

JGI **JAIN**  
DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY

# Aventure

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**CITIZEN-FRIENDLY  
ADMINISTRATION**  
A WEBINAR

**OTT-SEIZING  
THE SCREEN  
AND HOW!**

**WHAT AN 'ID'EA  
MUSTHAFA!**



**REMEMBERING**

**GANDHI AND SHASTRI**



» Be the «  
**CHANGE**  
— you wish  
to see in the  
**WORLD**

# Editorial

Dear Readers,

Remembering and revisiting our national heroes is a way of reevaluating ourselves as individuals, as a society and as a nation. It is an opportunity to understand the paths we are treading and realign our visions in consonance with universal values. In this issue of Aventure, we pay homage to two great leaders of India: Babu, and Lal Bahadur Shastri, who devoted their lives to the greater good of the nation and humanity, a quality that is scarce to come by. We give a glimpse of Gandhi's multiple visits to the cities London and Bengaluru, each of which remains a marker of historical significance. Alongside, is a brief sketch of Shastri's rise from a passionate student patriot to, Nehru's trusted aide and finally, Prime Minister of the country.

Self-sufficiency and self-reliance have always been central to their vision of the country. India today is fertile ground with a solid ecosystem to nurture businesses and start-ups with innovative ideas and business models. Entrepreneurship has a definitive impact on national development. We feature the inspiring entrepreneurial journey of P C Musthafa, CEO, iD Fresh Foods. His is a telling tale of how passion and perseverance can propel one out of any debilitating circumstances, be it poverty or lack of opportunity. India has long made its mark as an IT leader and is galloping at a speed like never before. The power of AI and ML are being harnessed to achieve extraordinary results. Soumik Ukil gives an overview of how AI and ML technologies are paving the way for completely autonomous cars.

Technology seems to have spared no industry, especially in these times of social isolation. The visual entertainment industry has witnessed a dramatic change, especially in the way cinema is being consumed. The OTT Media Service has rendered the multi-billion dollar theatre establishments out of business and the single-star cinematic formula obsolete. The implications of government policy and consumer behavior will determine whether and how they will revive in the long haul. The Film Review section takes stock of how the OTT service is striving for long-standing audience engagement.

Experimentation is particularly rife among performing artists whose creative pursuits continue to flourish despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic – in context of which, Nalme Nachiyar reviews an adaptation of a Greek classic performed online. Deepak Malapur's review of actor, author Manav Kaul's short stories urges us to want to engage with his journey of displacement and loss.

Finally, miss not the angst of a woman in Rearview as she is time and again urged to adhere to stereotypes that often trample her liberty, and judged thereof, as she tries to shape her life on her own terms and at a pace that best suits her.

We are at the tail end of 2020, a year that unfolded in a manner bizarre in nearly a century, and it is heartening that humanity is finally, albeit slowly on its path to recovery. We see with some relief the government making budget allocations for the Covid vaccine and planning ahead for the administration of the same to the citizens of the country.

Signing off, with Team Aventure wishing that this Deepavali ushers happier tidings,

Thank you.  
Editor

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Your Million Dollar Question Just Got Answered



# A Nation is as Strong as its Education System



“  
NEP’s endeavor to include and emphasise regional languages, gender sensitivity, inclusion, equitable human growth, community participation, skill courses, and universal education, with equality and research-oriented learning outcomes as a vital component, represents a systemic shift in the education sector.  
”

As the country stands on the verge of a sensational future, reforms in the educational policy are as critical as in the administrative policy. Education is an essential entity in creating a diverse and prosperous community, providing opportunities and justice to all.

India is all set to embrace crucial educational reforms in the coming years. We believe that progress comes from continuous emphasis on comprehensive collective vision and implementation. With the proposed New Educational Policy 2020, the edification of the learning community is poised to focus on the fundamentals of learning in the present, while preparing students for a future they envision. This policy, if implemented at all levels, with a systematic streamlining of content, pedagogy and curriculum, can attempt to revamp the country’s development as it seeks to make education open, unbiased and comprehensive.

New age education is expected to embrace a multidisciplinary approach incorporating innovative concepts which would help in bridging the gap between academia and industry. This would further increase the momentum towards inter-disciplinary studies, research based and interactive learning with technology integration.

NEP’s endeavor to include and emphasise regional languages, gender sensitivity, inclusion, equitable human growth, community participation, skill courses, and universal education, with equality and research-oriented learning outcomes as a vital component, represents a systemic shift in the education sector.

The structure of a nation is largely dependent on its designers; therefore it is the educational institution’s responsibility to provide quality education as it is a hallmark of human development, the significance of which cannot be undercut. Keeping this in view, we have always provided holistic education and nurtured a tribe of young minds who reverberate with

self-confidence and aspirations, and are challenge-ready.

JAIN helps students not only learn about themselves, but also about their continually changing world, as they practice social skills with our encouragement and under our guidance. With the world suddenly turning towards uncertainty, education must aim at becoming substantial and educators must now begin to think of creating global citizens, as the learning curve is no longer confined to domestic frontiers.

**Dr. Chenraj Roychand**  
Chancellor

# NEP 2020 Heralds a Road Less Travelled



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The academic, administrative and financial autonomy coupled with high quality of instruction under this scheme should herald far-reaching benefits for the learners and the society in general. At JAIN we have been imparting value and skill-based quality education, leading to the holistic development of students. NEP 2020 echoes the need for a strong foundation in this regard and showcases the intent.  
”

For ages, India has efficiently etched its academic credentials to become a destination of choice for scholars from different nations that dot the globe. We have yet another opportunity to make it happen if the recently released National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 by the Government of India is implemented. As we understand it, the Policy has been proposed after intense deliberations and consultations with various stakeholders.

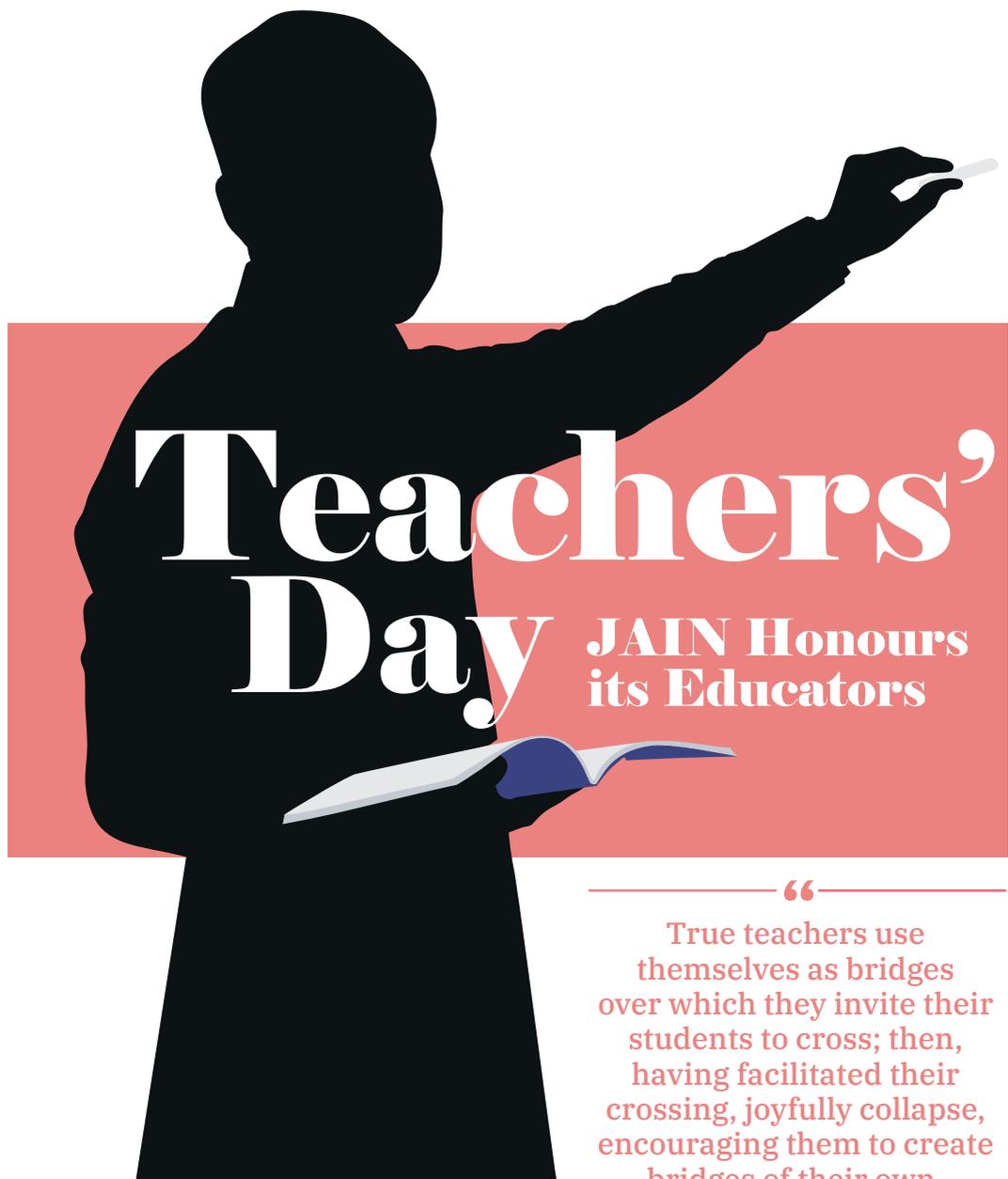
NEP 2020 is an ambitious policy document that envisions to not only overhaul but also re-energising the higher education system to overcome myriad challenges and deliver top-quality higher education, with equity and inclusion to all young citizens, as the foundation. The reforms envisaged are commendable as they will go a long way in shaping the learning and teaching ecosystem, with greater emphasis rightly placed on higher education.

The formation of a National Research Foundation (NRF) aims to promote and fund research activities in the country. A slew of such engagements are set to catapult education in India to the highest echelons on the global map. The NRF is expected to enhance the quality of research studies in India across different streams. The establishment of NRF will also broaden the existing research horizons and will act as a catalyst to bring non-science disciplines of research within its ambit with the proposed four major disciplines – Sciences, Technology, Social Sciences, and, Arts and Humanities. The proposed four-year undergraduate degree with features such as a credit-transfer system, multiple entry and exit options at different stages is a radical change that would benefit the student community. While a timeframe will have to be worked out for the implementation of this new policy, consensus is building around it and this could prove to be decisive in transforming education in India.

At JAIN, we are excited to be part of the higher education odyssey and remain steadfast in

our commitment to putting the country on the global education map. For us, NEP 2020 is a “Navasutra” if you consider all the nine dimensions put forth in the policy document. The academic, administrative and financial autonomy coupled with high quality of instruction under this scheme should herald far-reaching benefits for the learners and the society in general. At JAIN we have been imparting value and skill-based quality education, leading to the holistic development of students. NEP 2020 echoes the need for a strong foundation in this regard and showcases the intent. With a concrete roadmap for teaching and learning, the government can incorporate new and novel ideas that will make education flexible, relevant and equally accessible to all the sections of the society.

**Dr. N Sundararajan**  
Vice Chancellor



# Teachers' Day

## JAIN Honours its Educators

“**T** rue teachers use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own.”

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, gatherings of more than a handful of people are restricted across the country. Thus events and celebrations are now turning virtual. Jain (Deemed-to-be University) too has adapted to the new normal, adhering to the COVID-19 protocols and is staying on top by shifting its events and programmes online.

“  
True teachers use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own.  
”

Amid the pandemic, the country celebrated Teachers' Day on September 5. Adapting to the new normal, JAIN conducted a virtual celebration to honour and felicitate the teachers. The teaching staff and the directors of various departments along with students converged on a virtual platform.

As a curtain-raiser to the event, on 4 September 2020, JAIN organised a National Level Certificate Webinar to create awareness about the National Education Policy 2020. Dr. Ganesh Hegde, Adviser, NAAC, Bengaluru led the talk on the platform. He detailed the

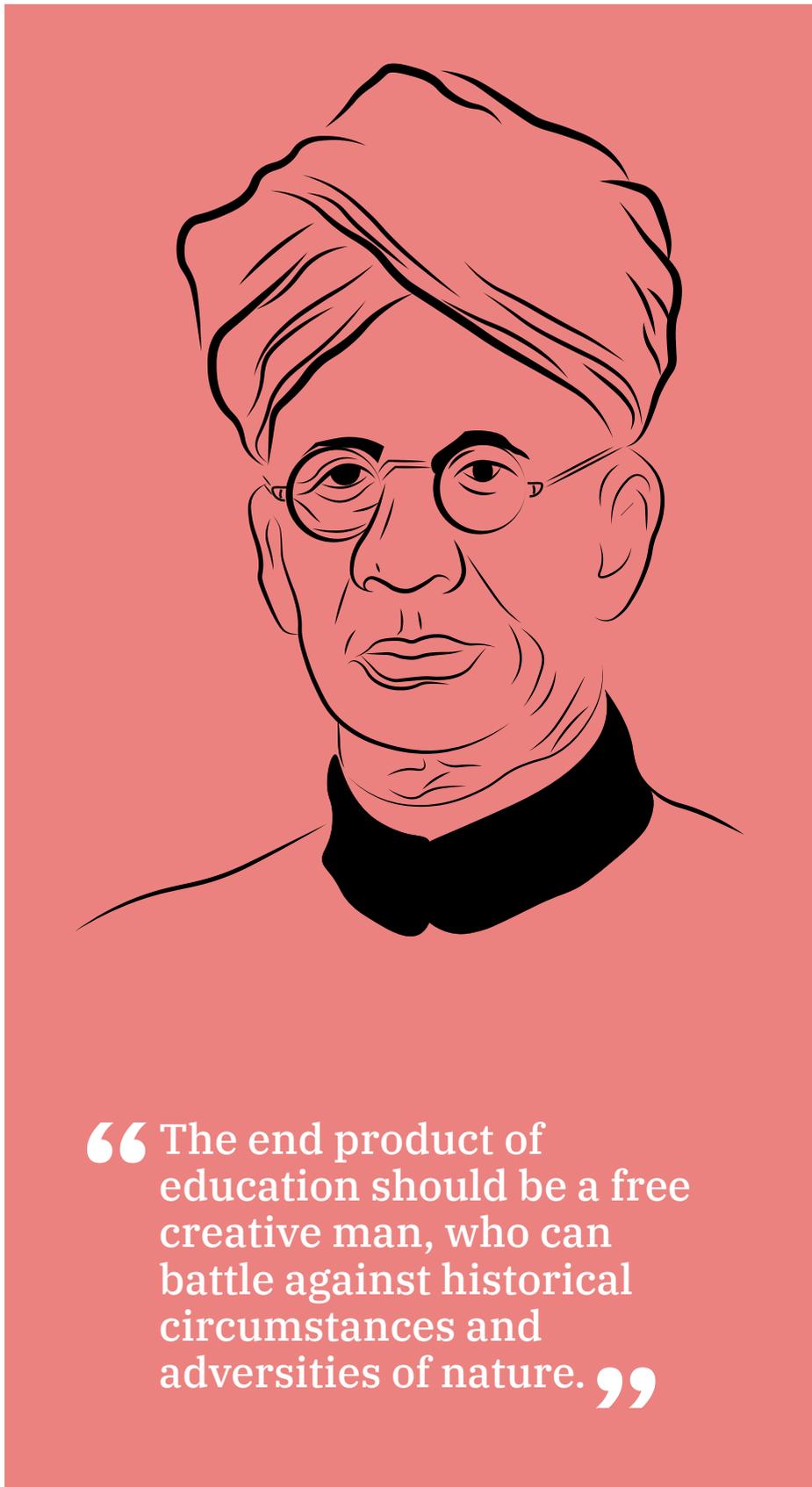
National Education Policy and explained how teachers can contribute to its implementation and thus shape the future of students.

The main event, held on 5 September 2020, honoured the longest-serving faculty members of various departments. Videos of cultural performances by students of JAIN were shared on the virtual platform. This was followed by an interactive exchange between teachers and students, to provide real-time experience. Personalised messages for teachers were also presented by students, expressing their memorable moments on the campus.

Ukti, the cultural forum of JAIN played video messages from JAIN alumni, who are now working at different locations and with reputed organisations. Virtual celebrations brought together students and teachers from various parts of the country and registered an eventful celebration.

Thereafter, a few faculty members were felicitated. Fellow colleagues shared their experiences of working with the felicitated members. Their contribution towards the enrichment of the student community and development of the institution were lauded. Students were also given an opportunity to talk about their admired educators.

Dr. Veena Nagaraj, a retired professor from the department of chemistry shared her experience while serving at JAIN. “When students recognise teachers’ contribution to their life and owe a part of their success to them, the purpose of being a teacher is achieved. This gives a great sense of pride and instills a sense of gratification in a teacher’s life,” she expressed. She also praised students who rendered social service during the pandemic. The felicitation was followed by a series of activities planned by the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat club. While the event saw various activities such as poetry recitation, solo classical song renditions and painting, the icing on the cake was the video streamed by students expressing gratitude to their teachers. The teachers, dressed in ethnic attire to showcase the cultures and traditions of India was another highlight of the event. Besides, a plethora of activities was also in



“The end product of education should be a free creative man, who can battle against historical circumstances and adversities of nature.”

“When students recognise teachers’ contribution to their life and owe a part of their success to them, the purpose of being a teacher is achieved. This gives a great sense of pride and instills a sense of gratification in a teacher’s life.”

store for the faculty members to make it a fun-filled event.

“Our students never fail to impress us with their performances and this time too, it was no different. Despite all the challenges, our students have managed to put up a great show and made this event unforgettable for us,” said a faculty member during the felicitation.

It also presented the faculty members with opportunities to recall some of their “gurus” who inspired them in life and motivated them to embrace the ‘noble profession’ of educating and guiding the youth.

The event also paid tribute to Prof. Anant - School of Interior Design, who passed away recently. A special video showcasing Prof. Anant’s contributions, created and presented by the students, moved everybody to tears. In a separate event, Prof. Vasudeva Murthy from Dept. of ECE and Prof. Ravishankar S from Dept. of ME, who superannuated recently from service were felicitated. Both the guests shared their experiences as teachers and their views on the roles and responsibilities of teachers in nation building. The teachers, who were honoured during the celebration, will remain a source of inspiration and motivation to all faculty members of JAIN.

The occasion during this tough time was an opportunity to recognise the contributions of professionals in the field of education to impart knowledge to students. The well-coordinated event concluded with the directors and teachers thanking all those who worked to make the programme a grand success. ▲

# Workshop for Research Students



Student Research Development Cell (SRDC) of Jain (Deemed-to-be University) organised a national level one-day online workshop on 18 September 2020 on the topic 'Insights on Research and Publishing a Research Article'.

Dr. Dinesh Nilkant - Director - School of Commerce, JAIN, in his inaugural speech stressed the importance of the research-based learning approach in education and urged students to address environmental problems through research.

The first session of the workshop led by Dr. Rajdeep Manwani - Coordinator, School of Commerce, JAIN, touched upon the different aspects of research in the current pandemic scenario. He outlined the three stages involved in research: problem identification, data gathering and analysis, and data interpretation and finding solutions. Dr. Aftab Alam - Professor, Centre for Management Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi took students through the second session titled 'Review of Literature and Developing a Questionnaire'. The session talked about the purpose of reviewing literature and enumerated the various steps involved. He also gave an insight into citation styles and reference in research articles. The second part of Aftab Alam's session focused on developing a questionnaire.

