw eighty kilometers away. The roads were dark and unlit, and in the headlights of the car raindrops sparkled. Out of the city, we hit a coastal road. We could hear the crashing of waves and rain spattered the wind screen as we wound down the road that edged the beach on our way to Chilaw, the town with two significant temples of yore: Muneshwaram, dedicated to Lord Shiva and Manavari, a unique temple dedicated to Rama containing a Ramalingam.

Although victorious in war with Ravana, Rama felt uneasy. He worshipped Shiva at Muneshwaram, and sought a remedy to relieve him of the 'dosha', the shadow of death that was following him for killing a Brahmin (Ravana was a Brahmin). Lord Shiva told Rama to build five linga temples to remedy the situation.

Standing at a distance, I looked up in awe at the towering temple choc-a-bloc with intricate sculptures on the outer façade. Golden gods and goddesses stood, each in their own niche all the way up to the shikhara. "Did Ravana build this temple?" I asked a priest. He looked at me, strangely and answered "This temple pre-dates Ravana; Ravana worshipped Shiva in this temple." I was baffled and intrigued. Muneshwaram, is a temple of antiquity, one of the most venerated 'panch ishwaras' of Lanka, built in the classical style of Hindu temple architecture, with four ornate entrances, one in each direction. Layers of history are overlaid in this structure and the passage of time is evidenced with the inclusion of some Buddhist shrines within the main temple. Shrines, to Ganesha, Vishnu, Ram, Sita, Laxman and Hanuman, occupy space within the large temple, but the Shiva lingam is set deep within in the



The front entrance of the famed Muneshwaram temple one of the 'Panch Ishwars' or Shiva temples of Sri Lanka; (Bottom) One of the several 'rathas' fashioned like Ravana's vimana. A number of these massive chariots are housed in the compound of the Muneshwaram temple

sancta sanctorum. The compound houses enormous chariots, reminiscent of Ravana's chariots and they are used for festive processions to this day. The chant of OM reverberates continuously while hordes of people stream into the temple.

Manavari Kovil, is twelve kilometers north of Chilaw. It is an unpretentious building, but of great significance for Hindus. This was the first temple that Rama built on Lankan soil and installed a lingam to wash himself of the sin of killing a Brahmin. The Ramalinga is an extraordinary object of worship for Hindus being a representation of both Shiva and Vishnu. There are only two Ramalingas in the world; one in the Manavari Kovil in Lanka and other in Rameswaram at the northernmost tip of India both welded in worship.

Science has corroborated what the scriptures stated thousands of years ago. The Puranas and the Ramayana, tell us that Bharatvarsh during the Treta Yug, was vast and Sri Lanka was a part of it.

Valmiki, the author of the Ramayan, explicitly mentions a bridge, the Setubandhanam, that spanned the ocean and joined India at Dhanushkodi with Lanka at Talaimannar. Oceanography confirms that this strip of land is seven thousand years old, while carbon dating of the beaches near Dhanushkodi also





A pair of gigantic lion's paws form the entrance of the Sigiriya rock sculpted out of a single granite piece The massive palace complex atop the rock is also called as the Lion's fortress

substantiates the date.

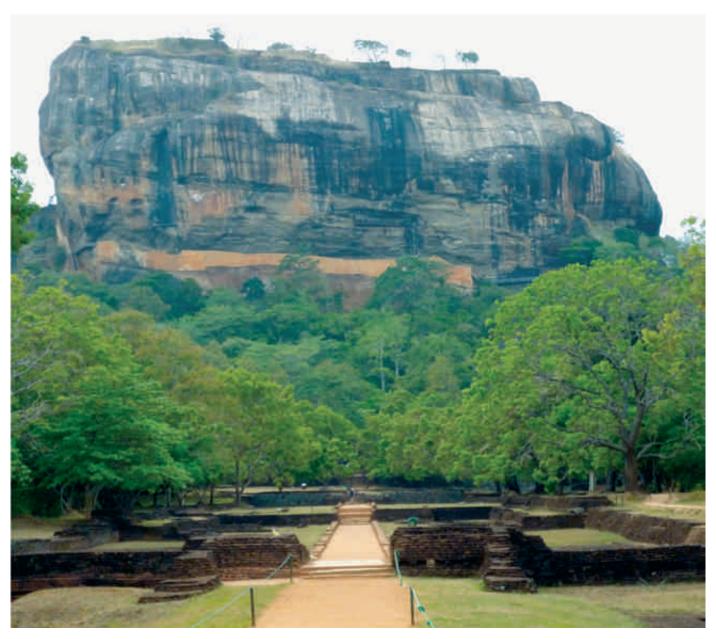
The 'golden palace' at Sigriya

Ravana, king of Lanka was a Dasanaan with ten heads that symbolised his thorough knowledge of the four Vedas and the six Upanishads. Thus he was a Brahmin.

Lord Shiva's consort, weary of the ascetic life in the Himalayas wanted a home. Lord Shiva although an ascetic, was a loving husband. He asked Vishvakarma to build a palace and a magnificent golden palace was built for Parvati. Ravana was asked to perform the 'Griha Pravesh,' house warming puja for them. Pleased with the puja, Shiva offered Ravana a boon as his dakshina and Ravana, asked for the golden palace itself!

Sigiriya: 'Be ready and in the car by 5.45a.m.", said our guide. We winced at the thought of an early rising while on holiday, but nevertheless complied. In hindsight it was a wise decision. As the day wore on, it became burning hot. Sigiriya is located in the northern Matale District near the town of Dambulla. It is an astounding site of both historical and archaeological significance, dominated by a gargantuan block of granite approximately six hundred and sixty feet high. Eminent historians believe that the vast plateau atop the Sigiriya rock held Ravana's majestic golden palace. Only a being with Ravana's extraordinary powers could have accessed it, was the thought that crossed my mind as I gazed at the rock!

Sigiriya has two parts, the Western part which is about two hundred and twenty-three acres and the Eastern part, which



Sigiriya was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1982. It is a two hundred meter high rock surrounded by the remains of an extensive network of gardens, reservoirs, and other structures and is believed to have been the Golden Palace of Ravana –Swarna Lanka

is about a hundred acres. It has a high park area, with three ramparts and two moats. The Eastern part has boulder gardens and the Naipena Guhava, or The Cobra Head Cave.