“  
The session emphasised the importance of descriptive statistics, measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion, measures of skewness and correlation.  
”

The third and fourth sessions of the workshop dealt with 'MS Excel for Data Analysis', and 'Developing a Research Paper' respectively. Dr. A. Sharmila - Associate Professor, School of Commerce, JAIN, who conducted the third session, gave an overview of the analysis of data concerning editing, coding and classification.

The session emphasised the importance of descriptive statistics, measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion, measures of skewness and correlation. In the concluding session, Dr. Rashmi Sharma - HOD - Accounting & Costing, Bhusawal Arts, Science and PO Nahata Commerce College, spoke about internal and external factors in conducting research. In her session, Dr. Rashmi focused on the importance of proving a hypothesis in research papers.

She also gave valuable inputs on research methodology, structure of a research paper, data analysis requirements to suit the research paper, and on how to approach different journals for publishing research papers.

Over 600 students attended the workshop on various online platforms like Zoom and YouTube Live. 



# JAIN Scholar Bags Award at APYE



**M**ichael V L Chhandama, a Ph.D scholar working under the guidance of Dr. Kumudini Belur Satyan, Department of Biotechnology, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) was selected for the first online Asia Pacific Youth Exchange (APYE) Global Social Innovation Idea Competition co-organised by United Nations Development Programme and Asian Development Bank. Michael was shortlisted based on his ‘Statement of Proposal’ and merit at APYE, held in Thailand, in January earlier this year with full funding. The finals of the event was held online on 28 August 2020, where Michael and his 4-member team titled ‘CHAWIKAN’, which translates as “to uplift the Mizoram society”, won the runner-up award under the ‘Ideation’ category. More than 30 teams from nations across Asia pitched their project proposals before a panel of experts from diverse fields. Out of 30, eight teams were shortlisted for the final round and Michael V L Chhandama and team after a tight competition bagged the runner-up award.

The prize includes a certificate, resources to pursue the project, and a 50 per cent scholarship to attend the next APYE event.

Founded in 2016, APYE is a regional youth programme, which responds to the global need for actively engaging youth in

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**Michael was shortlisted based on his ‘Statement of Proposal’ and merit at APYE, held in Thailand, in January earlier this year with full funding.**  
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localised Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiatives. Currently, APYE has its

presence in South Korea, Thailand, and The Philippines with more than 1500 alumni from over 25 nations. It also aims to help young people around the world to lead and implement projects addressing community impact of COVID-19. The main objectives of the programme are to enhance the youth’s understanding of SDGs and their role in achieving them and to increase understanding and cooperation among young people across Asia and the Pacific through cross-cultural dialogues, networking and partnerships. **A**



# Pandemic Impact on Education Access, Quality and Equity

**T**he Department of Economics, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) organised a webinar on 'Pandemic Impact on Education: Access, Quality and Equity', in which students and guest speakers expressed their views.

Held on the 25 July 2020, the webinar commenced with an invocation song, followed by a welcome speech. Ms. Rohini Yekbote

and Mr. Vengala Bhaanu Teja, students of 3rd year B.A. (Hons) Economics, emphasised that India needs to measure up in the context of the higher Gross Enrollment Ratios around the world. Mr. Vengala Bhaanu, during his presentation, suggested adherence to Sustainable Development Goal - 4 - quality of education. 'Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality of education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all is a sustainable

developmental goal', claimed the students. Ms. Rohini presented the structural changes needed to transform the traditional education system into a digital online platform, and the pros and cons of the traditional and online education systems. According to her, reducing the syllabus would not serve the purpose of education.

After the students' turn, Dr. Xavier V K- Head of Economics Department, JAIN elaborated on the impact of the pandemic on higher education access. He presented the demographic profile of Indian HEIs - the total number of government and private universities and aided and unaided colleges. Dr. Xavier said that the huge imbalance in the ratio between number of educational institutions and population is a matter of great concern.



He further emphasised that the MOE, NSS, Census data and SES data shows that the GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) has risen from 0.7 per cent in 1950-51 to 26.3 per cent in 2018-19 and it is projected to be approximately 30 per cent in 2020 - 21. He addressed the problems of duality in higher education in developing countries, where there is a regional imbalance and a low GER. Dr. Xavier concluded his presentation by suggesting strategies to increase GER – forging partnership with foreign universities, establishing high-quality private institutions and improving access to education through distance and online mode of learning.

Dr. Mathew P A - Chairman, Grace International Academy, talked about 'Turmoil and Transition in Higher Education during the Pandemic'. His presentation highlighted the difference between equity and equality and the trends in the Indian Education System (IES) and society in the 21st century. "Result is educational chaos, but chaos which seems to function," said Dr. Mathew. He also raised concerns about whether the IES can ensure fairness and inclusion. The speaker also enlightened the audience on three aspects of equity, viz., monetary resources, academic standard, academic content and support. "If institutions had invested in technology, then faculty members and students would have comfortably leveraged technology and worked with it," explained Dr. Mathew, while talking about the impact of COVID-19 on higher education. He talked about how digital divide during the pandemic created further division in

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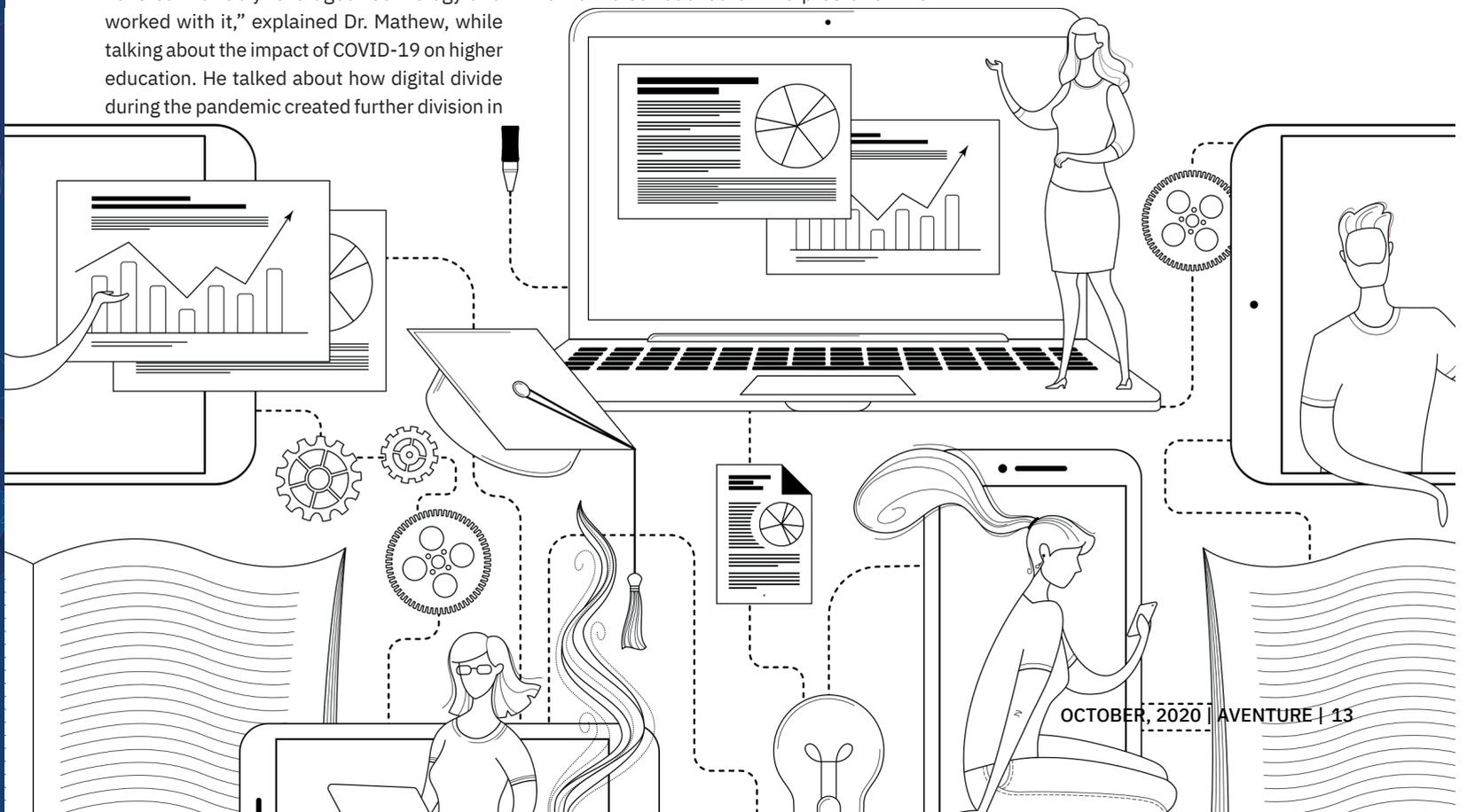
the gender gap and Dalit enrolment in higher education.

Dr. Rekha Jaganath - Former Member, State Planning Board, Karnataka elucidated the impact of the pandemic on the quality of education by listing challenges such as complete conquest of the education system by IT sector, and issues like security, authentication and verification of AI and machine learning. She spoke about the importance of delivering excellent quality education with macro and micro aims -- affordable and effective mass education and personality development, problem-solving approach and employability, respectively. Her talk also touched on the pros of online

learning such as access to international quality teaching via online broadcasting, flexibility of time and place, automation and freedom in curriculum design curriculum, lesson delivery and administration.

The last speaker on the panel, Dr. Augustine George - Principal, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous) talked about the quality of education during the pandemic and how the pandemic affects the future of education. He addressed mental health issues that may arise among students due to extensive use of electronics for online education. He said that quality is the prime focus of higher education, and that a sustainable and prosperous nation cannot be built without human resource development, which depends on the vitality of higher education and skill-based activities. He further added that in a technology-driven society, knowledge rewrites the fate of education and that the Indian education system is undergoing a great transformation based on three factors: economic, demographic and political change. He concluded saying that flipped classrooms are the new normal for higher education in India.

The webinar was open for the students and faculty members of JAIN. 



# Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan Opportunities and Challenges



**D**epartment of Economics, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) organised a national webinar on 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan: Opportunities and Challenges'. Dr. Madan Mohan Goel -The former Vice-Chancellor & Professor at Kurukshetra University, was the virtual Keynote Speaker at the programme held on 01 August 2020. His talk focused on the three models to implement Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan: The SMART Model, The SIMPLE Model and Needonomics.

"We should avoid stressing on 'Vocal for Local' and be diplomatic and use 'Glocalisation', meaning 'Think Globally and Act Locally', for promoting Vasudhiava Kutumbakam (the word is one family)," Dr. Goel said. Being a Needonomist, he suggested that for the implementation of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, we have to be action-oriented by remaining alert and aware of everything happening around us locally and globally and thereby gain wisdom. There is a dire need to adopt the "PalliPalli" approach (Hurry in Korean) while implementing good schemes, in this case, making India self-reliant through

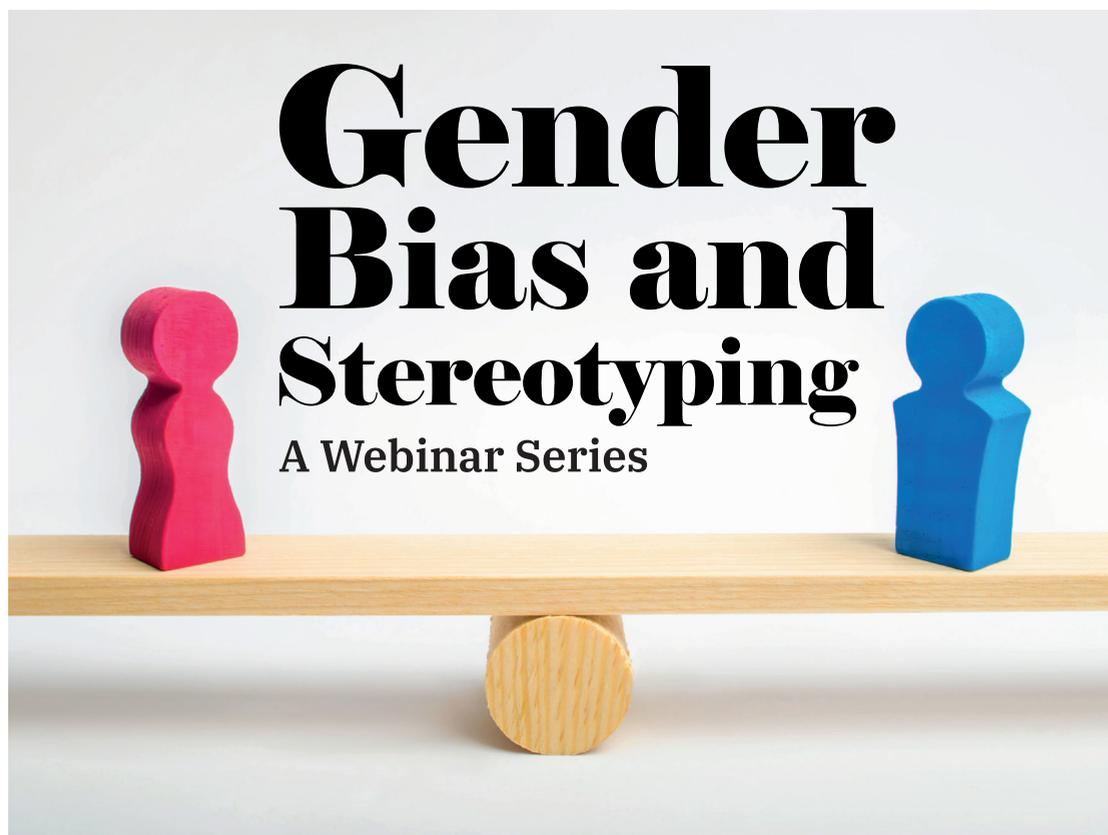
Webinar Report  
**Atmanirbhar  
Bharat Abhiyan**  
Opportunities and Challenges

Speaker  
**Dr. Madan Mohan Goel**  
Former Vice- Chancellor & Professor  
Kurukshetra University

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The focus should be on basic infrastructural development in urban and rural areas, to benefit rural development.

We have to create a congenial environment to work without stress and fear on a level-playing-field for the survival and revival of the economy, explained Dr. Goel. He added, that for the revival of the economy, we must become 'Street Smart Indians' as consumers, producers, distributors and traders.

Dr. Xavier V K- Head, Department of Economics, JAIN, said, "The policy of De-liberalisation is currently followed by countries across the world, unlike liberalisation in the past two decades. Trade and tariff wars along with capital controls are persuaded by states to promote self-interest. Specifically, India's capital account liberalisation has been a procrastinated issue." Dr. Xavier also took the opportunity to brief the challenges in the self-reliance strategy being embraced by India. ▣



(ISEC) covered the topic 'Relevance of Gender in Migration: With Reference to India'. After a brief introduction to the topic, she delved into the details and talked about different aspects of migration with particular emphasis on reverse migration during COVID-19. The current COVID-19 situation and its impact on society was also a topic of interest. A Power Point Presentation vividly narrating the arduous journey of women migrants in India made the session interesting.

Ms. Selva Meenakshi - Counsellor and Soft Skills Trainer of Anna University, known for creating unique programmes to address psychological issues in the

**J**ain (Deemed-to-be University), under the banner of the Gender Sensitization Cell of the University, organised a webinar series on 'Gender Bias and Stereotyping and Gender Equality and Women's Right'. Experts from different fields enlightened participants comprising faculty members, research scholars, students and interested participants from both genders.

The lectures navigated through several aspects of gender equality, gender sensitivity, sexuality, migration and gender, gender division, migration impacts on men and women among others. The speakers, while pointing out gender issues and inequality in society, viewed that the current scenario of social isolation in the country has resulted in greater incidences of domestic violence, sexual abuse and other forms of abuses, and hence women should be made aware to help overcome these challenges. The speakers also noted that women should attend awareness programmes to gain insights and to fight such issues in society. The sessions saw active participation.

The series included a webinar on 'Gender Sensitization' held on July 4 2020, anchored by Dr. Padmini Prasad. The programme was live-streamed on various digital platforms, including Zoom and was open to registered participants. Given the gender issues, safety issues and growing sexual abuse in our society, the webinar was an attempt at gender sensitization to equip and create a safe social and personal space for all in the society.

A national webinar on the 'Relevance of Gender in Migration: With Reference to India' was also conducted with 213 participants joining from different parts of the country. Directors, deans and heads of various departments took part in the programme and expressed their views on the topic. The importance of creating awareness regarding gender issues in educational institutions and how JAIN as a varsity is contributing towards creating a gender-balanced society were discussed.

Dr. Chenamma Kambar - Assistant Professor, Centre for Research in Urban Affairs, Institute for Social and Economic Change

campus and workplace was a guest speaker for a session on Women Empowerment. Ms. Selva Meenakshi stressed on the right to education and stated that women and girls should be equally empowered through education. Emphasising that the gender dimensions related to access to quality education faced by girls and boys, women and men, are different and so are their needs. Gender equality is intrinsically linked to the right to quality education to achieve which an approach that ensures that girls and boys, women and men are equally empowered through quality education is required. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic could reverse the limited progress that has been made on gender equality and women's rights. The coronavirus outbreak exacerbates existing inequalities for women and girls across every sphere – from health and economic independence to security and social protection.

The webinar was appreciated by the participants who received a participation certificate at the end of the programme. **A**

# NEP A Review 2020



Efforts have long been underway to find new strategies to achieve educational transformation for the current century. The new National Educational Policy (NEP) aims to modify the landscape of the Indian teaching-learning system with a robust plan involving excellence and equity to meet the growing aspirations of children and parents.

Jain (Deemed-to-be University) organised webinars at its various campuses to create awareness about NEP 2020 amongst teachers, students, officials and other stakeholders in the higher education system.

A day-long national level webinar titled 'National Education Policy 2020 – A Review' was held on 14 August 2020. Dr. Viraj Kumar - Visiting Professor, Divecha Centre for Climate Change, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru and Chair of ACM India's Special Interest Group for CS Education (SIGCSE), was invited as the resource person for the webinar. Dr. Kumar has been part of task groups related to Educational Technology, constituted by the Karnataka Knowledge Commission and has served as a Chief Consultant to the drafting committee of the National Education Policy (MHRD, GoI).

Dr. Viraj Kumar shared the vision of NEP for Higher Education in India. He emphasised the three main elements of NEP - Higher Education System (HES), Holistic & Multidisciplinary Education and Educational Technology & Online Education. He indicated that we are in the midst of a 'Learning Crisis' which has propelled the Government to frame the 5+3+3+4 curriculum structure set to replace the 10+2 structure. He pointed out that the new education policy emphasises on vocational education and hands-on learning which would increase the number of hybrid jobs. He also highlighted the need for holistic and multidisciplinary education in a rapidly changing world.

Dr. Viraj emphasised that education and learning is a constantly evolving process that has to be reformulated at regular intervals for student empowerment. Education according to him is not only about learning from the syllabus, but also about self development, further leading to societal development, curiosity, discipline, creativity and a conduit to disrupt the cycle of illiteracy. This would eventually help the student community to adapt and reinvent themselves to the new hybrid work culture and dynamic socio-cultural changes. He highlighted the challenges encountered in accessing online and offline content. He stated that the National Educational Technology Forum which provides independent evidence-based advice, builds institutional and intellectual capacities, envisions strategic thrust, articulates new directions, and also promotes research.

A session on 'Unwrapping the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020' was also organised with two speakers on the panel Dr. R.S. Deshpande, well-known Agricultural Economist and former Director, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) and Dr. P.S. Jayaramu - Former Professor in Political Science, Bangalore University and former Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR. The eminent panellists were in conversation with Dr. Sandeep Shastri - Director of the Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CERSSE) and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, JAIN. The event registered nearly 1000 participants including academicians, policymakers, civil servants,

research scholars and students from all over the country.

Dr. Deshpande began by welcoming the comprehensive nature of this policy, which addresses every facet of education. It provides a wide array of instruments to help achieve the goals envisioned in the policy through programmes operating on the basis of pre-planned strategies and overall vision of transforming India to Bharat, taking a cue from the UN Sustainable Development Goals. He stressed on the importance of infrastructure investment, to implement the New Education Policy, which is poised to help teachers and students in rural areas.

Further, he added that a child goes through various phases in the learning curve and accordingly, the NEP's 4 segments may be disproportionately spread. The first component in the document, school education, is covered in 23 pages, the highest, and then comes higher education covered in 17 pages, while the section on implementation is spread over

64 pages making it the largest segment. So this document must be critically reviewed by experts to identify scope for improvement.

Dr. Jayaramu in his presentation focused on the sections of the policy that were applicable to school and higher education. He applauded that the policy well 'crafted' and addresses issues related to school and higher education system. He cited the aim of raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio in secondary schools to 100 per cent as ambitious but not unachievable. The 4-year undergraduate programme embracing multidisciplinary focus is welcome as it is already being practised in many universities around the world. The timeline of 15 years for the removal of the affiliation could have been shorter as it has been grossly misused he opined. The focus on Research and Innovation and setting up of Incubation Centres are also welcome he said.

Dr. Shastri led the discussion by asking critical questions, like if our education system is ready for a critical discussion on the policy and the

changes it has proposed. The importance of debate and discussion on the policy was also highlighted.

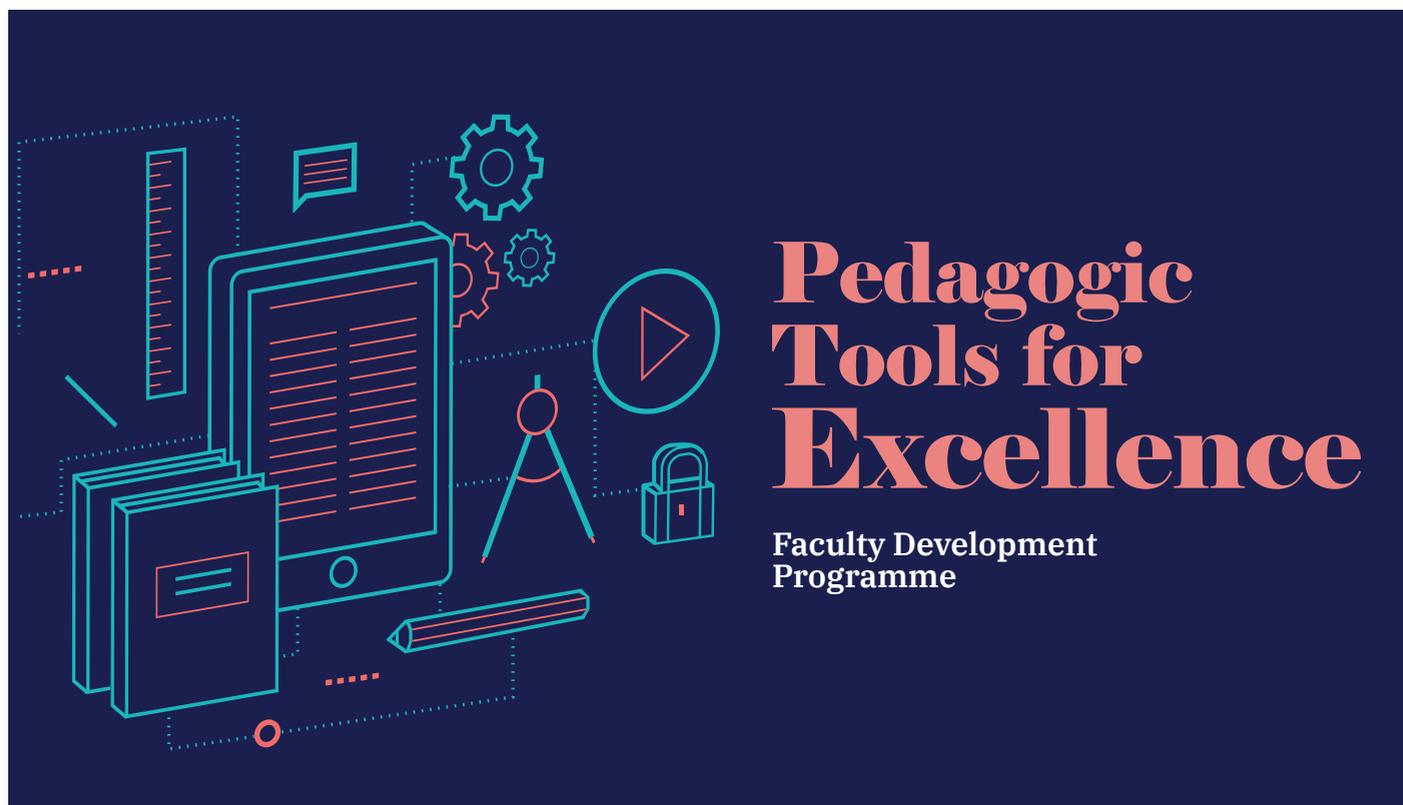
Prof. Dr. Madan Mohan Goel - Former Vice-Chancellor and Needonomist Professor, Kurukshetra University talked on 'Perception of Higher Education in NEP 2020'.

"NEP 2020 is necessary but not sufficient for transforming the nation into a global knowledge economy. A time frame for the implementation of comprehensive, holistic and learner-centred NEP with a flexible system by adopting a well defined Public Private Partnership (PPP) model is essential," said Dr. Goel. He also talked about the SMART model (Simple, Moral, Action oriented, Responsive and Transparent) to improve governance. Dr. Goel opined that, for efficiency, sufficiency and equity in higher education, we must link fee structure and user charges with inflation rates, based on retail prices so that high cost recovery can be ensured. **A**

“NEP provides a wide array of instruments to help achieve the goals envisioned in the policy through programmes operating on the basis of pre-planned strategies and overall vision of transforming India to Bharat, taking a cue from the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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**S**amshodhana, the Faculty Research Cell of Jain (Deemed-to-be University) organised a three-day national Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on 'Unleashing Excellence of Academia through Pedagogic Tools' from 9-11 September 2020. In adherence to the COVID-19 protocol, the programme was conducted virtually.

While Dr. Dinesh Nilkant - Director, School of Commerce, JAIN delivered the inaugural address, Dr. Rajdeep Manwani - Coordinator, Department of Commerce, JAIN conducted the first technical session on 'Discovering the Power of Vocal Variety and Unlocking Public Speaking Secrets as a Pedagogical Tool', and elaborated upon the various features of communication.

Dr. Rajdeep Manwani in his opening remarks said that there are two aspects of communication, intent and content. Content includes vocal variety and body language.

Elaborating on vocal variety, Dr. Manwani stated that a sentence consists of six different inflexions with six different meanings. He also





talked about the 4 Ps - Pace, Pitch, Power and Pause, its importance and how it can be used in the classroom. He highlighted the vocal variety which alters according to the mood of the situation, like Drama, Action, Thrill, Mellow, Soulful, and Repetition. He emphasised that a good speaker must leave the audience to imagine than explain everything.

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**Teachers can be good facilitators, but they are not the only source of knowledge for students.**  
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The following session conducted by Dr. Hemanth Kumar S - Professor - Marketing & International Business, CMS Business School, JAIN focused on ‘Instructional Planning and Development – Case Study as a Pedagogical Tool – Part 1’. He touched upon various aspects of teaching while explaining that teaching may be hampered by issues like poor environment, poor training, poor examples and poor thinking. Most of the teachers fail to prepare robust instructional

planning, which according to Dr. Kumar is an important part of the profession. Teachers can be good facilitators, but they are not the only source of knowledge for students he opined. He gave tips on how to prepare the lesson plan with Outcome-based Education. His talk highlighted the modes to interact with students such as formal/informal conversation, feelings, thoughts, ideas, experiences, discussions, debates, brainstorming activities, ad analysis, interpersonal activity, focus group method and so on.

The second day of the online FDP also had two technical sessions. Dr. Hemanth Kumar S continued his session on ‘Instructional Planning and Development – Case Study as a Pedagogical Tool – Part 2’, and Dr. R. Satish Kumar - Professor - Marketing Area, JAIN delivered a talk on ‘Best Practices in Learner Centred Teaching’.

Dr. Hemanth Kumar highlighted various strategies such as arranging the classroom, name tag strategy, creating climate and role, and the three typical stages of case analysis - analysing the situation, helping the students

to understand more by asking questions frequently and the methodology to resolve a debate.

Dr. R. Satish Kumar, analysed the concept and methods of Learner Centred Teaching. He highlighted the various ‘Cs of Education’ such as Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Citizenship/ Culture and Character Education / Connectivity. The concept of Blended Learning and components and methodology to be used in classroom teaching were discussed.

The concluding session of the event on Day 3 was led by Ms. Manju Goel – Founder, Director, Eduvangelists Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru on ‘Unraveling the Mind’. Ms. Goel explained the concept of Mind, Brain and its differences. She discussed the different parts of the human mind and its differences and functions.

The technical sessions were followed by Q & A. The three-day virtual programme saw active participation from faculty members and other staff members on various online platforms including Zoom. 📺

# Citizen-Friendly Administration

A Webinar



In his introductory remarks Mr. S. Ramanathan pointed out that in the recent past the theme of 'Citizen-Friendly Administration' has steadily risen to the top of the agenda of governance, not only in India but across the world. 'Putting Citizens First' is a natural extension of the New Public Management (NPM) initiative, which seeks to better serve citizens as clients and customers. This has led to experimentation and innovations such as Centrelink in Australia, the Common Measurement Tool in Canada and New Zealand's Kiwi Counts. According to him, the theme of 'Citizen-Friendly Administration' has greater resonance today because of the expanding opportunities presented by digital information and communications technology (ICT). It is not only possible to devise Citizen-Oriented Services but genuinely Citizen-Informed and even Citizen-Designed interventions to accommodate needs of individuals and communities — also referred to as 'individualisation' of policy and service delivery. Such developments are consistent with the 'Public Value' perspective, which calls on political leaders and civil servants to explore myriad ways to provide services for citizens and communities.

During his talk, Mr. Ramanathan recalled that the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by Shri M. Veerappa Moily, in its 12th Report of February 2009, aptly titled, 'Citizen-Centric Administration: The Heart of Governance' recommended a Seven-Step Model for Citizen-Centricity:

- Define all services which you provide and identify your clients

- Set standards and norms for each service;

Notwithstanding efforts in this direction, Mr. Ramanathan raised the following questions for deliberation at the webinar:

- Are Westminster governance systems, with their vertical accountabilities and divided responsibilities, necessarily incongruent with a citizen orientation, or can they be made to move faster and further?
- Can governments increase the trust of citizens by improving services and better engaging them, or will citizens continue to disengage from government, no matter how much progress is made?
- How can citizen input mesh with the input that inevitably comes from experts, stakeholders, and government agencies (often other levels of government)?
- Do governments provide what citizens and communities want or need, or do they focus on better providing services that governments have identified in certain ways?

In Mr. Ramanathan's considered view, making administration genuinely citizen-friendly needs to be preceded by the following initiatives:

- Discovering Citizen Needs and Preferences - Systematically learning more about the experiences of citizens in

receiving the services delivered to them and using that feedback to improve the delivery of those programmes

- Engaging Citizens in Policy and Service Design - Improving how governments engage citizens in the design of policy and service delivery regimes
- Improving Administrative Capability - Developing strategies to improve capacity and capabilities in government

According to Dr. A. Ravindra, Citizen-Friendly Administration assumes special significance in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. New issues have emerged which deserve the attention of the government as well as all other stakeholders. In his view, the following four issues need to be addressed on priority:

- Public Health: The importance of public health cannot be over-emphasised, especially during the outbreak of contagious diseases. Unfortunately, in India, this is a neglected area. A mere 9.6 per cent is the share of public health in the overall health expenditure. This needs to be stepped up so that preventive health care gets the required attention. Public health systems should be strengthened in terms of infrastructure and manpower.
- Environment: Matters relating to the quality of air and water, waste management and traffic congestion are of crucial importance in urban areas. These are closely related to public health and improving the quality of life and need serious attention of state and local governments.

- **Employment:** The most glaring outcome of COVID-19 pertains to the loss of jobs and livelihoods, evident from the mass exodus of migrants from cities. Unemployment in India is at 6.2 per cent and it is the highest in the last 45 years. We need to think of new modes of creating work especially for the poor.
- **Innovative Governance:** It is the tool for recovery and moving towards people-friendly administration. Digital governance must be more inclusive and reach rural areas and vulnerable sections. A lot needs to be done to improve transparency by providing timely information to the people. Finally, a more decentralised approach must be adopted by involving people at the grassroots, and other stakeholders, to achieve optimum results. The aim must be to move towards collaborative governance.

Dr. Sandeep Shastri's presentation was based on research that used multi-methods. Essentially based on nationally representative public opinion surveys conducted over time by Lokniti-CSDS, the presentation supplemented the survey findings with in-depth interviews with All-India Service and State Service officers. These in-depth interviews aimed at exploring domains that could not be assessed through survey research on the one hand and also served to corroborate the findings of survey research on the other. Dr. Shastri looked at the level of Citizen Trust in public institutions. What emerged was that institutions like the higher judiciary, army and the Election Commission invoked greater trust as compared to the police, civil service and political parties.

While expanding the discussion on trust, Dr. Shastri quoted from the level of trust in the administration that a perception survey indicated. A little less than two-thirds of the respondents had trust in the administration, whereas a little over one-third had little trust. The officers interviewed made the argument that the lack of trust in the administration was often linked to how officers used their discretionary powers. Others argued that the challenge was much more complex, as the administration has limited resources to cater to very high expectations.

Dr. Shastri also dealt with the public perception of corruption in the administration. He pointed out that public opinion is split on the matter with a little over half holding the administration to be corrupt. The politicization of the administration was also discussed in which the point was made by officers that elected representatives are often uncomfortable with efficient officers, as then people would see no need to approach politicians! Officers also felt that fulfilling citizen expectations often required circumventing rules and that there was no appreciation or reward from citizens for hard work and honesty.

Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar's presentation, titled, 'From Citizen-Friendly to Citizen-Centric Administration: Moving the Citizen from Periphery to Centre' was based on the premise that there is clear evidence of deterioration in confidence and trust, on the part of citizens, in public authorities, in most parts of the world, including India.

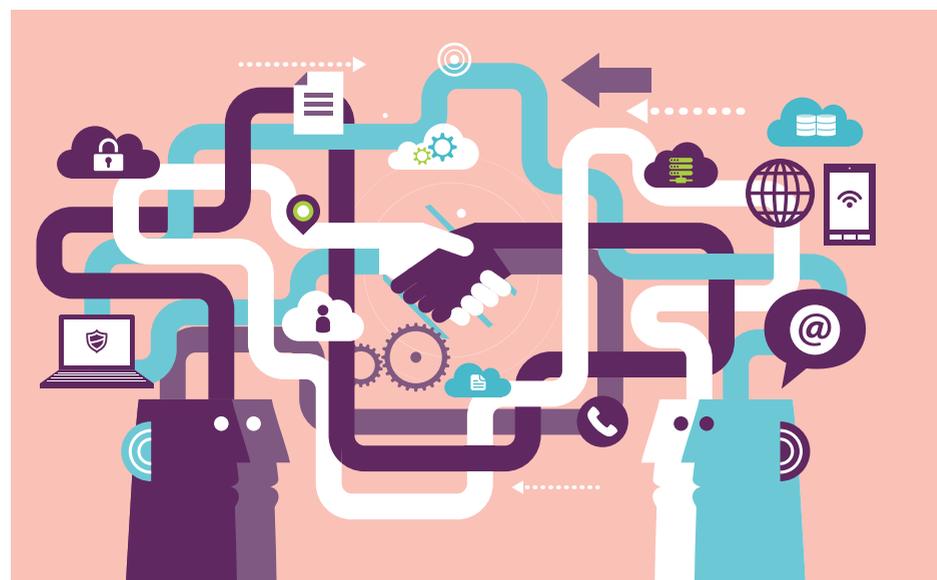
To remove the causes behind the increasing 'Trust Deficit' among citizens in Public Administration, Dr. Kumar made out a case for Moving the Citizen from Periphery to Centre, through the philosophy and theory of 'New Public Service' and its concomitant concept of 'Citizen-Centric Administration'. According to Dr. Kumar, the New Public Service (NPS) starts with the premise that the focus of Public Administration should be Citizens, Community

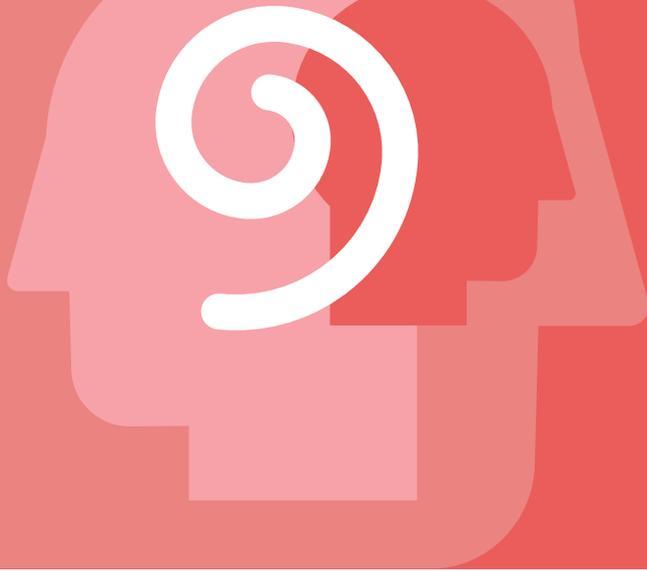
and Civil Society. In this conception, the primary role of public servants is to help citizens articulate and meet their shared interests, rather than to control or steer society. The New Public Service model approaches Public Administration from the vantage point of democratic theory, premised on the notion of active and involved citizenship. The role of public officials is to facilitate opportunities for strengthening citizen engagement in finding solutions to societal problems.

According to Dr. Kumar, placing citizens at the centre of Public Administration requires the following:

- Accepting the philosophy and theory of 'New Public Service';
- Adopting a very different approach to recruitment and professional development;
- Instilling a fundamental change in mindset on the part of public officials.

Participants in the webinar included Executive Committee members of the Karnataka Regional Branch of the Indian Institute of Public Administration; Faculty Members, research scholars, students of JAIN and other invitees. There was also a question and answer session at the end of the webinar. 





# A Study into Self and Identities

**A** bright and sprightly youngster radiating oodles of confidence, Deepthi Swamy exudes warmth and her lively nature is endearing. With a clear focus on academic excellence, Deepthi completed her double master's graduation and a doctoral degree from Jain (Deemed-to-be University) in 2018.

As she was nearing completion of her undergraduate course in Psychology, English Literature and Journalism at a reputed institution in Bangalore, she began to give a serious thought about her academic and professional trajectory. She had been keen on a career in psychology right from high school days and figured out that a long-term career in psychology would, for now, entail a Masters degree. "The hunt began to narrow down the colleges to pursue my studies and Jain (Deemed-to-be University) was one of the colleges on my list. Since it was newly instituted as a Deemed-to-be University, I had not heard much about its psychology programme, although I had heard great things about the college," she says.