By six fifteen a.m. armed with our entrance tickets and a bottle of water, we began our ascent of Sigiriya Rock in the cool of the morning. We walked at a comfortable and even pace knowing that there were one thousand two hundred steps to negotiate. The climb began with an easy incline surrounded by trees. Every few yards there was an information plaque attached to a tree or placed on a stand, but since it was in Sinhalese, we kept going, stopping only for sips of water. Looking around we noticed water tanks and what would have been well laid out gardens almost in the style of the Mughal gardens in Kashmir! As the incline increased, the steps narrowed, the stones became uneven and high and we had to lever ourselves up to the step above holding on to the stone wall on the inner side. The climb seemed interminable! But, the higher we got the better was the view of the verdant surroundings below. Finally, panting and

puffing we got to the entrance of the 'Lion Rock' fortress as it is called. Solid rock has been sculpted into giant lion's paws and steps arise from between the huge paws moving up into the dwelling above! There are no railings to hold, so one must climb this narrow ribbon of gravelly steps with utmost caution. At last! We climbed the last few stones and stood up on a flat platform that stretched beyond sight. A drizzle set in and we savoured the cooling drops after the heated climb.

Nothing is left of the palace, except broken walls, and interconnecting pathways with signs that say 'eastern palace or northern palace', so we located a raised flat stone and gratefully sank down, imagining ourselves on a throne, cooled by the drizzle, surveying the entire country from an aerial height while munching on biscuits! Having cooled off we began our descent. The route up and down Sigirya rock has been so designed that different parts of the palace can be observed. During the descent we came upon a spiral connected to a high hanging cave. This was the fresco cave which depicts palace life and its people.



The densely wooded slopes of the Ella region

Here too, the style of the paintings and facial features of the subjects were akin to those of the Ajanta frescoes in India. Here too, photography was not permitted. Further down we came upon a vast platform, laid out like a theatre and needless to say it was the audience hall. Then came the Cobra Cave! An enormous natural rock formation that appears like a raised cobra hood, nestled in the jungle. There were some faded paintings on the ceiling that were barely visible, but legend says that Sita was held prisoner here for some time.

Sita's abduction

Sita's nightmare began in the eleventh year of exile in the Dandakaya forest. Surpanakha, Ravana'sister, saw Rama in the forest and coveted him. Rama spurned her advances and so did Lakshmana. Humiliated, Surpanakha sought to attack Sita as the cause of the men's contempt for her. Lakshmana intervened and cut off her nose and ears. Disfigured, she retreated to Lanka to seek succor from her brother Ravana, and avenge herself.

Ravana coerced Mareecha, a rakshas in the Dandaka forest to assume the appearance of a golden deer and entice Sita. As expected, Sita was enamoured of the creature and insisted that Rama catch it for her. Mareecha lured Rama deep into the forest. When he was unable to catch the deer, Rama let loose an arrow bringing it down. Mareecha regained his original form and

imitating Rama's voice screamed for help. A frantic Sita compelled Laxmana to go and rescue his brother. As soon as Laxmana departed, Ravana appeared in the garb of a mendicant seeking food. He feigned religious wrath and lured Sita out of the hut, then seizing her by her hair, carried her off to his 'viman' a flying vehicle. As she was being abducted Sita spied five monkeys on a mountain top. Wanting to give Rama a clue to her whereabouts, she threw down her shawl and jewellry, which the monkeys picked up. Presently, Rama and Laxmana came by searching for Sita. The vanars befriended them and showed them the jewellery and the shawl.

The search for Sita

Lankapura was the hotbed of action following the abduction of Sita and there are over fifty sites in Sri Lanka connected to it.

Weragantota the "place of an aircraft landing" is where Ravana set Sita down in Lankapura. Dense jungles cossetted the beautiful city of Lankapura.

Ravana's wife, Queen Mandodari's palace stood in these picturesque surroundings, but Sita refused all hospitality even from the queen and was therefore lodged in the courtyard of the palace in the area now called Sita Kotuwa. Wanting to ensure that Rama should not find her, Ravana moved her into the mountains to the Ashok Vatika. The route was said to be



Manavari Kovil (temple) is situated twelve kilometers out of Chilaw and is one of the two Ramalingams existing in the world. Outside the temple stands a black lingam with Nandi facing it

spectacular. Today, there is barren land atop the mountain range across which Ravana drove from Lankapura to Ashoka Vatika. The chariot path atop the mountain range is still visible, but remains barren.

During the ride Ravana gave Sita some rice balls to eat, but she accepted nothing from him and threw them away. Villagers named them *Sita Goli*, and they are found along the chariot track to this day. They are used as medicine. *Carbon dating done on these rice balls have ascertained them to be more than five thousand years old!*

Another memorial to Sita's suffering in captivity is the 'tear pond' formed along the chariot route. Where her tears fell a pool was created and it does not dry out even during droughts. The area also has several trees with bright red blooms the 'Sita' flowers. Petals, stamen and pistils, of these flowers resemble a human figure carrying a bow and they are only found in this area of Sri Lanka.

Nuwara Eliya, is the main theatre of Sita's story. The Ashoka Vatika, her open air jail was a little way out of Nuwara

Eliya in a place now called Seetha Eliya. It was Ravana's pleasure garden, and he tried to woe her, but she spurned him. She sat on a rock and wept, waiting for Rama. The rock is called the Hakgala Rock and the Hakgala Garden is located at the base of the rock, once a part of the Ashok Vatika. Sita Pokuna was a barren area atop the Hakgala Rock where the Sita Amman Temple stands presently.

The Seetha Amman temple, is the only temple dedicated to Sita. It lies about five kilometers out of Nuwara Eliya. Hanuman had located Sita here and carried news back to Rama and the *vanara* army waiting on the shores of Southern India.

Edging the roadside with the dense jungle as its backdrop, the Seetha Amman Temple is of recent origin, being built in the early 2000s, but its location is ancient. Three idols, Sita, Ram and Laxman were retrieved from the stream flowing behind the temple. The temple has a golden outer façade in the style of South Indian temples with Rama, Sita and Laxmana as the central figures on the entrance arch. A large statue of Hanuman kneeling is by the side of the entrance. The idols of antiquity are enshrined in a central space, while there is a small Gana-



The beauteous hills of Nuwara Eliya form a hill station akin to Ootacamund in India. It is surrounded by vast tea estates and typical colonial structures, now turned into hotels

pati shrine and huge paintings of Hanuman adorning the walls within. Photography is forbidden. This rule has stemmed from the latest fad of people taking selfies with their backs to the deities!

Steps from the temple lead down to the stream where foot prints akin to Hanuman's have been found. Some are small and some are large, testifying to the powers of Hanuman of being able to alter himself to any size. A foot print is outlined in gold and on a large rock above the foot print is the tableau of Sita in the forest seated on the rock and Hanuman standing before her. Monkeys abound in the area. They move silently in and out of the temple unrestricted. They accept the pilgrims and the pilgrims accept them.