## First Impressions

What was your first impression of JAIN? "I was in for a huge surprise when I met my classmates and faculty members. You go in with preconceived notions about any new place, but I was amazed at the down-to-earth nature of the faculty members! I couldn't have asked for better teachers to guide me through choosing a career option in psychology," says

Deepthi. She went the entire haul to obtain two more degrees after her Masters, an M. Phil and a Ph. D. After Masters. She got the opportunity to work full-time as a faculty member at the Department of Psychology and thus began her life as an academician. "I found it very amusing and at the same time daunting that some of my professors were now my colleagues," she chuckles.

## The Right Guides

"It is said that without efficient guides to help you navigate, the world is a hostile place. I was fortunate to have the best of people holding hands as I learnt to toddle and then walk during my initial days as a lecturer. Amongst them I would like to mention Dr. Shailaja Shastri, Head of the Department of Psychology at Jain (Deemed-to-be University) who became my guide in both professional and personal life. She encouraged me to break out of my shell and inspired me," remembers Deepthi fondly. It was because of her motivation that Deepthi fell in love with teaching and research. Dr. Sowmya Puttaraju, her mentor, was another such influencer. "Her ability to view life with a creative filter and to care for people with empathy are qualities I will always aspire to emulate. It was definitely because of such resourceful educators that I was able to secure First Rank and a Gold Medal in my Master degree course at the university," she says.

## Dual Roles - Work and Study

Her desire to immediately pursue a doctoral degree after M. Phil was a matter



of some discussion both at home and at the department. The solid support that she received from everyone, especially her colleagues in the department, only reinforced her aspirations. The three and a half year stint in the department as a faculty member was a lesson in harmony and unity. When she was awarded the 10th rank in the Global Peter Drucker Essay Challenge in 2015, it was her colleagues who cheered and celebrated her success more than anyone else.

A lot of importance is given to multi-disciplinary research and this helped Deepthi take a step in the right direction since collaborative efforts between researchers from different fields is trending in academic research. "The university provides a lot of support and resources to help research students. The research methodology classes conducted by Dr. Sandeep Shastri and team were helpful. The university also organized numerous workshops, symposiums, conferences and panel discussions on the latest trends in research in various disciplines. Besides, the 2-day annual Research Retreat was refreshing and motivating especially when one goes through a slump in the course of their study," shares Deepthi.



### Studies on Identity

Her doctoral thesis was in the area of Social Psychology. The concept of 'Identity' in psychology had always intrigued her. Owing to her personal experiences, she felt it would be beneficial to explore the influence of a person's Social Identity on them in various contexts. It was during her undergraduate days that she started exploring her own sense of identity and this led to several changes within her. She also wanted to explore the identities that influence a human being on a daily basis. She explains, "Research in this field is quite limited in India and hence is dominated by an international presence. Given the fact that India, as a country, is diverse at so many levels, I was surprised by the limited research on Social Identity." To this end, she began her journey of four years to explore the domain. "I was fortunate that my guide helped me streamline my research ambitions into a workable methodology. Given the conventional methodologies utilized in psychological research these days, Dr. Shailaja pushed me to break these barriers. I was thus able to develop a web-application to hierarchically classify the multiple social identities based on the extent of influence they have on an individual at any given time. The application is called SocioID."

Her trip to Austria to attend the Global Peter Drucker Forum, an international management conference, was a study of how cultures interacted with each other in myriad ways. She met people from across the world and listened to speakers who represented the top companies in the world. She learnt that employers used psychological principles extensively for employee productivity and well-being. Due to her passion in studying Social Identity, she had the opportunity to correspond with one of the world's foremost contemporary authorities on the subject, Dr. Alexander Haslam, University of Queensland.

He offered suggestions and resources that made her study more robust. "I had read extensively about the research undertaken by Dr. Haslam and his team in applying the principles of Social Identity in various areas like health and sports. Hence, I reached out to him via email requesting his opinion about my study," Deepti explains.

She adds, "During the course of my study, I was able to assert that Social Identity was a very important facet of a person's thought process and consequent behaviour. I also discovered that people were being primed to adhere to one or the other social identity on a daily basis, and this in turn influenced how they thought about the world around them. The membership aspect of social identity was also something that people sought, the study revealed." Thus, Deepti was able to understand the significance of multiple identities in the social world and how they can be harnessed to effectively develop and modify thought processes and behaviour.

### Tough Times

Pursuing the doctoral degree was certainly thrilling for Deepti. However, since she was pursuing a full-time job she felt pressurized, especially when her schedules clashed. Finding a software professional to help her code the website for the web application was a difficult task; it took nearly a year for the application go live. She also struggled with finding respondents for her survey. She needed about 600 employees, from both private and government sectors, and who belonged to the 'young adult' category. Finding government employees from this age group who were willing to respond to the questionnaire was a tough task.

While not working, she is reading or trying her hand at culinary delights. A voracious reader, Deepti is currently feasting on Phillipa Gregory and Michelle Moran. "Both write historical fiction and it's my favourite genre," she says. Her favourite authors include Jane Austen, L M Montgomery and Mary Balogh. She is also a big fan of P G Woodhouse.

### Entrepreneurial Venture

During the doctoral years, Deepti understood

the importance of individual growth and finding one's unique 'Identity'. So, soon after her academic stint, she founded I-dentitee, a consulting firm, for training and research called I-dentitee LLP in 2018. Through this firm she works with students, teachers and parents to train them to develop specific skill sets like self-awareness, creativity, mindset, stress management and so on. It also enables her to work with budding researchers in helping them structure their methodologies for research and help with data analysis. Through I-dentitee, Deepti hopes to help individuals evolve to their full potential. I-dentitee's tagline, 'Innovation, Motivation and Optimization' is indicative of the firm's objectives. The objectives and services offered by the firm are an offshoot of Deepti's Ph. D work which helped her determine that people function better holistically when they achieve their potential. The firm customizes modules on psychological skills and life skills to suit the requirements of clients from across spectrums and conducts customized workshops on skill building in a variety of areas.



Individual consultation is also done to facilitate clients' understanding of how to proceed to function effectively. It becomes clear that Deepti has also envisioned the future goals of the company when she says, "The company aims to set up a network that can help people connect to anyone from any profession and walk of life for insight and understanding the same."

"Overall, being part of a good university structure and having the support of people around you is important when making a big commitment like pursuing a doctorate. But this will amount to nothing if your confidence levels, your passion and enthusiasm and your commitment aren't up there. So believing in yourself and your potential is most important to succeed in life," says Deepti. These are her parting words to students dreaming big.

Centre Piece

# Lal Bahadur Shastri: A Leader to Reckon With



**M**y earliest introduction to Shastri was through my father. Among the stories he often narrated was the one about how Lal Bahadur swam across the Ganges to reach school. The economic exigencies of his family were so severe that he could not even afford a ferry to cross the river. The desire for learning, however, was strong enough to spur him to swim across the river even when in spate.

Born in 1904, in Mughal Sarai, Uttar Pradesh Lal Bahadur lost his father, Shardha Prasad (a clerk in the Revenue Department, Allahabad) to bubonic plague when he was just a year old. His mother, Ramdulari Devi raised him and his two sisters. The family later moved to Varanasi.

The Indian Independence movement was gaining momentum while he was still at school. The masses were becoming active in the agitation against the British Government. Nishkameswar Prasad Mishra, Lal Bahadur's teacher in high school, a patriot, keenly followed the manner in which the freedom movement was gaining momentum and permeating the entire country. He kept his students abreast of the developments in the nationalist movement and the role of each of the leaders in the fight against the British. Inspired by Mishra's patriotic fervor, Shastri took a deep interest in the freedom struggle and the freedom fighters of the time.

Lal Bahadur was a bright, studious and smart student. Even as a young boy he was acutely aware of the hierarchical caste system prevalent in the country and the injustices that were being meted out to those at the lowest rung. He viewed the caste system as destroying the social fabric of the society. He already seemed to have a vision for the country -- a caste free society that would give equal rights and justice for everyone. When he was just twelve, Lal Bahadur took a decision which surprised not just his family members, teachers and friends, but also many leaders and activists. He dropped his surname 'Srivastava' to relinquish all privilege of being a high caste. At an age when children hardly cared to understand the complexities of institutions like caste, religion and society,

Lal Bahadur not only understood them but was also able to critique them and, furthermore, express his opposition through 'action for transformation'. He was to later say, "India will have to hang down her head in shame if even one person is left who is said in any way to be untouchable."



It was in January 1921, that Lal Bahadur took another big decision. He quit school when the tenth class exams were just a couple of months away. He attended a public meeting in Banaras addressed by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. During this meeting, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to students to boycott schools run by the British. The next day, Lal Bahadur quit Harish Chandra High School and joined the Congress Party as a volunteer. He began to participate in anti-British demonstrations, rallies and meetings.

He took a leadership role in inspiring students to quit government-run institutes and join the Non-Cooperation Movement. The British Government ordered the arrest of Lal Bahadur. He was jailed but was let off as he was still a minor, only 17.

Lal Bahadur joined Kashi Vidyapeeth, established by Nationalist leaders to educate young activists about India's history, culture, heritage and greatness. He was among the first students who joined this institute, which was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi. Lal Bahadur graduated in philosophy and ethics in 1925. 'Shastri', the title of the bachelor's degree given to all students, became a permanent fixture to Lal Bahadur's name.

As a young reformist and activist, Lal Bahadur worked for the upliftment of Dalits. He joined Lok Sevak Mandal formed by Lala Lajpat Rai and worked tirelessly against injustice and discrimination in the name of caste.

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**Lal Bahadur took a decision which surprised not just his family members, teachers and friends, but also many leaders and activists. He dropped his surname 'Srivastava' to relinquish all privilege of being a high caste.**  
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Lal Bahadur by now was recognised as an ardent Nationalist by the top leadership. He proved to be a great asset for leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, J. B. Kriplani, Govind Ballabh Pant and others in inspiring the masses to play a pivotal role in India's freedom struggle. And during this time, he was arrested several times and jailed.

India's freedom struggle took a big leap when Mahatma Gandhi gave the 'Quit India' call to the British at a Congress convention in Mumbai in 1942. The British Government arrested Mahatma Gandhi and all other prominent leaders. These arrests led to unrest across

## Centre Piece



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*Shastri with his family*

India and people in large numbers staged protests against the British. Lal Bahadur at this juncture communicated messages from the nationalist stalwarts to the public. He also conveyed important decisions and messages to them from the residence of Pandit Nehru in Allahabad.

It was in the year 1937, at the behest of prominent leaders that Lal Bahadur contested elections and became an elected representative of United Provinces. After India attained Independence, Lal Bahadur became the Minister of Police and Transport in Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant's cabinet. As a minister, he took many revolutionary decisions. He was the first to allow the appointment of women conductors in public buses. He was the first to order the police to use water jets, instead of lathis to disperse unruly crowds. Lal Bahadur was successful in controlling communal riots, mass migration and resettlement of refugees of Partition.

Just before the first General Elections in Independent India, Prime Minister Nehru appointed Lal Bahadur as the General Secretary of the All India Congress Party. Nehru was greatly impressed by his leadership qualities in the wake of prominent leaders being

imprisoned by the British. He became the most reliable leader and a perfect assistant to Nehru. Congress Party swept the first general elections in 1952. Prime Minister Nehru inducted Lal Bahadur into his Cabinet as Minister for Railways and Transport. As a central minister, he set the highest standards. He adopted a zero-tolerance policy against corruption and did not hesitate to drop leaders facing allegations of corruption from crucial posts, which was indeed a bold move.



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*Shastri and Jawahar Lal Nehru*

The 1962 war with China left Prime Minister Nehru devastated as India lost land and many of its brave soldiers. During this crisis, leaders and public alike had openly questioned the decisions taken by Nehru. But Lal Bahadur stood by Nehru, as always.

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**Nehru was greatly impressed by his leadership qualities in the wake of prominent leaders being imprisoned by the British. He became the most reliable leader and a perfect assistant to Nehru.**  
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When Lal Bahadur succeeded Nehru as Prime Minister in 1964, the country was riddled with several challenges. The euphoria of Independence had faded and the infant nation was experiencing a tumultuous phase. There was unrest in many states. Tamil Nadu was against imposition of Hindi as a national language. High unemployment rates had stirred youth agitations in Odisha. There was political turbulence in Kerala and Shastri had to impose the President's Rule. Demand for a separate state in Andhra and Telangana



regions was growing. The Kashmir issue remained unresolved. On the international front also, challenges were aplenty. Russia and Pakistan had new leadership. China remained a threat. Relations with the USA and European countries had to be strengthened.

Two other events posed a big challenge to the Prime Minister. Due to a series of famines, India was heading towards a drought. The food grains crisis was raging in the country and affected the common man the most. Even as he had begun to address this problem, the country was attacked by Pakistan. In the midst of all this, the U.S threatened to withdraw its food supplies to the country. In this context, Lal Bahadur's slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan' during his speech to a public gathering at Ramlila Maidan in Delhi struck a chord among the masses and became very popular. It was his way of enthusing the kisans of the country to produce more so the country could reduce its import burden; and, of firing up the jawans of the country to retaliate against the Parkistani army that was infiltrating into the country on a war-footing. Lal Bahadur's four-decade experience of political leadership stood him in good stead during these crisis situations. These incidents are but a glimpse into his courageous leadership.

It was Shastri's staunch belief that unity and self-reliance were the path to building a great nation. To combat the shortage of food grains, he appealed to the people to fast for one day every week. The mass leader that he was and a leader of conviction and commitment, the entire country followed the suggestion given by their beloved Prime Minister. People fasted every Monday and it came to be called, 'Shastri Vrat'. He also promoted the ideas of 'White Revolution' and 'Green Revolution' to enhance self-sufficiency and empower those at the grassroots. These became nationwide

movements, and India's milk and food production increased substantially, which earned farmers their livelihood and made food staples affordable for the masses. The result was that the economy began to recover and the country reached self-sufficiency.

Lal Bahadur died in Tashkent, USSR, on January 11, 1966. He was to sign a peace treaty to end the 1965 India-Pakistan War. His death was perceived to be unnatural and several theories have since been in circulation.

kurta and a dhoti. He lived like a common man. All of five feet two inches, Shastri's stature as a servant of India stands tall. He always held the nation's interest above all else.

It has been more than five decades since he passed away, but the nation remembers him fondly. He will continue to inspire generations to come by virtue of the high standards he set as a politician, public representative, minister and prime minister. India will always remember him as a leader who stands as an



*Shastri with Arthur Bottomley, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations*

But the fact remains that India lost one of its most outstanding leaders.

His simplicity is beyond comparison. He held the highest public post but always remained down to earth. He was dressed in a cotton

incomparable symbol of Courage, Honesty, Simplicity and High Values, in personal and public life. 

*Dr. Arvind Yadav  
Journalist and Author*

# Remembering India's Second Prime Minister: Lal Bahadur Shastri

Lal Bahadur Shastri, India's second Prime Minister shared 2 October as his birthday with Mahatma Gandhi. He considered himself lucky to have been born on the same date as the Mahatma, though thirty five years later. It was a year ago that my book on Lal Bahadur Shastri – Politics and Beyond (published by Rupa and Co) was released. As I was reading through the materials I had collected for writing this book, I realized that so little has been written about this 'gentle and genial' Prime Minister who was Prime Minister of India for a mere nineteen months. He was preceded by the legendry Jawaharlal Nehru who led the country for seventeen years after independence. Shastri was succeeded by Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi, who too emerged as a much discussed political leader. She held office for sixteen years in two phases. Sandwiched between them was Shastri's short yet crucial term as the nation's Prime Minister.

During the nineteen months that Shastri was Prime Minister, the nation faced one challenge after another and he bravely and patiently dealt with each of them. He emerged as the consensus leader within the Congress to succeed Nehru as he had no enemies either within the party or outside in the wider political spectrum. His main contender was Morarji Desai who had to grudgingly withdraw from the race when he saw the consensus building up in favour of Shastri. Many thought he was a compromise candidate. Yet when he assumed office, he quietly asserted his authority and more often than not had his way. He suffered a heart attack within weeks of becoming Prime Minister but was back to work after a short break, maintaining a punishing pace. When counseled to take care of his health, he reminded his advisers that he had taken on a responsibility and his health was a secondary factor.

Shastri was a leader who rose from the grassroots on the basis of his hard work,



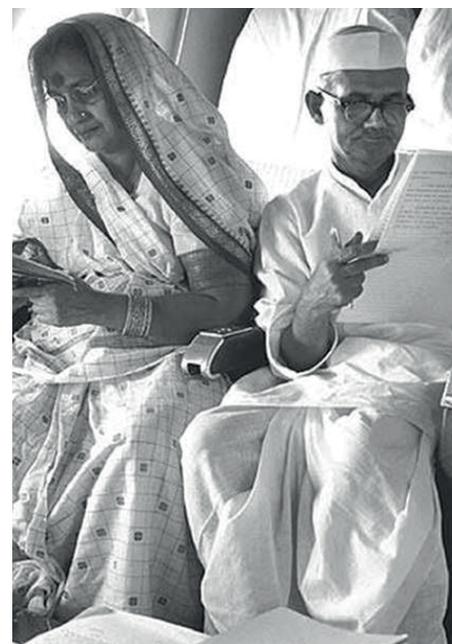
Swearing-in ceremony of Lal Bahadur Shastri

sincerity and honesty. His politics began at the local government level in Allahabad. A year before independence, he was appointed the Parliamentary Secretary to the Chief Minister of the United Provinces Govind Ballabh Pant. After the dawn of independence he became the Minister for Police and Transport in Pant's cabinet. As the 1952 General Elections approached, Nehru wanted him at the Centre to be a key General Secretary of the Congress party to oversee the election preparation. He played a key role in the choice of the candidates of the Congress party for the election and in the crucial victory of the party. Soon after the Lok Sabha elections of 1952, he joined the Nehru Cabinet as Minister for Railways and Transport. Four years into office, Shastri resigned accepting moral responsibility when a tragic rail accident occurred at Ariyalur (in what is now called Tamil Nadu). This resignation set the 'gold standard' in terms of probity and ethics.

However, some referred to his resignation as a 'clever political ploy' (The Times, London) as the 1957 General Elections were approaching

and Nehru needed Shastri in the party organisation to prepare for this election. On his resignation, he was given responsibilities of the chief organiser of the party campaign for the elections. With the return of the Congress to power in the 1957 elections, Shastri was back in the Nehru Cabinet as Minister for Transport and Communications. He was later shifted to Commerce and Industry and then took over the Home Ministry on the death of Govind Ballabh Pant. The Home portfolio was often considered the number two position in the government.

As part of the Kamaraj plan, Shastri along with a few other senior ministers resigned from the government in September 1963, to work for the party organization. Within five months, in January 1964, he was back in the Cabinet as Minister Without Portfolio on account of Nehru's ill health. He was the only leader who resigned under the Kamaraj plan but was brought back to the Ministry. This clearly indicated that while Shastri never sought political office, he was himself never too far away from positions.



On Nehru's death when he took over as Prime Minister he served at all levels: local government leader, Minister in the State Cabinet and Minister in the Union Cabinet besides being General Secretary of the

Congress Party. He had established linkages with the rank and file of the party, Congress leaders at the state and national level as also with leading politicians from other political parties.

As Prime Minister he is remembered for the way he handled the food crisis, ensured food self sufficiency over time and paved the way for the Green Revolution. The biggest test he faced was responding to the Pakistani adventurism in Kashmir in 1965. He is credited with the `first surgical strike` as he gave the go ahead to the Indian army to move into Pakistani territory to neutralize their capacities to strike at Indian targets. His famous slogan `Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan` symbolized his contribution to both Indian agriculture and the country's defence.