Our search for Sita, takes us to Ella which bears the clearest imprints of the Ramayana events. Ella is a small town in the mountains. It is a cool verdant area conducive to walking. Trees engulf dwellings and vehicular traffic is low. Roadside cafes and souvenir shops line the main street. That it was an impenetrable jungle thousands of years ago is easily imaginable. This region is supposedly full of underground tunnels that Ravana used to move about unobserved and through which he moved Sita to secret locations.

Two kilometres out of Ella is the Ravana Cave at one thousand, three hundred and seventy meters above sea level. Ravana used this cave to conceal the abducted Sita. The climb up to the cave is a steep, dangerous and difficult one with over six hundred and fifty uneven steps. Some places have no steps at all, just jagged rocks. It appears to contain a supernatural energy that makes people uncomfortable. The Ravana cave consists of one part of a tunnel which is connected to the Ravana Falls in Ella. Tunnels served as fast and secret transportation paths through the hills

Ravana Falls, a twenty-five meters waterfall, is located behind the cave. During the wet season, this magnificent waterfall is one of the widest in Sri Lanka.

Ravana caves, Ravana waterfalls and the Ravana wildlife sanctuary are all concentrated in Ella. A road has been cut through the jungle and at a designated point visitors are allowed to stop and view the Ravana falls. It is possible to go off the road and onto the rocks where the flow of the water is not

ferocious, but it is still a dangerous venture as the rocks are mossy and slippery. The volume of water depends on the monsoon, but legend says that the waterfall was so heavy it formed a curtain and Sita bathed in the pool at the bottom of the fall

Subsequent to Hanuman's discovery of Sita's location in Lanka, Ravana knew that Rama was on the way. He moved Sita to various secret locations as a precaution. Ravanagoda, in Kotmale, a complex of tunnels and caves was one and Istripura, was another with an ingenious network of interconnected pathways.

The war and defeat of Ravana

With Sita's location confirmed, Rama and his army crossed over the Sethubandhanam and entered Lanka from the North. War broke out. During the course of the war Laxmana was hit by Indrajit's Brahmastra and fell unconscious on the battlefield. Hanuman was dispatched to the Himalayas to fetch the life giving Sanjeevani herb to revive him. Unable to identify the herb, Hanuman uprooted the entire hill with all its flora, but when returning, bits of the hill fell in five places in Lanka.

Rumassala was one of them. Mysteries abound in Rumassala. It is a haven for herbs and researchers have recorded one hundred and fifty species unique to this hill and not found elsewhere. The soil of this hill is inherently different from that of the surrounding area and supports the Ramayana legend that it belongs to a totally different geographical location.

Rumassla is a forgotten factor of the Ramayana. It is better known for the Shanti Stupa built by the Japanese on the site. It was a rainy day and the slopes leading to the stupa were slick with moss. Treading on bare feet I walk in and ask the old lady selling lotus flowers about the Hanuman temple. "Hanuman" she says. "Come" and leads the way up a gradient where tucked away almost out of sight is an enormous idol of Lord Hanuman towering over the town holding up the Sanjeevani hill and adjacent to that is a small shrine of Lord Ganesh, simply adorned with diyas. "I am looking for the Hanuman temple" I tell her and a stocky man walks up to me and points the way. Further up another wet and wooded slope stood a tall Buddha at the gate. Once again on bare feet I walked through, expecting to



The spectacular Ramboda waterfalls descend from a height of a 109 meters and streams down through the Seetha Eliya region

see someone within, but all was silent. Going past the Buddha statue, I came upon a shrine with all the gods and goddesses of Hinduism packed together in a small space in photo frames. On the opposite side were statues in glass cases. The rest of the temple housed several Buddhas. I pay my respects to all the divine beings seated there and exit.

The Sanjeevani herb revives the injured in Rama's camp. Fierce fighting goes on until finally Ravana is vanquished by Rama.

Heartbreak

A victorious Rama sent for Sita and they met at Divurumpola which became the site of her 'Agni Pariksha' test of fire.

Sita came to Rama, overjoyed, but Rama averted his face, and when he spoke his words were cruel and cutting, "I have killed my enemy. I have done my duty, but you have lived for a year

in the enemy's abode. It is not proper that I take you back now." Sita was stunned. "You have broken my heart" she said, "Only the uncultured speak like this". She bade Lakshmana to build a fire. With suppressed rage, Lakshmana looked at Rama, as he lit a pyre, but Rama did not relent. Sita walked into the blaze hands folded in prayer.

"Slow the red flames rolled asunder, God of Fire incarnate came, Holding in his radiant bosom fair Videha's sinless dame, Witness of our sins and virtues, God of Fire incarnate spake, Bade the sorrow stricken Rama back his sinless wife to take:" Ramayana of Romesh Dutt

Widely travelled the author now heads the destination research division of Exotica Traveller. She is also an environmentalist and the author of four coffee table books on nature and also contributes articles to newspapers and magazines.

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"While painting, I travel within my mind and create my own landscapes – my own Hampi, my own cities, as I visualise it."

His abstract paintings in oil on Hampi, Badami and Varanasi have wowed art lovers since decades. The bold brush strokes, subtle interplay of muted tones alongside vibrant hues, tilting boats and coracles placed in an unconventional manner, temples perched on uneven rocks – all make for a striking canvas that transports viewers to the place of the artist's imagination inviting them to explore more of his journey. His charcoal sketches are equally captivating.

'Urban Stories' is a new series from the riveting palette of acclaimed Bengaluru-based artist **Gurudas Shenoy**, who was in Mumbai in December to exhibit his work at the Jehangir Art Gallery. The series are his "travel" stories on canvas that happened during the recent pandemic when he was confined to his home and studio. It is interesting to see how the artist has been able to capture still life, urbanscape and even Hampi in the same frame.

Shenoy has held around 14 solo shows in India and abroad and his works are proud possessions of private and corporate enthties, and a few institutions. While attending to fellow artists and guests who have come to view his exhibition, and fielding question from art students and aspiring artists, he takes a breather to chat with **Anuradha Dhareshwar** about his art journey.

Can you give us a brief background of yourself?

I grew up in Udupi, a small coastal city in Karnataka, surrounded by the beautiful Arabian Sea on one side and the verdant Western Ghats on the other. I soaked in the beauty of the rural landscape, the greenery, floating clouds that formed different patterns, the rains lashing the countryside, the colourful fishing boats sailing in the sea that kept changing colours at different times of the day, the temple architecture, etc. Basically, it is nature that inspired me as



Gurudas Shenoy

a young boy and I would walk around with a sketch book trying to capture the various moods of nature. That was the beginning of my artistic journey.