A review of Shastri's leadership style is indicative of his key strengths. There are five strands of his leadership which stand out and make him unique and worthy of emulation. Firstly, he was a people's person in every sense of the term. The trust, tact and transparency with which he dealt with people were a key strength. In all his decision making, the common citizen was always the focus of attention.

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**A review of Shastri's leadership style is indicative of his key strengths. There are five strands of his leadership which stand out and make him unique and worthy of emulation.**  
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Secondly, his politics was one of consultation, consensus and cooperation. This consultation was evident in the way he signed the Tashkent Agreement. He held long consultations with not merely his senior Ministerial colleagues, but also took into confidence the military generals. The cabinet meetings he presided over as Prime Minister saw consensus decision making. Many opine that it ended with his Prime Ministership! Within the party, he ensured the cooperation of diverse groups.

Thirdly, Shastri placed a premium on practicing equality both in his personal life and in his professional dealings. His sense of fairness was something that was patently visible right from his early days in the Servants of India Society. Fourthly, he was a leader who

demonstrated both passion and compassion. This led to a situation wherein he had no enemies in politics.

Finally, he was a true apostle of peace. This is vindicated in the justification he gave for signing the Tashkent agreement. Shastri believed that he would be doing a great disservice to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi if he did not create an opportunity for peace in the region. When he passed away on the night of the signing of Tashkent agreement, he was denied that opportunity to take that dream forward. The image of the then Pakistani President General Ayub Khan being one of the pall bearers who carried Shastri's body to the waiting aircraft demonstrates the love and respect he was shown by the leader of a country which had been at war with India a few months earlier.

In the month of October, we pay homage to two Apostles of Peace. The first is Mahatma Gandhi for having led the freedom movement with non violence. The second is Lal Bahadur Shastri for crafting a path of leadership in post Independent India that was rooted in consensus, cooperation and consultation. They truly shaped the direction that Independent India would take. ▲



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*Shastri addressing a gathering*



**Dr. Sandeep Shastri**

*Pro Vice Chancellor of JAIN, is a student of Politics and author of Lal Bahadur Shastri: Politics and Beyond, published by Rupa and Co in October 2019.*

# Wheeling to Liberation

 Shubha Srikanth

In the 1970s, once a Company Theatre pitched its tents in a town or village, it remained there for a stretch of two or three months, performing plays and entertaining the local folk and those from the neighbouring villages and towns. With it came art, culture, excitement and entertainment. Plays were mostly scenes from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. People flocked these theatres irrespective of caste and religion, status and occupation and relived the ancient times.

One among such an audience in the town of Anekal was a young lad who accompanied his grandfather to watch the performances of the Company Theatre. For as long as he can remember he loved and enjoyed music and dance and theatre. He observed and reenacted the songs, dialogues, mudras, and movements

back home, even as he mastered the nuances of the Hindu epics. He trained his classmates and kids from the neighbourhood and put up plays at school and on the streets.

A sensitive child that he was, he once cast a quiet, reticent girl, as the valiant Jhansi Rani Lakshmibai, who for some reason was neglected by her family. This role transformed her, instilling confidence and self-esteem.

His grandfather practiced the family vocation of Ayurvedic healing. The boy accompanied his grandfather as he gathered medicinal herbs and roots and ground them into healing concoctions and pastes, for which he was tipped with a paisa or two. A large number of differently-abled children would also consult with his grandfather, for his potions and pastes and oils to strengthen nerves,

flex muscles and relieve pain. He interacted with these children who waited for long hours before their turn with the healer-doctor. He narrated stories, instilled life into characters, animated them with voice modulation and facial expression. He encouraged the children to follow suit. He taught mudras and hand movements, which the children out of sheer fun practiced back home. To his grandfather's surprise stiff muscles relaxed, pains gradually reduced, joints became flexible and energy and joy replaced sullenness. While the old man treated them with herbs and roots, the boy treated them with what is today practiced as physiotherapy, dance therapy and theatre therapy!

His name is Syed Sallauddin Pasha.



### Fast Forward to 2020

Syed Sallauddin Pasha is a celebrated practitioner of therapeutic dance in the country, rendering his services through Ability Unlimited, as its Founder and Artistic Director. He trains children and adults with mental health disorders and physical disabilities in dance, theatre and yoga, empowers them, reinstating dignity, social justice, and inclusion. Discarding the term 'disability' for 'ability unlimited' he flipped the majoritarian perception of the differently abled. He is passionate about and committed to engender personal and social transformation through art.

in Dr. Maya Rao's productions. "Anekal gave me the cultural grounding that is so essential for an artist. The exposure and the blended cultural scene in Bengaluru helped me evolve a bigger vision and seek a bigger platform for my creative and social initiatives. The idea of social transformation through art on a large scale had begun to take shape," says Pasha. He had by now collaborated with several NGOs and other social service institutions and was conducting art therapy workshops for differently-abled children. "What today is being touted as art therapy and dance therapy for physical and mental health, I was practicing in the 1970s and 1980s," he points out.



^ Pasha receiving National Award from President Pratibha Patil



What Pasha's family didn't foresee was that the whims and fancies of childhood would one day grow into his purpose and calling in life. Moving to Bangalore in the 1980s expanded his horizons. Having learnt Bharatnatyam and Kathak from stalwart gurus Narmada and Dr. Maya Rao, he went on to earn a 3-year PG diploma and a 3-year degree in choreography. His tutelage under guru Maya Rao had a definitive impact. While emphasising erudition, she also upheld the experiential; and this helped Pasha stay rooted in the traditional, guru Kittappa Pilla's *bani* for instance and the ancient Sanskrit theatre, yet exposed to various genres of dance, music and theatre (Chau, Mohiniyattam, martial arts) and renowned international artists (Kanak Rely, Peter Brooks, Merce Cunningham, Marcel Marceau). He was cast in pivotal roles of Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana, Krishnadevaraya, Amir Khusro and many more



### Innovation and Therapy

An amalgamation of all these experiences eventually resulted in the ideation of a new repertoire of dance and music as therapy, a means of livelihood and above all a stepping stone to a life of dignity and self respect for a community which continues to be frowned upon and treated as a burden by the family and society.

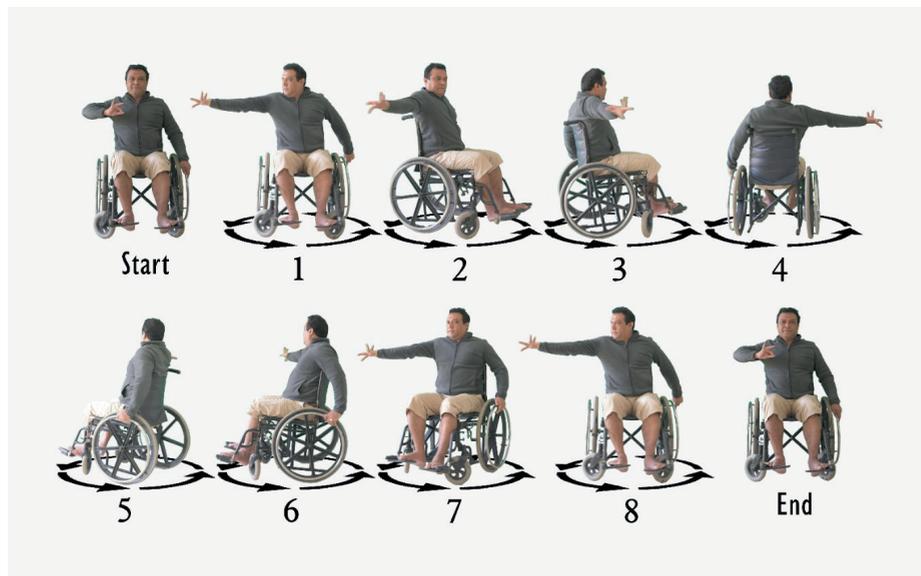
Pasha had already experienced the power of dance and theatre in the healing process back in Anekal. He introduced the same in a systematic and formal manner in his dance studio. "My students came with all types of impairments, and hence I had to inhabit their space physically and emotionally to understand them and assist them out of those restrictive spaces, and towards spaces of physical and emotional liberation," he

## Expressions

says. He had to realign his perception of the world as a visually impaired experienced it -- only through touch and sound; understand space and movement from the perspective of one who was bound to the wheelchair or an adult who was all of 3 feet. As a first step, he taught his students Yoga to build strength and stamina and instill balance between body and mind. Abhinaya and movement followed.

His productions are a unique blend of classical, contemporary, modern and folk dances, martial arts, and Yoga. After extensive research he modified the equipment used by his students to support the dance movements. He discovered novel techniques of movement whether on wheelchairs, with crutches or with white sticks. He evolved techniques that would enable the visually impaired glide smoothly and precisely over the entire expanse of the stage. His choreographies are replete with complex and physically exacting movements and formations of pyramids, roundabouts, chain reactions and others. The high energy that translates into visible, rapid and synchronized movements is breathtaking. Perfect mudras, impeccable foot work, clear and captivating facial expressions and, smooth and coordinated movements, belie the disabilities of the performers. Pasha's face lights up with pride when he says, "Most often the audience doesn't even realize that the performers are differently-abled. Once they discover, they gasp in disbelief. Members of the audience line up for autographs and photographs backstage!"

The equipment, which are perceived as a symbol of 'weakness', transformed into symbols of strength. They became integral to the dance and became meaningful and functional props. The wheelchair is Krishna's chariot, the white stick morphs as Durga's and



Shiva's trishul, the crutch is a weapon. What lends Pasha's productions with grandiosity is his creative investment into imaginative, colourful and sophisticated stage props and costumes. He employs the highest quality of stage design and lighting, not to mention original music scores.

### Hurdles Along the Way

Efforts of reaching out to the society out of one's own accord to make a difference often attracts an equal measure of bouquets and brickbats. It hasn't been different for Pasha. "Some people often want to find a black spot. I have always believed in going beyond such fault finding and mudslinging. Once you are in the public domain, you are an easy target to criticism. I have a vision and I have a commitment. That's all that matters," he says. Most of guru Pasha's students are differently-abled hailing from the lower socio-economic background. He brings these children from the streets, from signals and from nearby villages to his institute. "It doesn't come easy. I have to first establish rapport with the children, talk to them and explain what I'm offering them. Then I have to meet their parents and convince them to allow their children to learn dance. Parents have to overcome pressures of social prejudice, believe in the authenticity of my work and trust me for the safety of their children. After all this effort, some children run away and get back to begging or just while

away their lives," he explains. He also has to allay parents' fears that their children will be put to begging, labour and be sold!

In the early years, Pasha's students were refused a platform to perform at events and festivals, only because they were differently-abled and the props used were wheelchairs, white canes and crutches. "When I asked the government for opportunities to perform I was sent from pillar to post. Fest organizers didn't encourage us. Dance festivals didn't have a space for the differently-abled," he rues. Undeterred, he began to produce shows himself. However, once their performances became popular, invites and offers began pouring in from all over the world and he



## Expressions

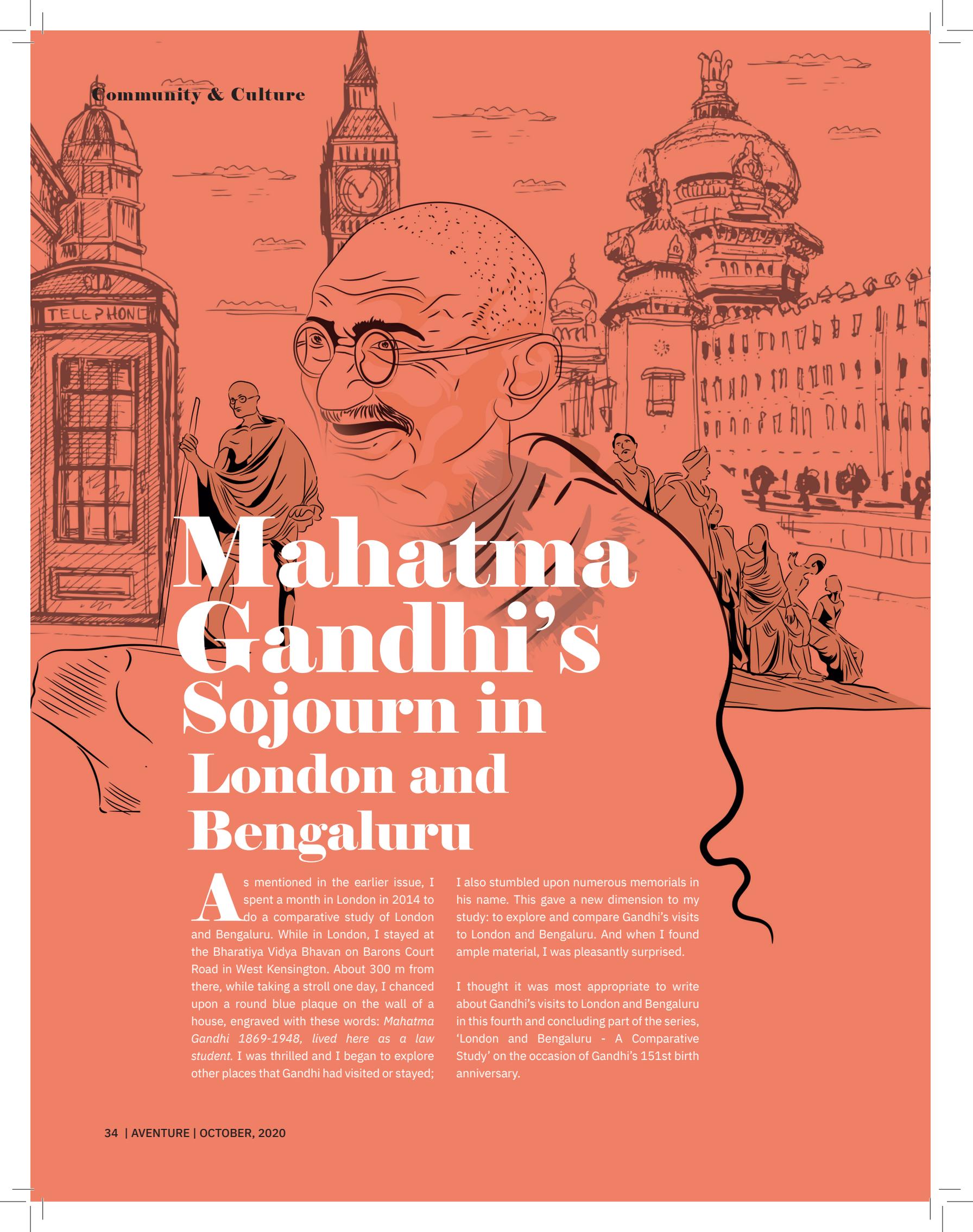


continues to enthral audiences with his masterpiece productions. Children who rarely stepped out of their neighbourhoods, have now travelled the country, and many, even the world, and have a stable source of income.

“Many artist-therapists have appropriated my work, my techniques and methodologies and have claimed it their own. That is a bit hurtful. But I have documented all my work, to disprove such claims. Having said that, these are inconsequential, because art has a greater purpose. Art must transform. For art to become transformative, it has to reach the common man,” he says.

His students have performed in all talent shows and dance competitions held on television, Amir Khan’s ‘Satyamev Jayate, for instance; and, on the occasion of Dussehra, Nivedita, exceptionally talented at the piano, was featured on a popular Kannada comedy show. “All of us have shortcomings. For some these shortcomings are visible and apparent. That does not make them any less human than us. Nivedita is affected by Cerebral Palsy. But she is a very gifted musician. To identify a person’s strength or talent and nurture it should be the focus,” emphasises Pasha. Though frowned upon by many, for him the television is the one medium that can reach his students and their unlimited abilities and talents to a large and diverse audience. “Art if restricted to an intellectual coterie doesn’t evolve and doesn’t allow the masses to relate to it. My art has purpose -- to change societal perception of ability and disability; more importantly, to change the perception of the differently abled towards themselves,” he says.

Like Pasha, there are many who are dedicated to work with the less privileged communities to assist them in self-reliance and self-sustenance. Artists like Pasha, go beyond promoting themselves, themselves, and find fulfillment in bettering the lives of others. Students who enter the precincts of the studio transcend the barriers of caste, religion, nationality, language and sex, to be united by a will to transform through creative self expression. A movement of cultural integration among the differently abled community has been ignited perhaps for the first time in the country! 



# Mahatma Gandhi's Sojourn in London and Bengaluru

**A**s mentioned in the earlier issue, I spent a month in London in 2014 to do a comparative study of London and Bengaluru. While in London, I stayed at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on Barons Court Road in West Kensington. About 300 m from there, while taking a stroll one day, I chanced upon a round blue plaque on the wall of a house, engraved with these words: *Mahatma Gandhi 1869-1948, lived here as a law student*. I was thrilled and I began to explore other places that Gandhi had visited or stayed;

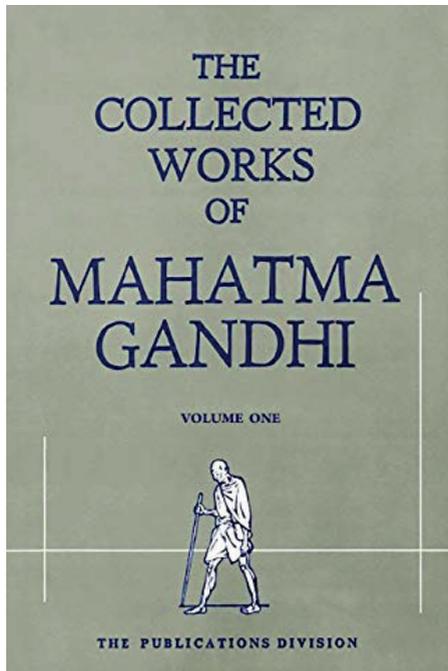
I also stumbled upon numerous memorials in his name. This gave a new dimension to my study: to explore and compare Gandhi's visits to London and Bengaluru. And when I found ample material, I was pleasantly surprised.

I thought it was most appropriate to write about Gandhi's visits to London and Bengaluru in this fourth and concluding part of the series, 'London and Bengaluru - A Comparative Study' on the occasion of Gandhi's 151st birth anniversary.



Gandhi's account of his experience in London - *Guide to London* is an Indian traveller's the survival guide with practical advice on how to plan studies, save money, and prepare food in a rented room. It is also a veritable source of information about London of those times. It was privately circulated and posthumously published as part of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi - Vol. 1*.

Zac O'Yeah, the author of the crime novel trilogy *Mr. Majestic, Hari, a Hero for Hire and Tropical Detective* all unfolding in Bengaluru, has traced all the sites in London related to Gandhi's five visits.



On the afternoon of 27 October 1888, Gandhi set foot on British soil for the first time. He stayed with his Indian co-passengers

at a luxury hotel, *The Victoria*, in posh Northumberland, near Trafalgar Square, today called The Grand. Though fascinated by the elevator and the sophisticated rooms, he realised he would soon run out of money. He checked out of the hotel as soon as his luggage arrived from the harbour.

With the help of an Indian friend, a student, he shifted to a boarding house at 20, Barons Court Road in West Kensington. His formal admission to Inner Temple for a law degree was slated for 6 November 1888. The widowed landlady, Elizabeth Fanny Turner charged him 30 shillings a week for boarding and lodging. She served only stewed cabbage and boiled spinach, which Gandhi neither relished nor digested.

After about nine months, he moved out of this house for reasons of economy and dietary preference, but his stay at Barons Court Road was the longest of all. During 1880s, noisy steam engines passed 20 feet away from the backyard of this house and today you can find a tube station in the same place.

His first attempt to eat out was at Holborn Restaurant, where he embarrassed his friends by asking whether the starter contained non-vegetarian ingredients. They told him to follow local customs and eat what was offered. Gandhi hastily left the restaurant and walked the streets that night in despair.

Three years later, Gandhi triumphantly hosted his farewell dinner at the same restaurant. He booked private dining room number 19, a fairly large one and ordered a special vegetarian feast - the first of its kind in the history of the restaurant! He also hired an orchestra for light entertainment, but his bashfulness prevented him from delivering a speech. On later visits to London, he often returned to eat at the Holborn. It was demolished in the 1950s and today Sainsbury's Supermarket stands in its stead.

Gandhi's second restaurant visit was to Central Vegetarian Restaurant in St. Bride Street on Monday, 22 October 1888. On the menu that momentous day was pea soup, macaroni pudding, and apple tart. He ate his

first satisfying meal since arriving in London. Besides, the restaurant was adjacent to the London Vegetarian Society, of which Gandhi later became a board member. It also became Gandhi's first platform to try out his debating skills. The building was bombed by the Nazis during the II World War. This significant spot is still easily accessible in the city centre, just off Farringdon Street.

### Gandhi's Visits to Bengaluru and London

Gandhi visited both cities 5 times.

Bengaluru in 1915, 1920, 1927, 1934, and 1936.

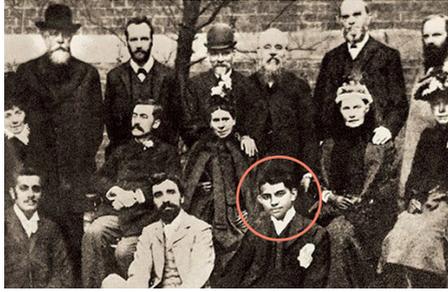
London in 1888-1891, 1906, 1909, 1914, 1931.

The year 1969 was celebrated as Gandhi Centenary Year. A commemorative volume 'ಗಾಂಧೀ ಮತ್ತು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ' (Gandhi and Karnataka) edited by veteran Gandhian Siddavanahalli Krishnasharma was released on 22 February 1970 to document Gandhi's visit to the Mysuru state. Historian Vemagal Somashekhar, has authored a book in Kannada titled 'ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಮಹಾತ್ಮಾ ಗಾಂಧೀಜಿ' (Mahatma Gandhi in Bengaluru) which details Gandhi's visits to the city.

In 1978, historian James Hunt, diligently documented Gandhi's visits in his book *Gandhi in London*. More recently, the High Commission of India in London published a booklet, *Mahatma Gandhi in London* to commemorate the diamond Jubilee of India's Independence Day.

For Gandhi the English vegetarian movement proved as essential and edifying an experience as studying law. It was a new fad and people met at London's vegetarian eateries to debate and discuss reforms over food and coffee. He delivered lectures on Indian food habits to the congregated vegetarians and wrote in journals

## Community & Culture



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*Gandhi with Members of London Vegetarian Society*

such as the Vegetarian, which he urged Indians to read and subscribe, to encourage the movement. This journal laid the foundation for his later interest in the print medium as a tool for disseminating ideas.

“Compared to 1888, London today has far more Indian restaurants. At least six are named Gandhi and I find that even the average pub dishes up a decent curry at an affordable price. Actually, in those days too, there were a few Indian restaurants around: the Hindoostane Coffee House was probably London’s first

curry canteen, opening in Portman Square in 1810. But Gandhi makes no mention of having patronized these,” writes Zac O’Yeah.

The Inner Temple remains pretty much the way Gandhi had seen it. The complex is situated right between Fleet Street and the Thames. Even the street lights around the Inner Temple are made of cast iron, which is why the area is in demand among filmmakers for its authentic 19 Century atmosphere.

Gandhi quickly learnt that a ‘gentleman’ kept himself abreast of current events. So, he spent a daily hour immersed in the *Daily Telegraph* and *Pall Mall Gazette*. He also visited churches to listen to prominent preachers. One of his favorite halls was the *City Temple*, which can still be found at the corner of Holborn and Farringdon Street. Young Gandhi felt that visiting the theatre was a great way to learn the ways of the world. The Lyceum was one of his favourites and it still runs shows. He took dance lessons, tried his hand at the violin, and studied French. He even went to Paris as a tourist to see the newly built Eiffel Tower,

although he liked the city’s cathedrals more. To save money he avoided public transport and walked pretty much everywhere. He frequented many parks to enjoy the cool climate.

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**The Inner Temple remains pretty much the way Gandhi had seen it. The complex is situated right between Fleet Street and the Thames. Even the street lights around the Inner Temple are made of cast iron, which is why the area is in demand among filmmakers for its authentic 19 Century atmosphere.**

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He returned to India in June 1891 and went on to spend many formative years in South Africa. Gandhi’s second visit to London in 1906 was on official business. As a prominent lawyer, he checked into Hotel Cecil, by the Thames, next to Waterloo Bridge. There are no traces left of it now. During this stay, he met Winston Churchill (then working in the colonial office) for the first time.

In 1909, he paid a third visit. Gandhi had an office, The South Africa British India Committee, at 28 Queen Anne Chambers, within walking distance from the Parliament and the Buckingham Palace. Gandhi stayed nearby, in room 76 at the fancy Westminster Palace Hotel, Victoria Street. It is now demolished. But one can still find the building that housed his office on Broadway near the corner of Tothill Street, now called Queen Anne’s Business Centre.

The year 1914 marked his fourth visit. A reception was held in his honour at Hotel Cecil, and was attended by celebrities such as the art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy, the poet Sarojini Naidu and Mohammad Ali Jinnah.



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*The Inner Temple, London*



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*Gandhi Statue at Tavistock Square, London*

In 1931, during his fifth visit, Gandhi was the representative of the Indian National Congress at the Round Table held to discuss the formation of Indian self-government. The conference took place at St. James Palace, across the street from Buckingham Palace, which later became the official residence of the royal family. During his last visit, Gandhi was invited to have tea with King George at Buckingham Palace. When he was studying, Gandhi liked to dress well and in the latest fashion, but on his last trip to London, he met the King dressed in a dhoti and shawl.

This time Gandhi stayed in the slummy East End, where his friend Muriel Lester ran a community welfare centre called Kingsley Hall. On 16 September 2014, I visited this heritage centre, a red brick building on Powis Street. The huge hall on the ground floor hosts Gandhi's bust. Gandhi spent three weeks in a room on the third floor. It is a very simple

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When he was studying, Gandhi liked to dress well and in the latest fashion, but on his last trip to London, he met the King dressed in a dhoti and shawl.  
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small chamber. Some of the materials he used during his stay are still preserved here.

There are not as many statues of Gandhi in London as in Bengaluru. A bronze statue by Fredda Brilliant was unveiled in 1968 at the centre of Tavistock Square just north of the British Museum to mark the centenary of Gandhi's birth in 1969. It was unveiled by the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson on 17 May 1968, in the presence of the High Commissioner of India V K Krishna Menon.

'A permanent monument to represent the friendship between India and Britain', a sculpture of Gandhi in standing posture carved, by Philip Jackson was unveiled by Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on 14 March 2015 near the Parliament. Peaceful protests are done here today. Gandhi's statue at the beginning of M G Road is the venue for such agitations in Bengaluru.



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*Gandhi Statue near Parliament, London*

## Community & Culture

### Gandhi's Visits to Bengaluru

After accepting the invitation of D V Gundappa (DVG), a litterateur, Gandhi came to the city railway station with Kasturba and G A Natesan, a well-known publisher and author, on 8th May 1915, by Madras Mail.

The guests were accommodated in a guest house, the newly built residence of the District Judge B S Krishnaswami Iyengar located on Seshadri Road near Ananda Rao Circle. K S Krishna Iyer of Irish Press was responsible for the hospitality of the guests. Gandhi's food consisted of raw groundnuts in limited quantities and papaya fruit.

His first meeting was arranged by DVG's Social Club at the Government High School grounds. Many dignitaries including former Dewan T Ananda Rao graced the occasion. Gandhi unveiled a portrait of Gopala Krishna Gokhale (now in the auditorium of Gokhale Institute of Public Affairs on Bull Temple Road, Basavanagudi). After the function, he returned to the guest house in City Municipal President Sir K P Puttanna Chetty's horse-driven coach. That evening Sir K P Puttanna Chetty presented a citation on behalf of the people of Bengaluru at a function organised in Lalbagh.

The same evening Dewan Sir M Visvesvaraya arrived from Mysore to meet Gandhi. He asked the organisers to get Gandhi a first-class ticket for his onward journey. But Gandhi told him that even if forced into the first-class, he would get down in the next station and board a third-class compartment!

Gandhi visited the city for the second time on 21 August 1920, as part of his nationwide tour to mobilise public support for the Non-Cooperation Movement. He visited Mangalore on August 19 along with Maulana Shaikat Ali (leader of the Khilafat Movement) and from there he came down to the city. A meeting was arranged at the Eidgah field in Cantonment and despite heavy rains a large crowd gathered rousing cheers of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' and 'Allah Ho Akbar'. Gandhi spoke in Urdu highlighting the salient features of the Non-Cooperation Movement. The crowd listened to him with rapt attention. His third visit in 1927 was a long and more memorable one as

it struck an emotional bond between him and the city. He had fallen ill and had been advised complete rest. The Mysore Government offered to take care of his well-being. A Committee was formed to make necessary arrangements at Nandi Hills for his convalescence. Upon his arrival in Bengaluru on 29 April 1927 he was taken directly to Nandi hills. Gandhi stayed there with Kasturba, his secretary Mahadeva Desai, and others.

After resting for more than a month, Gandhi was brought to the present day Kumara Krupa guest house near Golf Course. He stayed there



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*Meditating Gandhi near Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru*

for more than two months and held prayer meetings in the evenings, after which he would sit under a tree, and interact with people. The tree came to be known as Jyoti Vruksha and is present even today in the premises of hotel Lalit Ashok next to Kumara Krupa. The spot under this tree where Gandhi used to sit is preserved and a memorial has been built.

During his long stay here, Gandhi visited many institutions such as Indian Institute of Science, London Mission School, Chamarajendra Sanskrit School, National High School among others, and participated in several public meetings. When he learnt that National Dairy Institute in Adugodi bred local varieties of cattle, he visited the institute for 15 days to learn about the process. He was impressed with a high milk yielding cow named Jill. He and Madan Mohan Malaviya even took a photo with the cow. He signed in the visitor's book as 'a farmer from Sabarmati'.

The Merchants of Basavanagudi had arranged a mass feeding for the poor and built a



^  
*Visit to IISC, Bengaluru*

reading room for the general public. Gandhi first served the poor with food and then inaugurated the reading room sitting on a chair specially made for the occasion. In memory of Gandhi's visit, this area in Basavanagudi was called Gandhi Bazaar - a very prominent locality of the city. The reading room was handed over to Annaiah of Yuvaka Sangha who was doing yeoman service in the field of Education. The old building of Yuvaka Sangha at Tagore Circle in Gandhi Bazaar existed till 2017. Thereafter, the dilapidated structure was brought down and Annaiah is no more. Upon complete recovery, Gandhi was to leave Bengaluru on August 31.



^  
*Gandhi Memorail at Hotel Lalit Ashok, Bengaluru*

The previous day he was given a grand and respectful farewell in Lalbagh Glass House, where about fifty thousand people gathered to witness the event. He was presented with a memento made of Mysore Sandalwood and ivory, and a purse of ten thousand rupees. In his speech, Gandhi thanked everyone

## Community & Culture

for making his long stay comfortable and memorable. He appreciated the generous nature of Bengalurians. The next day, a large number of admirers turned up at the railway station to bid farewell to the great man they loved, respected and venerated. The entire scenario was highly emotional and many were in tears.

During his nationwide tour of the country to eradicate untouchability, Gandhi paid a fourth visit to the city on 4 January 1934. He attended a meeting at Mahila Seva Samaja in Basavanagudi, where many women spontaneously removed the jewellery they were wearing and donated them for the cause. In another function addressing Bangalore City Corporation staff, he said that Bengaluru was more beautiful than Bombay.



^  
*Gandhi and Malaviya with cow Jill, NDRI*

On 6 January 1934, he visited Gurukula Ashrama in Kengeri and addressed a rally of Dalits, and motivated students from backward communities to focus on their education. The members of the Bangalore District Board requested him to inaugurate a well dug to supply water to Kengeri's Harijan Colony. He did so by drawing water in a silver pot and distributed it to Dalits, marking the launch of the Harijan Movement in the state. Despite its historical significance the well remains unknown and neglected.

During Gandhi's last visit in 1936 he stayed at Nandi Hills along with Sardar Patel, Mahadeva Desai and Miraben. A south Indian Harijan



^  
*At Mahila Seva Samaja, Bengaluru*

Workers Conference was held for four days starting June 10, at Kengeri, where many important resolutions were passed.

There is a very interesting anecdote related to Dr. H Narasimhaiah (HN), who built National Group of Institutions and also served as the Vice Chancellor of Bangalore University. Once, the students of National High School, Basavanagudi were given permission to meet Gandhi at Kumara Krupa. Gandhi asked if anyone among them knew Hindi. The headmaster, aware of HN's familiarity with the language, introduced him to Gandhi.



^  
*Dr. H Narasimhaiah (HN) as a student with Gandhiji*

Putting his arm over HN's shoulder, Gandhi asked whether he knew the language. HN replied, 'Thoda! Thoda!' He laughed and patted HN's shoulder. Next day, The Hindu newspaper carried the rare shot. Later, HN

procured the picture from The Hindu and preserved it as a prized treasure.

Many names in the city like Gandhi Bazaar, Gandhi Nagar, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Gandhi Bhavan and Gandhi Sahitya Sangha indicate the influence of the Mahatma on the city. A large number of statues of Gandhi also stand as testimony to the city's regard for him. A plaque that was in Bangalore City Railway station displayed Gandhi's appreciation of the people of this city. Now it is not to be found there.

Gandhi Bhavan was established in Kumara Park West in 1965 to propagate Gandhian philosophies and ideals. It was inaugurated by the then President of India Dr. S Radhakrishnan. The premise has many attractive sculptures of Gandhi. The museum houses a library, an auditorium and a gallery with rare photographs of Mahatma Gandhi and letters written by him.

I wish that this article inspires youngsters in universities to attempt a similar study of Gandhi's association with South Africa. ▲



### Suresh Moona

A retired teacher. He writes for several newspapers and periodicals and conducts heritage walks in Bengaluru. He has authored books on a wide range of subjects. Founder-Director of Aarambh, NGO dedicated to reviving awareness about monuments of Bengaluru.

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# Aathangudi Tiles

## Exquisite and Sustainable

Fourth and concluding part of the series, 'Revitalising Traditional Livelihoods'.

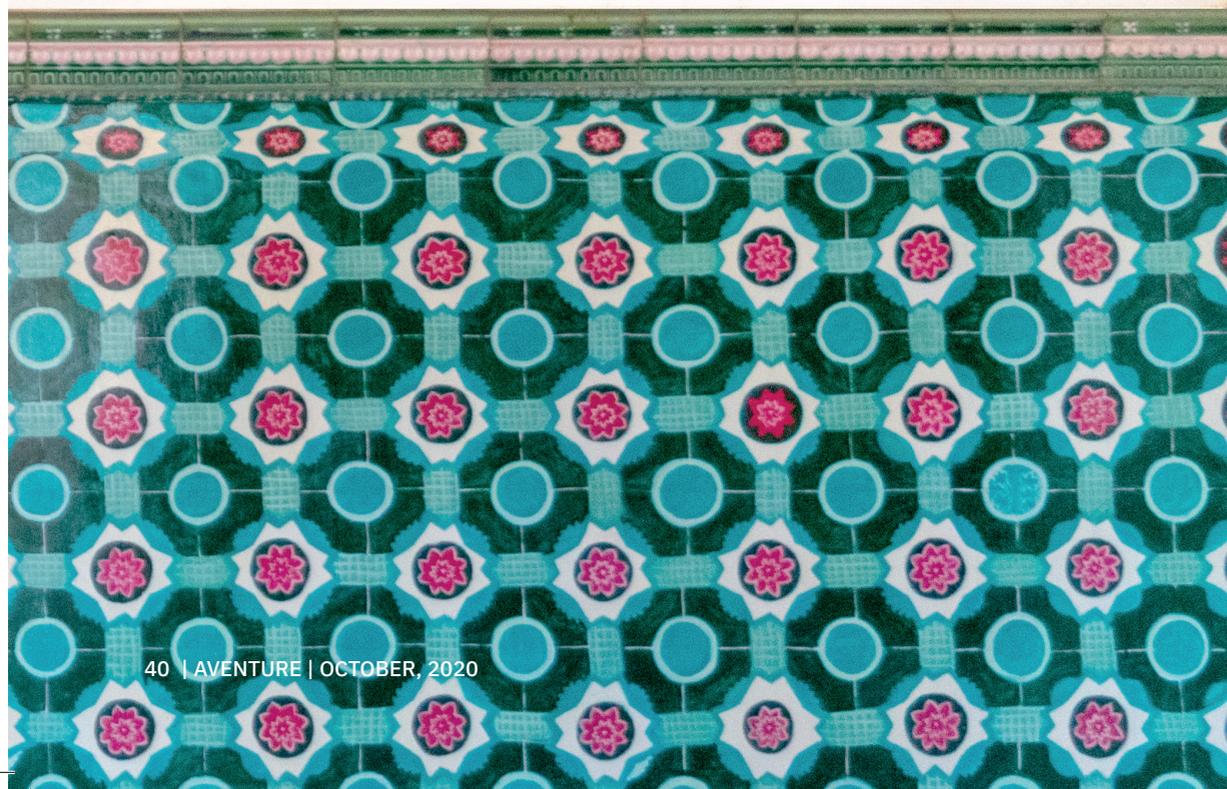
**T**he Chettinad region in Tamil Nadu covers about a hundred villages including Karaikudi town. Interestingly, the word *chettinad* comes from the Tamil word *chetti* meaning 'vessel', and the chettinad cuisine is well-known for its richly flavoured food preparations.

Karaikudi is a beautiful town dominated by temples, tanks and exquisite 18 Century homes. *Karai* means *garai* or cement concrete and *vedu* means house, and the houses thus built were *karai-vedu*, which eventually became *Karaikudi*. The inhabitants of this area, the *Nattucotai Chettiars*, are distinguished for their business and banking acumen, taste for great art and architecture, food and exotic

locally woven sarees. The name *Nattucotai Chettiar* comes from *natu* meaning rural and *kotai* meaning fort or in this case, the large houses of the *Chettiars*. The word *Chettiar* refers to a community traditionally engaged in trading activities, and is variously called *Chetty* or *Setty* in other parts of South India. These words are perhaps derived from the Sanskrit word *shresthi*.

Today Karaikudi is a ghost town and traces of its former brilliance can be discerned from what is left of the beautiful buildings of a bygone era. While some of these old houses have been redone and now stand out majestically with their pillared structures, others are dilapidated; but it is not hard to imagine their earlier magnificence.