Initial training in art happened at Kalabharti, the art school run by my father Gokuldas Shenoy, under the aegis of South Kanara Art Council (SKAC). My dad was an alumnus of the J. J.School of Art, Mumbai. The Council organised Art Camps, Art Festivals and various other art activities regularly, which used be attended by talented artists and writers of the time. There used to be talks by the visiting artists, writers, group discussions, slide shows, etc., all of which I was exposed to from an early age and laid a solid foundation for my future. The rich knowledge that I gathered from these art activities was impactful.

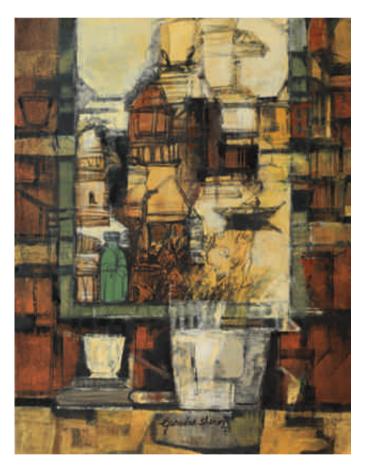
For formal education in art, I studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda (now Vadodara), which again was a great institution which had the finest faculty where I could hone my skills further. Besides painting in different media, I got to learn other forms of art including sculpture.

Your dad was an accomplished artist. How much has your art been influenced by his work?

I was extremely fortunate to have a friend and mentor at home. I grew up observing my father at work and learned a lot not just about painting skills, but more importantly finer aspects of life,



A 4 x 4 ft diptych titled 'Reminiscence' (oil on canvas)



An oil painting from his new series 'Urban Stories'

discipline, organisational skills and work ethics, among other things. My dad was a man of many talents. He was a prolific artist, a great sports person in his college days, enjoyed singing, but above all a fine human being...a caring person who had a large circle of friends - artists, singers, writers among others. He had innate leadership qualities and was a pioneer in art education and early artistic movements in Karnataka. So his influence on me first as a father and an artist was immense.

Tell us about your art journey. How did you get into abstract painting?

I always wanted to be a painter. After graduating in Fine Arts, I came home to Bangalore where my dad had relocated from Udupi. I used to observe him working on murals and also helped him initially in his studio. I was fascinated by that medium and loved experimenting with different types of materials. I worked with clay, glass, fibre glass, terracotta, wood, metal, granite, chalk, softpastels, charcoal...You name it and I have worked with almost every

material. But murals demanded a lot of time and I wasn't getting enough time to paint, which was my passion. Initially, I divided my time between the two but at some point I had to make the switch. Painting abstracts happened organically as I believe everything in this Universe is formless. Whether I painted in watercolours, oils, pastels... any medium, there was always abstraction in my work. So it was not as if I got up one day and decided I will paint abstracts.

How and where does the creative process begin?

A lot of inspiration for my work comes from travel. My travels abroad, especially to Europe opened up my mind and I saw art differently. I did not travel like a regular tourist. I loved exploring offbeat places; observe the local people, their life and culture. All that I had studied as a student of art is something that I got to see and experience during these visits. I would come home to India with memories and ideas that were flooding in my mind, waiting to be expressed on the canvas. I did not want to reproduce what I saw but it had to be my interpretation of the place. So that is what you get to see in all my paintings...my interpretation of a place.

Hampi and Varanasi are you favourite themes

I love travelling and in India too my work is influenced by places I have visited, whether it is Hampi, Badami, Varanasi or any other place. India has so much to offer. As a child, I grew up listening to stories from our epics and historical events narrated by a grand aunt who was a wonderful story teller. It was fascinating to know the story of Kishkinda in Hampi, stories of Vijayanangar Dynasty and their contribution to art and architecture, etc. As an artist, I spent a lot of time marveling at the rocks in Hampi, climbing the hills, soaking in the view from the top of the mountains with the Tungabhadra River flowing down. Just spending time in the midst of nature, studying the shapes, the effect of light on the rocks, making small sketches, and then going home and expressing them on my canvas was a process that I enjoyed. And still do. However, while painting, I travel within my mind and create my own landscapes – my own Hampi, my own cities, as I visualise it.

How do you decide on colours? Do you paint only on a large canvas?

Colour and composition are two very important elements of a painting. Colours are my forte and I mix them to create my own palette that reflects the mood of that place. Sometime, red dominates, sometimes yellow, sometimes green...so on and so forth. Even when I use red in my canvas, I take care to see it does not shout out. The bright colours merge with muted tones in a way to create a well-balanced canvas.



Drawing on canvas from 'Urban Stories'

I enjoy painting on a large canvas that gives me the creative freedom to travel to these places as I paint. It is not as if I don't paint on a smaller canvas, but I find painting on a bigger canvas more liberating. My hands move freely along with my thoughts, the strokes are bolder and I don't feel confined to a limited space

I can see a few paintings here where still life such as flower vases and bowls are juxtaposed with cityscape. Can you explain this?

These paintings are a part of my new series called 'Urban Stories' triggered by my emotions and experiences during Covid when we were confined to our homes. Due to travel restrictions, all my time was spent in my studio arranging and rearranging things within the four walls and that included tea cups and flower vases at the window. There wasn't much happening outside on the streets and I began imagining cities and life outside my window which resulted in these paintings.

You have been a part of the art scene in India for over four decades. What are the significant changes you have noticed in recent times? How is social media influencing art?

There are significant changes happening in the world of art. There is more awareness about art and artists. There are so many artfairs, art camps, art biennale, workshops happening in India and abroad. Lay people are taking a lot of interest in art, visiting exhibitions, appreciating art. There is phenomenal talent in all kinds of art and not just painting. The young and experienced, both are producing brilliant work and social media is playing a major role in reaching their work to a wider audience globally. It is a wonderful platform if used properly. The artist community is growing by the day. I see exciting times ahead for art and artists.

The online galleries are the new trend and helping artists to exhibit their work. Social media is playing an important role in giving exposure to art. Artists and their work are getting noticed world-wide at the click of a button. The role of physical galleries is equally important and India needs to have more galleries in every small town and big cities for people to appreciate art. Art needs to be given due importance in schools and should be a part of our academic curriculum. Students should be taken to art galleries to appreciate art and also be encouraged to take it up as career.

Can you tell us a little about Shenoy Art Foundation and its work?

It is a small initiative by me and my wife Amita to promote, encourage and support visual artists. It was founded as a tribute to my father who was also a philanthropist at heart and helped fellow artists in whatever ways he could. The Foundation showcases the works of emerging artists in Karnataka by giving them annual grants in recognition of their work. We observe their journey and reward those who are consistently creative.



Anuradha Dhareshwar is Editor, One India One People. She is also an artist and former journalist.