For over a century, Karaikudi has been renowned for the exquisite handmade Aathangudi floor tiles. and around Karaikudi were bedecked with these tiles. The tiles are made in Aathangudi, a sea-side town, just



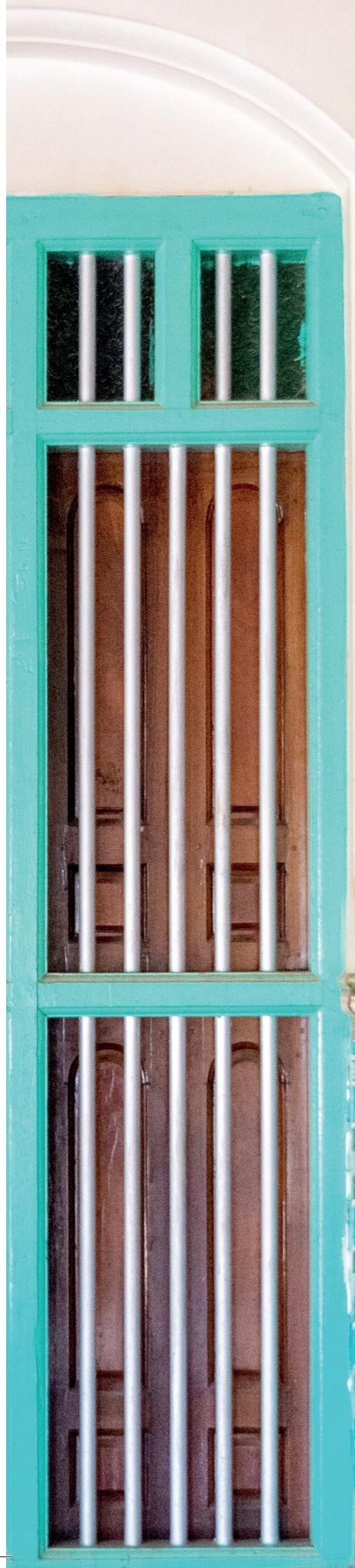
outside Karaikudi. Made of sand and cement and various coloured oxides, the tiles are traditionally decked with geometric designs. All houses in and around Aathangudi came to be decked with these tiles. Their exotic, colourful ethnic look came to be widely admired and demand for the tiles grew. As the tiles became popular, they were laid in almost all homes in Chettinad. Even today, we find several homes with these tiles wearing a resplendent look, after years of use. Many local designs became part of the heritage of this identity and today, traditional and modern designs coexist, reflecting the inevitability of change.

Many years ago several Aathangudi tile manufacturing units sprung up in Karaikudi in response to increasing market demand, and business was brisk for a long time. The infrastructure requirements were minimal -- a thatched overhead roof for shade was the only investment, a small room to store the material, apart from connectivity to a water source. In the rural landscape, this was a simple investment for a good business and so the businesses grew. Over time, some of the industries expanded keeping the future in view.

### Journey of an Apprentice

The process of making these tiles by hand requires an in-depth understanding of the various materials that are used. The tile-maker's proficiency comes from his long apprenticeship that begins at teen age in his home-industry, during which he is exposed to all aspects of the job. Only after he has achieved perfection is he allowed to work without supervision. We met Krishna, who is in his mid-thirties, and is locally considered a very knowledgeable tile maker. He is adept at processing orders and understanding designs. He meticulously calculates the area and the break-up of designs, and determines the exact number of tiles required to achieve a larger design for a specific area. When orders are placed, his inputs are crucial.

The apprenticeship is the only way a new entrant learns the nuances of the trade. An apprentice works from a young age and by the time he is an adult, he would have matured in the profession and his work would have become second nature to him. Today, however, there are no new young aspirants for the job of a tile maker in Aathangudi.



## Community & Culture



said to become better with use, proof of which is visible in tiles laid more than a hundred years ago in many houses. These handmade tiles can be customised to suit the buyer's taste and the simple process is ecologically sustainable.

The local tile makers believe that only the sand from the seashores of Aathangudi makes for good quality tiles because of the high silica and mica content. The methodology of tile making in Aathangudi is more than 100 years old and many ancient houses sport the tiles in exceptionally good condition. What differentiates these tiles is the sand quality and the artisanal skill along with the accumulated knowledge of the forefathers which these tile-makers inherit.

The laying of tiles is also a very skilled job and workmen from Aathangudi travel to lay them in various parts of India.

### Tile Making Process

A plain glass surface of the required size, usually 8x8 inches, is placed in a metal frame and the tile designs are worked on it. Over this is placed a metal stencil with the chosen design. The stencil is about an inch thick, the walls of which prevent the colours from mixing. A thick solution of coloured oxides mixed with sand and cement in precise proportions is poured into the design spaces. The designs can also be hand-drawn directly on to the glass. The preparation of oxides and the proportions to be used are tasks, which according to Krishna, come only with experience. We watched Krishna at work – he went about his work effortlessly. Mixing colours to achieve the perfect shade is a difficult task in tile making. Over the years, Krishna has perfected the art and science of blending colours to achieve the right shade for an entire consignment. This is a tough task to master since even a slight variation of quantities of ingredients will alter the shade.

Soon after the oxides are poured, the tile is shaken so that the colour pigments spread evenly. The stencil is then removed and sand is dusted on the surface. This creates pressure on the pigment and forces it onto the glass,



while it also dries. The cement is then packed over it and smoothed after which the metal frame is removed. After initial drying, the tile is placed in water to dry for 24 hours.

Upon cooling, the glass sheet comes off by itself or needs to be gently eased off. The tile now has a beautiful shine and to enhance the shine further, rice husk is rubbed on it with a drop of coconut oil, which cleanses the surface and leaves it brighter. The sheen is

The local tile makers believe that only the sand from the seashores of Aathangudi makes for good quality tiles because of the high silica and mica content. The methodology of tile making in Aathangudi is more than 100 years old and many ancient houses sport the tiles in exceptionally good condition. What differentiates these tiles is the sand quality and the artisanal skill along with the accumulated knowledge of the forefathers which these tile-makers inherit.

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### Revival

The competition in the floor tile industry is very high. Over the last several decades, with the advent of newer and fancier floor tile options, the popularity of the Aathangudi tiles dipped and awareness dwindled. People are unaware of the availability of cheaper, high-quality local options that are also very aesthetic. Younger artisans are thus moving to cities in search of better alternatives. The local tile craft of Aathangudi may die a natural death in a few years if it is not revived.

Today hand-made ethnic products, made from locally available organic raw material are viewed with pride. People are open and keen to try such sustainable and environment friendly products. With more orders, fewer artisans will move out and this will give this industry a chance to rejuvenate itself. Hence, this is a good time to revive such traditional industries. 



### Asha Malatkar

A sociologist and researcher, she runs a skill development training and awareness programme for women and other target groups. She is also working with three villages near Kengeri, Bengaluru providing support to anganwadis and schools. Previously, she was a teacher.

Pictures: Vijaya Gowri

**Conversation**



# What an 'iD'ea Musthafa!

**I**f toasts, cereals and juice are the answer to a satisfying breakfast in foreign lands, a table bereft of vada is unfinished business in South India. Talk to South Indian foodies, and they will rave on how this savoury snack made of lentils, accompanied with chutney and sambar tantalizes their taste buds.

Yet, it is never easy to craft out this perfectly shaped crispy, crunchy deep-fried snack, as many chefs will testify. The process can be tedious and messy often resulting in dreadful outcomes.

When entrepreneur P C Musthafa who hails from Wayanad in Kerala along with his cousins realised the need for an easy method to prepare this delicacy, he decided to perfect the art of making vada and take it to every household.

Their innovations didn't stop with the much-craved savoury and they added an assortment of south Indian breakfast delicacies over the years including idly and dosa batter to their product portfolio.

Musthafa left his well-paying job with a multinational company to start iD Fresh Food, a successfully run fresh food processing company located in Bengaluru. Launched in 2005, the company has successfully entered both local and foreign commercial markets. However, it is not just Musthafa's business innovations that resonated with foodies, but also the determination and perseverance of a bunch of youngsters to achieve something that they believed in, notwithstanding the struggle that came their way.

Frustrated by the hardships people go through to put a satisfying and hygienically prepared meal on the table, Musthafa decided to change the method of processing and packing food.

The company has recently shifted its focus to offering a range of healthy organic products, which are easily available at major chain stores and supermarkets in the country.

## Conversation

In a *tete-a-tete* with *Greeshma Sukumaran*, PC Musthafa talks about life, business and beyond. Excerpts!

**Despite your humble past and financial exigencies, you secured admission to the prestigious IIM and worked your way to achieve your dreams. Can you tell us about this inspiring odyssey? How does it feel to be in your present position?**

It is humbling and I am eternally grateful. Today I find myself in a position where people are drawing inspiration from my entrepreneurial experiences of building India's largest fresh food brand.

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Finally, in 2005, the five of us decided to put our ideas into action. We have always been on the same page as far as business goals are concerned. If I am the face of the brand, it's only because my partners entrusted me with that responsibility.  
”

For us, life was an everyday struggle. In our village, there was no electricity. I sold chocolates and milk while in school to supplement the family income. I guess my upbringing played a big role in making me what I am today. I can say with absolute conviction that there's no substitute for hard work and perseverance. If someone like me who dropped out at 6th standard for a brief period can succeed, so can anybody else!

Surprisingly, when I look back at all the years gone by, what I experience is not despair or anguish but a past filled with pleasant memories. There were days when we had no morsel to eat, which was quite often the case. But we had a loving family to fall back on and this made us feel treasured. My struggles motivated me to do well in life. I didn't want to be a victim of circumstances.

Today, when I am invited to share my success story at reputed institutions such as the Harvard Business School, MIT-Sloan and the United Nations, I am encouraged to work even harder and provide more opportunities for millions of aspirants from humble socio-economic backgrounds. As an entrepreneur, my *raison d'être* is to give back to the community.



**What role did your parents play in your journey?**

I give full credit to my parents because they pushed me to follow my instincts. Without their blessings and unwavering support, I would not have had the courage to make unconventional decisions that would later change the course of my life. For instance, my decision to quit a plush and remunerative position with a multi-national organisation to venture into business. As daily wage

labourers, they had lived a tough life bereft of material comforts and financial stability. It was only natural that they felt I was making a huge mistake by turning my back on a stable income. However, once I explained my idea, they became the wind beneath my wings. My sisters and I can vouch for the fact that our parents have never said 'no' to anything important to us. Our happiness and wellbeing have been their topmost priority. Not only did they teach us dignity of labour but also inculcated in us a deep sense of contentment.



**While the idea of establishing a business model with just dosa-idli batter itself is rousing, you managed to disrupt an entire market with vada batter and techniques that go into its making. Tell us about the ‘thinking’ behind these unique innovations?**

Here, innovation is simply driven by common sense. First, we understand the ‘gap’ and find ways to fill the gap. We had noticed that idli and dosa batter was sold in unhygienic, plastic packets. We saw an opening here and came up with our flagship boat-shaped, reusable and versatile packaging.

This bagged us the prestigious Indiarstar Award for innovative packaging from the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP). Similarly, our patented, squeeze-and-fry vada packaging design blends the complex art of traditional vada making with modern-day technology. With all our products, we aim to offer consumers fresh and healthy traditional Indian food dishes that are convenient to cook and smartly packed. Also, we aspire to make our food free of chemicals, preservatives, synthetic stabilisers, artificial colours or flavours. They are natural, made in ‘giant home kitchens’ (not laboratories) using state-of-the-art equipment and by following best practices.

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In my experience, values and ethics are strong foundations that help us withstand challenges and setbacks with equanimity and dignity. In this age of ‘global trust crisis’, we need to make concerted efforts to build trust, powered by transparency and honesty.  
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## Conversation

You often talk about the importance of values and ethics in life and business. Are these feasible in today's competitive world? What are the values you have remained loyal to?

In my experience, values and ethics are strong foundations that help us withstand challenges and setbacks with equanimity and dignity. In this age of 'global trust crisis', we need to make concerted efforts to build trust, powered by transparency and honesty.

We are earnestly trying to cultivate a culture of trust and sense of community through our Trust Shop initiative, and Meet Your Neighbour and Independence Day Campaigns.

Integrity, compassion, kindness and gratitude are values that have stood me in good stead over the years. I am thankful to my partners.

**Your cousins have played a big role in this journey. Tell us about them.**

My cousin used to run a small grocery in Bengaluru. Back then, I was pursuing my MBA course at IIM Bangalore and spent hours at his store exploring business ideas. Other cousins would often join these discussions.

Finally, in 2005, the five of us decided to put our ideas into action. We have always been on the same page as far as business goals are concerned. If I am the face of the brand, it's only because my partners entrusted me with that responsibility.

The idea was never just to make money, but to explore a life of purpose and bring about sustainable change in society.

**What was that eureka moment when you realised that it was?**

The Eureka moment, so to say, was watching the soaring demand for readymade idli-dosa batter in unhygienic plastic covers and rubber bands as seals. We were well aware of customer complaints about hygiene and quality. So, we thought, 'Why don't we do it better?' And that's how this brand was born.

**From batter to vada, then to parottas, filter coffee decoction, paneer and now coconut! You seem to have conquered the breakfast menu of south Indians completely. What's in the horizon?**

That's a great observation! South Indian breakfast has definitely been our focus area. However, we don't want to be limited by it.

The vision is to reclaim the place of traditional Indian foods in Indian households.

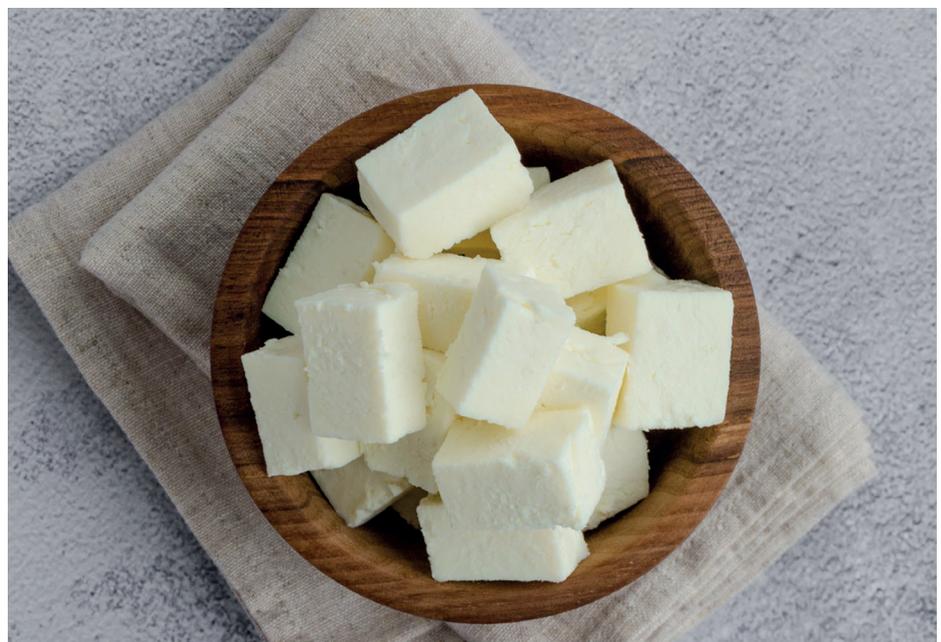
We are working towards making organic food affordable and accessible to all. We are also looking at strengthening our position in the dairy segment. Right now, we have paneer and curd in our dairy offerings. With the growing demand for immunity-boosting foods, this is an exciting space.

Similarly, the success of Smart Sip Tender Coconut and Grated Coconut – both in the natural coconut shell – is driving us to explore other plastic-free packaging options. We are working on exciting products in this segment.

**Which markets are you focusing on? How challenging has it been to penetrate some of these areas?**

Currently, our products are available in retail outlets across 28 Indian cities. They are also available overseas and on e-commerce platforms.

Every market has its unique value and we have been fortunate to make deep customer connections. COVID-19 crisis made us explore other domains – our maiden D2C operations under Trust Shop 2.0 in pandemic's worst-hit areas in Mumbai, for instance.





**Apart from the product, we understand that a lot of experimentation and thinking goes into the packaging of these items!**

Oh yes, those are some of my favourite stories. When we were working on the packaging for fresh vada batter, despite numerous efforts, things were just not falling into place. We were struggling to make a central hole for vada. It took us three good years to get the vada batter packaging right. The overwhelming customer response to our patented, squeeze-and-fry packaging design is the best reward for our efforts.

There are innumerable such stories with initial failures being the spur. We don't dread failure. We believe it is good as long as we keep learning.

**What is your mantra for business and life?**

My business mantra is to fail smart. Failure is a great teacher, provided you learn from it and never give up. Have the courage to take the

road less travelled.

My mantra in life is to pay it forward. Be good, do good. I strongly believe that when you truly want something, the universe conspires to help you achieve it.

**Apart from being the CEO, who is Musthafa away from business?**

I am a simple man who takes great pleasure in spending time with my family. Conversations, especially with my parents and children, inspire me to do better. My wife is my anchor – she is the glue that binds the family together.

**What is that one thing you would want to do differently from the last one if given a chance?**

Would you believe me if I told you that I wouldn't want to change a thing? Life is a gift and we must accept all of it – the despairs, difficulties and delights – with gratitude.

**A question on the COVID-19 pandemic. What has changed in**

**your life and business?**

The global COVID-19 pandemic has served as a not-so-gentle reminder that life is uncertain. A lot of things that we take for granted could be a thing of the past. This crisis has made people, as well as businesses, introspect and re-assess their priorities.

Initially, when the lockdown hit, we decided to minimise our production to only essential products to cater to the increasing demand for our delectable idli-dosa batter, parottas, filter coffee decoction and paneer among others. Over the last couple of months, we have been witnessing a shift in customer choices and behaviours. An increasing number of customers are opting for healthy and homemade foods. Since we have been spending more time at home and cook meals in our kitchens, the demand for foods that offer convenience without compromising health has been growing. We have been proactive in addressing customer concerns and cultivating an environment of trust. **A**

**Quick Takes**

**1. Best moment**

When I paid off my father's debts with my first salary.

**2. Memorable quote**

Mahatma Gandhi's, 'You must be the change you wish to see in the world.'

**3. Role model**

My parents

**4. Go To Food**

Idlis, any day and every day and possibly every meal. Equally addicted to our wheat parottas.

**5. If not this business, what else?**

Hard to say! But it would have to be something that offers solutions to problems that plague the world we live in.

**6. Favourite book**

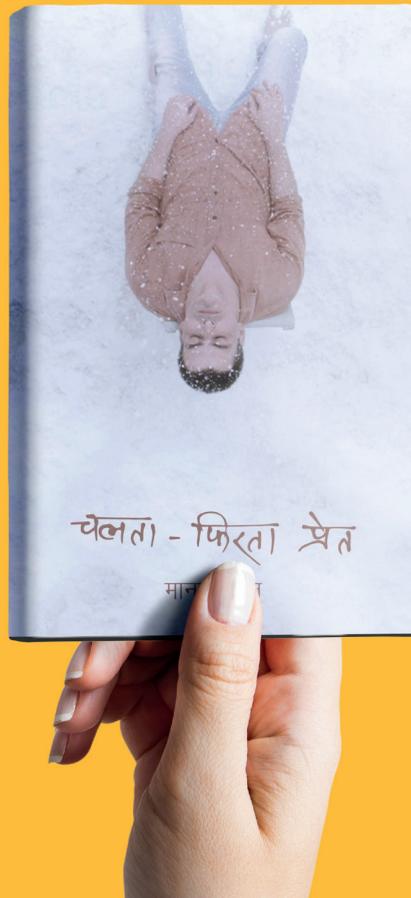
*Connect the Dots* by Rashmi Bansal.

# Chalta Phirta Pret

by Manav Kaul

**W**hen I was looking for a book to review, I wanted an interesting read and one that would set my excitement high. Since reviewing for the sake of it is not my cup of tea, I wanted to read an author whose stories and characters emerge from life. There should be nothing extraordinary about them, yet they should surprise the reader with the way they live their lives and colour it in shades unexpected.

Actor-Writer Manav Kaul's book *Chalta Phirta Pret* (Wandering Souls) more than fulfilled my requirements. A collection of nine short stories are no less than a short autobiography of the author who is a part and parcel of the stories; he is the narrator and the stories are cut out of his experiences at different stages of life.