The Constitution of India, adopted on 26th November 1949 and implemented on 26th January 1950, is the principal document that formulates the rights, duties, and powers of citizens, governments, and its officials. It is a living document that has evolved over time through numerous amendments to meet the

Amendments Significant And Impactful

Here go some of the significant amendments and their impact on the common man:

- Abolition of states according to classes and introduction of Union Territories and reorganisation of states by language was one of the first significant reforms of the boundaries of Indian states and territories, organising them by the language spoken in those areas to arrange the states properly and minimize the complexity of state boundaries. This amendment has made administration and governance more efficient and relatable for the common man as it aligns with their linguistic identity.
- The 42nd amendment aka mini-constitution in 1976 inserted Socialism and Secularism in the Preamble, a provision on fundamental duties: Secularism and socialism were inserted to restore the faith of the nation in order to ensure that minorities would be safe and prevent exploitation by the rich. The main reason to add socialism was to promote social as well as economic equality in the country. The introduction of secularism was to ensure there was no official state religion. This amendment ensures that every citizen, regardless of their religious or economic background, is treated equally.
- The fundamental Right to Property in India was deleted from the list of fundamental rights in 1978 to permit the reorganisation of land and to facilitate land acquisition for developmental projects. This amendment has facilitated the government's ability to undertake large-scale public projects that benefit the common man.
- The amendment that brought in the Law of Defection in 1985 was introduced to combat the issue of political instability caused by duly elected representatives switching parties. This ensures that the mandate given by the common man is respected and upheld.
- The 73rd amendment in 1992 was a landmark in the history of India as it granted constitutional status to Panchayati Raj institutions. This amendment brought governance closer to the rural population and gave the common man the right to participate directly in the democratic process.
- The 86th amendment that brought in Right to Education in 2002 made education a fundamental right for children aged 6-14 years. This amendment has had a significant impact on the common man by ensuring that every child has access to education, thereby empowering them with knowledge and skills for a better future.

- The 101st amendment introduced in 2016 the Goods and Services Tax (GST) a comprehensive indirect tax on the manufacture, sale, and consumption of goods and services throughout India. This has simplified the tax structure and made it more transparent, benefiting the common man by reducing the overall tax burden.
- The 103rd amendment in 2019 ensuring Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) Reservation provided for a 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the economically weaker sections in the general category. This amendment has ensured that the common man, irrespective of their caste or religion, if economically weak, gets equal opportunities. And, the most recent being:
- The 104th amendment in 2019 abrogated Article 370, which granted special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This amendment brought J&K under the same laws as the rest of India, ensuring equal rights and duties for the common man living in this region.

Balancing Diversity And Social Welfare

These amendments have not only affected the governance and administration of the country, but also the lives of the common man. They have aimed to promote the welfare and interests of the citizens, and to protect their rights and freedoms. They have also tried to balance the diverse and sometimes conflicting demands of different sections of the society, and to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation. They reflect the evolving needs of the society and the country's commitment to uphold the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity enshrined in the Constitution.

These amendments, among others, have shaped the Indian Constitution to its current form, ensuring it remains a dynamic and relevant document that continues to serve the needs of its citizens. The Constitution of India, through these amendments, strives to uphold the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, ensuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. The Constitution is not a rigid or static document, but a living and organic one, that adapts to the changing times and circumstances. It is the result of the collective wisdom and vision of the people of India, who have entrusted it with the task of guiding the destiny of the nation.



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

Agriculture

A new lease for folk rice varieties

Once its most consumed grains in India, as folk rice varieties seemed to be on the verge of being edged out by the senseless quest for high-yield hybrids – thanks to lost biodiversity – farmers across states have launched a sustained campaign to preserve the native varieties. **Hiraman** points out that the new-age varieties are doing incalculable harm by destroying traditional agricultural systems and rupturing food cultures.



Farmers at a paddy field in Sangli

he cereal that provides daily sustenance to over 60 per cent of the population in India was once home to more than 100,000 rice varieties. Sadly, this biodiversity is irretrievably lost, forced out by the quest for high-yield hybrids and varieties.

However, in recent years farmers in several states of the country are at the forefront of a movement to safeguard what remains of this genetic wealth as they grow the native varieties. Grown under varying ecosystems on a range of soils under varying climatic and hydrological conditions ranging from waterlogged and poorly drained to well-drained situations, rice is one of the chief grains of India and is grown in 43.86 million hectares.

One can understand the richness of rice heritage from the fact that in Bangladesh, around 7000 rice varieties were replaced by modern high-yielding varieties (HYVs), out of which only 400 now survive, and that too on marginal farms.

Almost 5000 rice varieties from India's Northeastern

states were shipped to the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines in 1965. Out of this, none of the varieties from Assam exist there anymore. In West Bengal too, over 5500 varieties were recorded to have existed until the 1970s, out of which 3500 varieties were shipped to IRRI for preservation. Similar is the case with China, Japan and other South East Asian Countries, where local varieties have drastically declined, because of the shift to monoculture and modern varieties since the 1970s.

In the 1970s agricultural institutions and development agencies in India promoted the new 'miracle' varieties and irrigation technologies ushering in the Green Revolution. Following this, rice varieties suited to upland and deep-water paddy farms started disappearing. Another negative fall-out of such an irrigated method was the rapid depletion of groundwater.

When thousands of such rice 'landraces' disappear, we lose folk knowledge about the properties of specific varieties; it destroys traditional agricultural systems and even upsets food cultures. Moreover, the farmer becomes viciously tied to

dependence on the external supply of seeds and inputs.

HYVs Vs Folk rice varieties

Native or heirloom varieties have adapted over centuries to local ecologies and have proved hardier in the face of problems such as pests and drought. Compared to this the modern varieties bred in labs were designed for the neat routines of intensive agriculture. They were tailored for mechanised farming, intended to absorb large doses of chemical fertilisers and predictable supplies of water.

Most efforts to conserve folk rice varieties in India have been individual or institutional initiatives. That's what sets the farmer-run Amarkanan Rural Socio-environmental Welfare Society (ARSWS) apart. It is led by Dr Anjan Kumar Sinha, a botanist and assistant professor at Purulia's Raghunathpur College. The Society has so far conserved and preserved over 200 extant varieties and shared the seeds with fellow farmers so that they can be multiplied. Of these, 106 varieties have been registered with the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority—an effective system for the protection of plant varieties and the rights of farmers and plant breeders.

Similarly, the Forum for Indigenous Agricultural Movement (FIAM), a grassroots organisation of farmers active in Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts of West Bengal cultivate heirloom (folk rice) varieties with environmentally friendly agricultural practices to usher food security in their villages. What started in 2011 with five to six members who were against chemical cultivation for high-yield crops has grown to about 120 farmers from nearly 25 villages. In the process, the NGO has revived over 100 indigenous paddy varieties.

In 2020, Sagar Krishnanagar Swami Vivekananda Youth Cultural Society of South 24 Parganas (West Bengal) was granted the PPR (Protection of Plant Rights) for conserving *Harinakhuri*. Incidentally, *Harinakhuri* like other landraces was almost extant and grown in a few villages of coastal saline tracts of West Bengal, where it is under localised cultivation.

The efforts put in by S.R. Srinivasamurthy, a farmer from the Narsipur Taluk of Karnataka to conserve and propagate folk variety is nothing but exemplary. Embarking on a tour of the rice-growing states in a bid to collect different species of rice to build a seed bank, he procured 350 varieties of rice, (many of these with medicinal properties) and planted them in his 1.5-acre plot. His seeds are sought after by other farmers too.

In Kerala, it was found that traditional rice varieties were vanishing, with as many as 55 varieties of paddy seeds becoming extinct in the Wayanad district of Kerala in the Western Ghats. Once nearly 160 varieties of paddy were grown here. This came to light through a study conducted by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board, as part of its preparation of the People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) in the year 2002. It was also discovered that there were about 25-30 varieties cultivated in a single panchayat, which means it could plunge into extinction if not actively conserved.

According to the farmers, folk varieties can withstand cyclones better than modern ones, while others can cope better in conditions of drought or low rainfall. Farmers had other reasons to prefer desi varieties—their taller paddy stalks yielded valuable byproducts: fodder for cattle, mulch for the soil, and hay for thatching the roofs of their homes, unlike the short-statured modern varieties.

Farmers' desire to conserve them includes reasons like aroma, their relationship with the environment, adaptability, nutritional value, cooking quality, revival of traditional agricultural systems and promoting food culture.

We live in a reality where climate change is here to stay – and it means long spells of drought, increased frequency of storms and floods, late rains and soil salination, all of which will severely



Harvested Paddy

affect food production. So, it is these local, hardy rice varieties that will finally come to our rescue. Until now, the hurdles in the production of traditional varieties were lower yield and lack of an exclusive market.

Village which grows 20 folk rice varieties

Murukate village in Kolhapur, Maharashtra grows 10 traditional varieties of rice with organic fertilisers, and the mountain streams that irrigate the fields lending each of them a unique fragrance. Most paddy varieties grown here fall under the category of *suvashit* (Marathi for aromatic) rice, which takes 120-135 days to mature, unlike the high-yielding and hybrid ones that are harvested much earlier.

The varieties range from the slender-grained Ghansal, round Jondhla Jirga, Black rice and Ambemohar – the one with the fragrance of mango blossom – to the sticky Indrayani and Hawla, which is preferred for infants and also to make puffed rice.

Community effort in conservation is rare and that's what sets apart the paddy growers of 20 villages of Sangli's Shirala taluka in Maharashtra who took to growing folk varieties during the second wave of COVID-19 when paddy seeds and chemical fertilisers were scarce. They sourced 23 indigenous seeds and formed six self-help groups with 15 members each growing five to six varieties in plots ranging from 20 gunthas to three acres each.

Folk varieties possess medicinal and nutritional properties. For instance, antioxidant-rich Gobindobhog helps boost metabolism, keeps digestion smooth and supports good health. Rich in anthocyanin, Kala Namak rice contains 11% protein, which is almost double that of common rice varieties and has a low Glycemic Index (49% to 52%). Considered the first food for babies, Ghansal nourishes body tissues and is easy to digest. Shastika Shali has proved its efficacy against muscular and neurological disorders.

Folk varieties possess several stress-tolerant properties, which act as positive factors in the retention of rice landraces in the face of increasing propaganda for cultivating HYVs. Traditional rice varieties therefore represent important genetic reservoirs with valuable traits.

Hiraman is a freelance writer and a weekend farmer.

Education

The 'rare' Hindi professor in Goa

Far removed from the popular perception about Goa is a dedicated teacher. Dr. Magdalene D'souza is the only Catholic professor who has devoted her life to the teaching and promotion of Hindi language and literature. Her love for Hindi – not Goa's official or widely spoken language -- took roots during her stay in Kanpur. Manu Shrivastava sketches a gem who has won recognition for her unusual pursuit.



Dr. Magdalene D'souza at St. Xavier's College in Mapusa, Goa

ndia's smallest state, Goa, is famous for its sun-kissed beaches, bustling nightlife, and tourism. It has, however, many hidden gems including a rich history, cultural heritage, abundant wildlife ... and people who are mentoring and guiding the youth to build a purposeful life.

One such unique individual is Dr. Magdalene D'souza who has dedicated her life to the teaching and promotion of Hindi language and literature and presently heads the Department of Hindi at St. Xavier's College in Mapusa, Goa.

Magdalene holds the rare honour of being the only Catholic professor in Goa who teaches Hindi. And, she teaches at the institute that is also her *alma mater*. Her predicament is an interesting one because she has been furthering and teaching a language that isn't the first language in Goa.



Dr. Magdalene receiving the award given by Bharat Nyaas

The official language of the Republic of India, Hindi is written in Devanagari script and is the lingua franca (a shared language of communication used by people who are speakers of different languages) in most parts of India. The other official language of the Government of India is English.

Hindi is the official language in many states. These include Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana.

In Magdalene's Goa, while Hindi is not the official language, it is taught in schools. The language is mandatory till a few initial standards and later it becomes optional where students can opt it as a subject and continue learning it. In

2014, India's smallest state came at par with the national education boards and implemented the provision of Hindi being offered as an optional subject in standards ninth and tenth. Other optional languages being Sanskrit, Portuguese, French, among others; Konkani/Marathi being the compulsory language.

Magdalene's tryst with Hindi language began early in her life as she was born in Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh - the Hindi heartland of India. Kanpur is also the city where she grew up and spent most of her educational and transformative years.

And, it was in Kanpur that the seeds of love for Hindi language were sown in Magdalene's heart. During the initial years in school, she dabbled with creative writing that blossomed over time and was exposed to Hindi literature as well.

When she finished tenth standard, Magdalene's family left Kanpur to return to their native land, Goa. Her father, who was working as an electrical engineer with the electricity supply company in Kanpur had retired.

In Goa, Magdalene enrolled in St. Xavier's College in Mapusa. Here, she found just the right environment and continued her pursuit and love for Hindi literature. She completed a B.A. (Hindi) degree and despite being the only Catholic student in her class, she excelled and outperformed everyone. There was an innate brilliance and aptitude in Magdalene when it came to Hindi.

Goa's St. Xavier's College in Mapusa is, incidentally, named after the Jesuit missionary St. Francis Xavier who was an exemplary student himself and an illustrious teacher. The college was established in 1963. and is one of Goa's largest and oldest colleges.

Commendably, the Department of Hindi has existed since the inception of the college. Several scholars and stalwarts have served it including Dr. Arvind Pandey, Dr. Adityaprasad Tripathi, Dr. Brahmadev Mishra, etc. Their students, including Magdalene herself, have gone ahead promoting the language and strengthening the department, till date.

Magdalene attributes her continuing love and admiration for Hindi to her teachers and professors who constantly pushed her to achieve more. Another person who has played an important role in Magdalene's life is her father who has always encouraged and motivated her to follow her passion.

After finishing her bachelor's degree, Magdalene pursued M.A. and M.Phil in Hindi Literature from Goa University. She didn't stop there and continued learning when she enrolled for a Ph.D in Hindi at Goa University which she completed recently.

Immediately after finishing her M.A. degree in 1991, Magdalene started her teaching career with a job at the Government college in Khandola, Goa. She also taught at a school before joining a college in Pilar. At this time, she had started teaching at her alma mater St. Xavier's College in Mapusa in a part-time capacity. In 1995, Magdalene started teaching Hindi, as a full-time faculty, at St. Xavier's College, Mapusa.

Magdalene says she's the only Catholic professor in Goa who teaches Hindi. "There are many Catholic teachers who are teaching Hindi in schools but none in a college."

The Department of Hindi at St. Xavier's College, Mapusa under the aegis of Dr. Magdalene D'souza has been active in organising events and literary activities to promote Hindi and invoke an interest in the language and its literature. Seminars, workshops, talks, contests, etc., are held on important days such as Hindi Diwas and Premchand Jayanti.

Hindi Diwas is celebrated every year on 14 September to commemorate the day, when, in 1949, a compromise was reached during the drafting of the Constitution of India on the languages that were to have official status in India. Premchand Jayanti is celebrated to honour and remember Munshi Premchand, one of the greatest Hindi novelists and short story writers of India.

Magdalene says they have been celebrating Hindi Diwas in the college for over two decades. The students participate in competitions like original poetry recitation, duet singing competition, bhajan competition, etc.

Magdalene, however, rues the recent slump in number of

students in the third-year course. "Although there is a genuine affection and enthusiasm for the language, students choose to pursue different subjects and discontinue Hindi by their third year of college."

Remarkably, all Hindi students have found employment, with many of them currently serving as educators in numerous colleges throughout Goa," she maintains.

At the inauguration ceremony of a two-day International Seminar organised under the joint auspices of Hindi Department and Hindi Research Centre of Arts, Science and Commerce Government College, Sankhali, Goa and Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Goa, in March 2023, Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant addressed deliberations with respect to the 'Economic Scenario of the World as Expressed in Hindi Literature.'

In his speech, Dr. Pramod Sawant congratulated the students studying Hindi language and literature, as well as their professors, for inspiring the younger generation to engage in in-depth studies of the language. He expressed confidence that the multi-lingual state of Goa will contribute more to the Hindi language and literature in the near future.

For Dr. Magdalene D'souza's contribution in the teaching and promotion of Hindi language in Goa, she was awarded by Bharat Nyaas, Kanpur on 18 December 2022.

Magdalene D'souza is not only a rare breed of teacher but also a rare gem of Goa who has enriched the lives of many people with her knowledge and love for Hindi language and literature. She is truly deserving of all the accolades she has received so far.



Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, # M e T o o A t H o m e a n d #MeTooBeyondBorders initiatives.



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DR V S VENKATAVARADHAN (1938-2023)

Scientist-Genius with a poetic flow

Scientists are the pioneers of human progress, pushing the boundaries of knowledge and shaping people's understanding of the world. Among those who made profound contributions, reflecting their curiosity, passion, and dedication to science was the legendary Dr V S Venkatavaradhan, who had an uncanny knack of making complex scientific subjects easy for even commoners to grasp, mesmerising them with his consummate communication skills.

With an ability to blend science and aesthetics, he strode like a colossus in the enchanting space of planetary science. A training, a science scientist by communicator by passion, and poet at heart, he was acknowledged as the Carl Sagan of India. He was an ardent votary of science who popularised visual astronomy by scripting and producing nineteen major sky-shows at the Nehru Planetarium, Mumbai, where he served as the director from 1979 to 1997. He wrote newspaper articles and appeared programmes of Doordarshan and All India Radio popularising science subjects.

Dr. Venkatavaradhan born in Salem, Tamil Nadu, completed M.Sc. in Physics from the Madras University and joined the Atomic Energy Training School in 1961. He later joined the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) in Bombay in 1962 and obtained his Ph.D. in 1970 under Prof. Devendra Lal from the University of Bombay.

He had a sterling scientific career, conducting research in geophysics, cosmic rays, meteorites, lunar physics, and planetary physics. Among his many prominent works, he collaborated with NASA as a co-investigator in studying lunar rock samples from the Apollo missions and solar and galactic cosmic ray experiments in the Skylab missions.

During his stint at the Nehru Planetarium, Dr. Venkatavaradhan instilled a culture of recognising young talent by establishing the 'Student's Science Programme' through which many a budding scientist got an opportunity to contribute to the Planetarium's scientific and creative outputs. He was instrumental in instilling scientific temper in young minds which speaks volumes of his temperament and vision. Little wonder, his students left a global imprint in their chosen disciplines. His ability to explain complex concepts of physics

and astronomy in simple and easy terms to the lay public was legendary.

Dr VSV, as he was often popularly called, continued his academic pursuits as Professor Emeritus at the Sona College of Engineering, Salem. He was also the acting director of the Discovery of India, Nehru Centre from April 1983 to November 1984. As an orator and author, he delivered numerous lectures, radio talks, television programs,

and wrote articles and books on various aspects of science. He had this unique ability to communicate science in the medium of poetry. Over the years he penned poems encompassing a range of themes. Long before workplace wellbeing became fashionable in the post Covid-19 era, he propounded the idea of the

three-day week in the late 80's- an idea that was well ahead of its time.

Dr. Venkatavaradhan was a member of several national and scientific international organisations. Among the many recognitions he received, he was conferred the Indira Gandhi award for popularising science from the Indian National Science Academy (INSA). Dr Venkatavaradhan was a man among millions. He has to his name more than fifty research papers in Science Geophysics, Space Astrophysics and more than a thousand popular articles on various aspects of science in leading newspapers and magazines. He loved children. Inner happiness flowed from this people's scientist in the presence of kids

A friend, philosopher, guide and mentor to many, he passed away on 26 October 2023 at 85. He is survived by his wife Shakunthala, daughter Aruna and son-in-law Sudhir and son Sunder and daughter-in-law Sonali and grandsons Badri and Varun. He will be remembered as a visionary scientist, a charismatic educator and more importantly, the noblest of humans, who inspired generations of students and enthusiasts with his love for science and poetry.



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

NAMDEO DHONDO MAHANOR (1942-2023)

The farmer poet

Namdeo Dhondo Mahanor, fondly called Na Dho was an Indian nature poet, lyricist, writer, vocal farmer activist and member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council.

He was born in Palaskheda village in Aurangabad, five kilometers from the famous Ajanta Caves. He lived

here all his life, enjoying poetry and progressive farming. His interest in poetry was born and continued in that isolation. Our rural life has a very lively cultural life, long traditions with various forms of poetry and folklore, as well as drama, music and dance. He absorbed poetry as a child, sitting on his mother's lap while she spontaneously composed and sang songs while grinding grain on a stone wheel. Besides, there was so much folk song and music around him.

Always dressed in a plain white shirt and pajamas, he had little formal education. He brought to life the real world of the farmer, although earlier poets wrote about nature more romantically in the form of flowers, birds and trees. In his opinion, the closest relationship with nature was the farmer.

He taught us to see culture in agriculture. His poetry came from his life experiences. He was born a farmer and could write with some depth about good rainy days and dry times. He beautifully captured the essence of life, nature, love and the human experience, touching the souls of many.

His literary journey was not only personal but also part of our collective cultural heritage. His experimentation with art and agriculture can be seen in his films. His poetry reached people through school books, radio songs and council speeches. He raised critical issues about farmers during his tenure as MLC. He contributed a lot to Marathi literature and many common words are his unique gift to the language. His words became the thread that bound the rich tapestry of Marathi literature, preserving the essence of language and tradition. He saw the whole connection between the farmer, the soil, the season, the environment, the climate, the farm and the aesthetics of agriculture.

He complained that our ruling class, in its complete and willful detachment from nature, which it exploited, emphasised the aesthetics of art galleries, museums and the like, ignoring the beauty of nature. But the destructive pressure group of

agriculture and chemical fertilizers now seriously threatened nature and rural life and he felt an urgent need to get rid of these elements.

During his literary journey, Mahanor wrote several notable works that reflect his abundant love for nature. His collections of simple but powerful poetry books include

Vahi, Balkavinchya Nivdak Kavita, Gandhari, Atvanichi Jokha, Gavatlya Goshti, Ajintha, Nirmal's Ganga Vahu, Ranatlya Kavita, Panzad, Jagala Prem Arpave, and Kavitetuna Ganyakade.

He has also composed several songs for some acclaimed Marathi films like Mukta, Sarja, Jait Re Jait and Ek Hota Vidushak. The custard apples grown on his farm, which were not affected by the drought, he called Lataphal.

Mahanor was awarded the Padma Shri (1991) and the Sahitya Akademi Award (2000). He was appointed to the State Legislative Council in 1978, where he made a good impression with his agricultural expertise

Mahanor's work inspires us to take a fresh look at poetry related to farm life and the need for more creative writers and experts to write about India's dire agrarian crisis. A poet who was connected to the land but whose poetry touched the skies. With his sensitivity, he revealed many aspects of Mother Nature.

Mahanor died in Pune, Maharashtra at the age of 81 after prolonged kidney ailments and was cremated in his native village. We have lost a wilderness poet who deeply loved the soil of this state. It is emotional that he died during the rainy season. He leaves behind two sons and three daughters.



A.Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer who when not enjoying his favourite cup of coffee, loves to keep people happy.

Great Indians

SHARAD YADAV (1947-2023)

Socialist leader who stood tall

n an era when politics came to be dubiously described as union of strange bedfellows, Sharad Yadav had a roller coaster career but one who left his mark even in the peak era of coalitions. The seven-time MP who fought Lok Sabha elections from the three Hindi hinterlands of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, was instrumental in forging several alliances and saw friends turning into foes and then again returning back to forge partnerships.

Agriculturist, educationist and ar engineer, Yadav, was born in July 1947, in Hoshangabad in Madhya Pradesh in a peasant family. Evincing keen interest in politics from his student days, he was influenced by socialists Jayprakash Narayan and Dr Ram Manohar Lohia.

The one standout in his electoral career was his headlong plunge into the anti-Emergency movement and his election from Jabalpur as the candidate of the combined Opposition, defeating the Congress candidate.

The ferment in the national politics in the Hindi-speaking states saw the opposition in a constant state of flux. Yadav changed parties -- from the Lok Dal during the Emergency period to forming the Janata Dal with the late Prime Minister V.P. Singh in 1988, and later forming the Janata Dal (United) in the late 1990s (when he parted ways with another former PM H.D. Deve Gowda) and the 2003 avatar with the late George Fernandes and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. However, he remained committed to his socialism credentials.

Among the durable faces in the galaxy of opposition leaders, Yadav had a five-decade career and was re-elected to several terms in the Lok Sabha — in 1977, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1999, and 2009, and Rajya Sabha — 1986 and 2004. He first entered the Union Council of Ministers when V.P. Singh became Prime Minister of a short-lived National Front government (1989–90), as Minister for Textiles and Food Processing.

After the split in the Janata Dal, he formed the JD(U) in the late 1990s and became a part of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and was also the convenor of the alliance for some time. When Atal Behari Vajpayee became Prime Minister, Yadav served variously as Minister for Civil Aviation, Labour, Consumer Affairs, and Food and Public

Distribution between the period 1999-2004.

He lost his Lok Sabha seat in the 2014 elections and two years later, he was replaced as president of the JD(U). The move set off a power struggle within the party, and in 2018, Yadav and his supporters formed Loktantrik Janata Dal. All this was resolved a couple of years later when he merged his new party with the Lalu Prasad Yadav-led Rashtriya Janata

One bleak spot was his "sexist" stance on reservation of Lok Sabha seats for women. Considered a protege of veteran leader and deputy prime minister Devi Lal, he literally compared a woman's honour with votes, raising political hackles. As controversy erupted, Yadav refused to back-off from his comment that came close on the heels of Bengaluru mass molestations during the new year celebrations. "I didn't say anything wrong. We should love votes the same way we love daughters." His comment was considered sickening and showed the place women occupy in the worldview of most Indian politicians. He also supported the Mandal Commission in the thick of its controversy.

He will also be remembered for the legal battles he fought towards the end of his political career - one challenging his disqualification from the Rajya Sabha, and the other challenging the government's order to vacate his official accommodation in New Delhi, allotted to him while he was a member.

For someone who held many organisational posts in the party apparatus, his demise was announced by his daughter through a social media post. He had been ailing for quite some time. He leaves behind wife Dr Rekha and daughter Subhashini. His death on 12 January 2023, was condoled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and host of other leaders.



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