Not many people are comfortable with writing about death. Most of us may do so in our personal diaries, but very few have the courage to share such thoughts with others either orally or in writing. Kaul has explored life and death in their various facets, but for him, neither is definitive nor extraneous from one another; they merge seamlessly.

While reading Kaul's short stories, one is sure to get transported to a world one has never witnessed. Even though all of us live life in different capacities, reasons for joy and sorrow are somewhere, somehow similar. However, in the case of Kaul's experiences, it is surely a completely different and unique world which we relate to and yet feel like debutants. We are familiar with the concept of death, but we tend to forget about it during the journey from life to death or salvation. Kaul presents the universal

truth that death is inevitable yet nothing to be afraid of in a manner like none other. I remember the lines of Gulzar from the movie *Anand – Maut, tu ek kavita hai*.

Oh death, you are a poem.

This collection has seven stories in total, namely *Ghoda*, *Blue Raincoat*, *Naadaan*, *Pita aur Putra*, *Rachana*, *Smuggler* and *Chalta Phirta Pret*. Born in a village of Baramulla, Kashmir and brought up in Madhya Pradesh, Manav Kaul has travelled and seen life in different lights and shades. The same reflects in his short stories. As Kaul states in an interview, he is always curious about everything around him and becomes part of the events taking place, be it in a work of fiction or in the real world. When he goes to a swimming pool for the first time, his curious, lucid mind instantly exclaims at the blue colour

of the water of the swimming pool. He feels the pulse of Kalidas when a longing lover sends messages to his beloved through the clouds. Kaul is highly influenced by Albert Camus' *The Outsider*, where the protagonist is too honest to escape the fatal strokes of the dishonest world. Kaul too is brutally honest in his narration of his life experiences. He says that when he was going through a break up with his first love, and they struck a conversation regarding going their separate ways, he felt he was reading a poem -- the dialogues exchanged between him and his lady were similar to that of the melodious lines of a poem. He becomes an outsider and insider at once. This capacity to watch himself from a distance is revealed time and again in his work. The same theme runs through *Blue Raincoat*, which serves as the foreword for the book. The foreword is named *Bhumika*, after his first love. Very few of us are gifted with the power of experiencing the collusion of a poetic world with the world of reality or vice versa. And Manav Kaul is one of them.

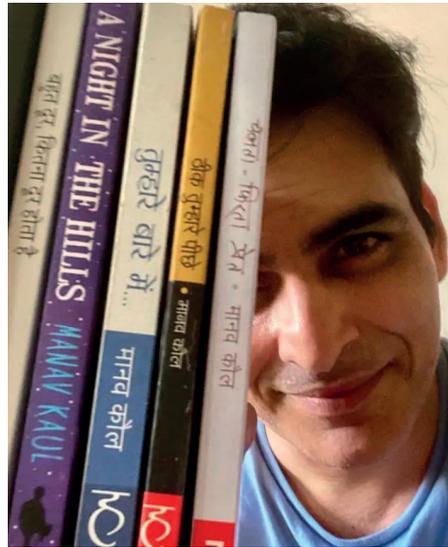
Kaul's love for the river and the myriad possibilities associated with the river are exhibited in the short story *Ghoda*. What strikes one in this short story is the reciprocal and complementing exchange between human beings and the river. Through the river that flows a few meters away from the woman protagonist's house, nature participates in her joyful as well as poignant experiences. This style of involving nature and human beings in certain ordinary situations is seen in the poems of Matthew Arnold.

In *Ghoda* (Horse), the horse symbolises the harbinger of salvation for a woman who strongly wishes to break her soul free from the shackles of years of slavish submission in her married life and to live a life of her choice, post-salvation. The author describes her son and husband as a husband like husband and a son like son to perhaps suggest how humaneness gets squeezed dry by roles that have failed to evolve. The woman has restricted herself to the kitchen, tending to the needs of her husband and her son. She is scared to speak her mind or rather she has chosen to stay mute since her desires and opinions hold no value at home. So she goes to the banks of the river without the knowledge of her husband and bares her heart

to the river. Her subconscious mind has given birth to an imaginary *sakhi* or female friend with whom she shares every incident of her life. The fear of her husband is so deep-rooted in her mind that when a nurse at the maternity ward tells her that her son looks like her, she does not accept the compliment and corrects the nurse saying the baby looks like her husband. Fast forward to the future, she does the same when her daughter-in-law says that her son resembles her. When the daughter-in-law wants her allow her, claiming of the kitchen, she refuses and even her husband and son do not allow her to step out claiming her to be mentally unstable. The cases of women trodden down by the male-dominant families are not a new phenomenon but the way the author presents the heart-wrenching condition of such a woman is unique and appealing. She burns like a candle, lights up the lives around her willingly, neglecting the fact that she is melting away.

Manav Kaul is highly skilled at using metaphors, and he weaves one adeptly in *Blue Raincoat*. The author comes across an interesting story behind a blue raincoat owned by a poet-philosopher whom he meets in South Korea at a congregation of litterateurs from different parts of the world. Kaul who has just come out of a broken relationship, enters into a relationship with a South Korean girl. He is not sure of this relationship as well, yet he goes with the flow. He carries the clouds pregnant with heavy rains of the past as well as the ones he is committing in the present. However, he is relieved for some time when he meets a poet friend who tells him that his blue rain coat protects him from getting drenched in the torrential rains and thrashing cold. Here, the blue raincoat stands for a strong will that shields one's mind from the bruises of bitter experiences. The author learns this important lesson and leaves Korea regretting being deprived of a blue raincoat.

*Chalta Phirta Pret*, the last in the collection, becomes a metaphor for the entire Kashmiri Pandit community that was forcefully ousted from their land of origin and who are now scattered across the country. Deprived of a sense of identity, they are wandering souls, who are uprooted from Kashmir and are unable to strike roots in an alien land. The



narrative keeps shifting between Kaul's past and present with the exquisite use of stream of consciousness. The story revolves around Kaul and his father, and the strains their relationship underwent before his father

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**Chalta Phirta Pret, the last in the collection, becomes a metaphor for the entire Kashmiri Pandit community that was forcefully ousted from their land of origin and who are now scattered across the country.**  
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breathed his last. Kaul's father had remained in Kashmir while the family migrated. He had missed his father's presence all through his growing years. The metaphor of building a snowman is spellbinding. The protagonist remembers or rather imagines (the line between the real and the imagined, the past and the present is often blur) his father making three big snowballs; but the fourth breaks again and again, preventing him from completing the snowman. This symbol goes on to represent unfulfilled desires and dreams – unrequited love, the eternal yearning to return to one's land, the longing for his father all through growing up years, and so on. In every image

of his father the author concocts in his mind, the crow is a constant presence, symbolising death. Even when the family is united, the protagonist fails to spend time with his father due to his busy life. Ironically, when he does decide to dedicate time, his father is no more. His failure in this regard leaves him in a limbo. And he feels he belongs nowhere. His soul is eternally cursed to hang between life and death with no room for salvation. Here, the title *Chalta Phirta Pret* (The Wandering Spirit) applies to both: the protagonist who feels lost without the guidance and affection of his father; and, the father who continues to visit his son even after death because he seeks to fulfil his wish to spend time with his son.

*Chalta Phirta Pret* is an apt title that perfectly describes the condition of each soul in today's world. It reminds me of a line from Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* where he compares the crowd on the London bridge to 'the walking corpses' as they travel through life to death without any purpose and destination. The same applies to the protagonists in this collection of short stories. ▲



**Deepak Malapur**

A writer in Kannada, Hindi and English, his collection of short stories in Kannada titled, *Chahada Angadi* was recently published. His poems have been published in *Poets International* among others. Besides creative writing, he translates, creates content, sketches and paints.

Review | Theatre

# Antigone

## 24x7

Old Tragedy,  
New Aches

A Digital Retelling



**T**he COVID-19 pandemic dealt a huge blow to an already struggling performing arts industry in the country. As the lockdown came into effect, hundreds of cancelled performances and the shutting down of the handful of rehearsal spaces forced theatre practitioners to embrace the virtual possibilities of theatre and explore how it could transcend the stage and be directly beamed onto the screens in our homes.

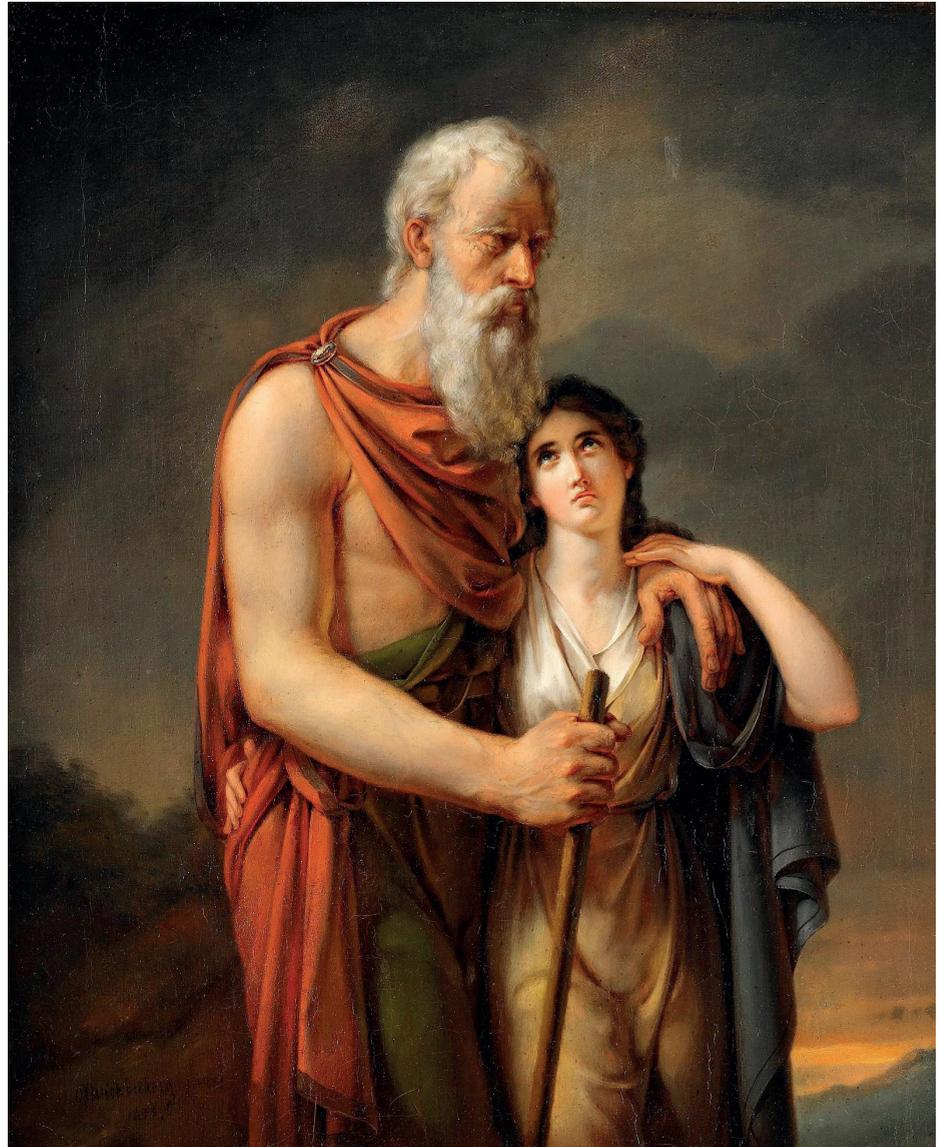
The product of one such transition and exploration is Mumbai-based Pomegranate SWERVE's *Antigone 24x7*, a contemporary retelling of Sophocles' classic Greek tragedy, by playwright-director Gerish Khemani. Known for his extensive work as a theatre arts facilitator, Khemani is also a recipient of the 2017 Hindu Playwright Award.

In this clever digital adaptation, Khemani and his young actors (all aged between 17-19 years) not only completely reimagine *Antigone*, but also rewrite it for the present time. The plot is one of the most crucial parts of a tragedy, and the sequence of events and conflicts in *Antigone 24x7* stay faithful to Sophocles' original. But the language of the text is contemporary, its tone heavily millennial.

Specifically designed as a Zoom play, *Antigone 24x7* introduces us to the characters in the city of Thebes (circa 2020) whose lives have been upended by a curfew in the aftermath of a civil war in which Oedipus' two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, have killed each other and their uncle and successor, Creon (Zayan Dholoo), has risen to power.

The play opens with the Chorus – an essential component of a Greek tragedy, represented by a pared-down three-person council here – discussing their isolation during the political lockdown in Thebes, the frequent power-cuts and unstable internet connections over a 10 pm Zoom meeting. Creon has turned Thebes into a “scavenger-friendly” city by denying a burial to Polynices, whom he considers a “traitor”, while his brother Eteocles, a “martyr”, has been laid to rest with state honours.

The message is loud and clear when moments



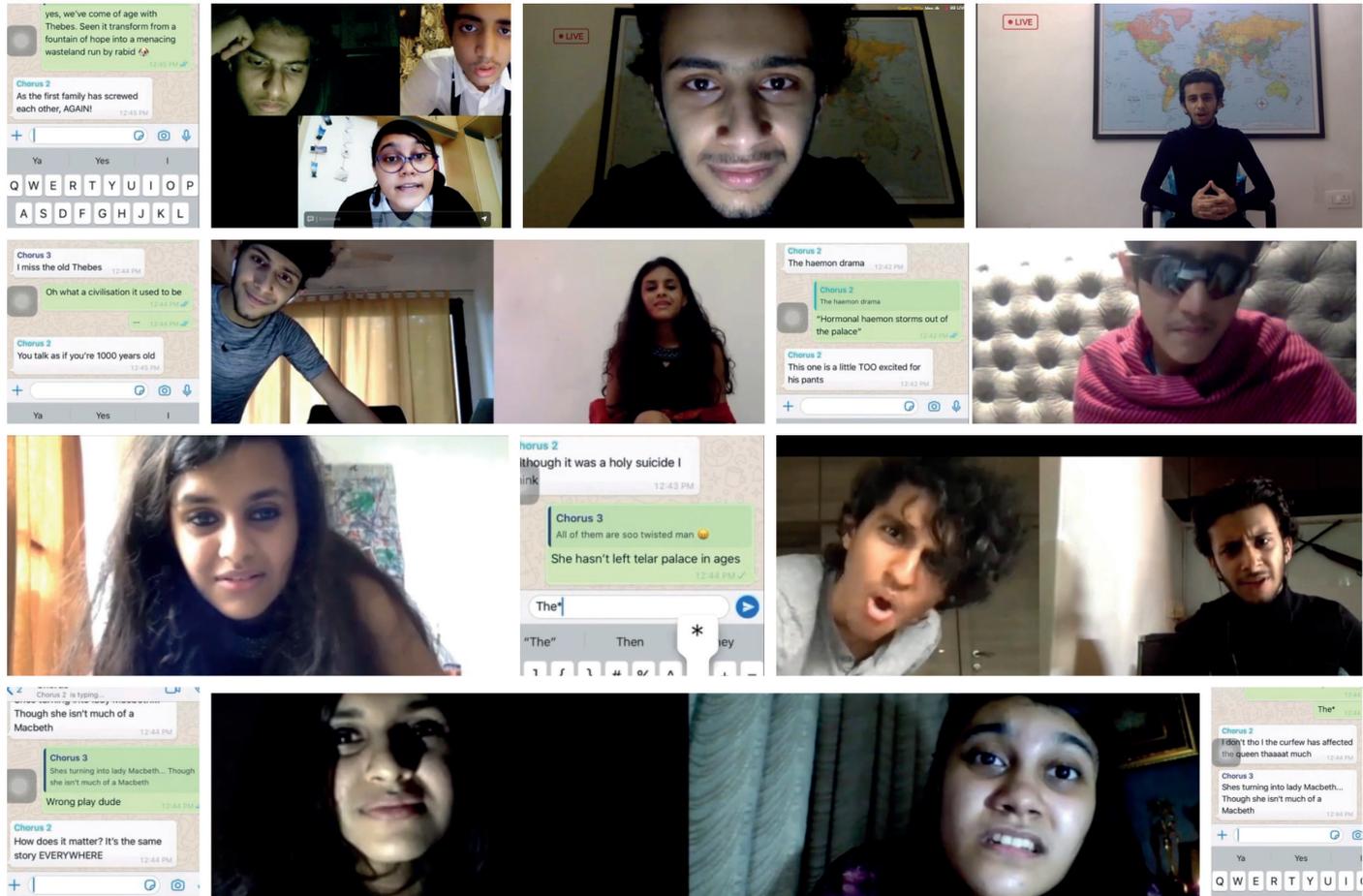
later, Creon goes live to address his “loving and loyal” Thebans. He vows to save the city from those who have brought nothing but “dishonour and ruin” and punish those who attempt to bury Polynices.

“  
**In this clever digital adaptation, Khemani and his young actors not only completely reimagine *Antigone*, but also rewrite it for the present time.**  
 ”

But for *Antigone* (Ira Sharma) and *Ismene* (Jonina Fernandes), daughters of Oedipus, it is a matter of protecting the family's honour. Unfazed by the consequences, a feisty *Antigone* makes it her mission to give her brother a proper farewell but *Ismene* believes that her sister is simply risking it all for a man she has hated all her life.

*Antigone* remains unmoved even by a beseeching *Haemon* (Kush Shah), the man she loves, choosing to find solace instead in a story he often tells her of an imaginary future where their love isn't constantly under threat: “Just you and me, far, far away from this Greek tragedy.” When Creon finally orders that *Antigone* be

## Review | Theatre



killed for being disloyal to the king, his ruthless decision leads to more tragedy and death that even the sage counsel of an ageing, blind prophet Teiresias (Theon Langrana) can't stop. Every character in the play is in a dual battle, grappling with the ideals that shape our expectations of the world and the relationships that show it for what it is.

Antigone and Ismene are like two sides of the same coin, and their conversation, shrouded in the darkness of a power-cut, reveals jealousy that is rooted more in admiration than malice. Ismene believes that Antigone is "bold, inspiring and elusive" but living on her own has made her stubborn. Antigone, on the other hand, calls herself a "messed-up heroine" fighting her insecurities.

In their confrontations, Antigone is the perfect foil for Creon - a woman resolute in her mission, a citizen morally superior to her king. But it is in the quieter, more reflective moments

with her loved ones that we see a flawed protagonist. The pride she takes in being called a "reckless rebel" is shaken when she thinks of the heartbreak and ignominy that her actions

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**Every character in the play is in a dual battle, grappling with the ideals that shape our expectations of the world and the relationships that show it for what it is.**  
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will bring to Haemon and hence urges him to marry a "perfect Ismene". The writing shows us an Antigone who, even as she daringly risks her life, is just an 18-year-old child, hungry for her lover's attention and her sister's validation. In Haemon, we see a young man torn between the woman he loves and his father, and in Creon's

we see a father dressed in a king's costume, consumed by power.

Creon's predicament is also the central conflict of the play. All he wants is to preserve the order and for that, he is ready to kill a troublemaker like Antigone. But he fails to realise that what is 'right' (human law) is merely a code of behaviour imposed by the powers that be and what the state's law forbids could, in fact, be a more righteous path (divine law).

When Creon belittles Antigone for being outspoken and opinionated, he could have well been the voice of Twitter's misogynistic 'uncles' enraged by a woman's freedom to speak her mind and feeling the need to punish her for it. There are several such instances where the writing borrows from present day people and sensibilities; whether it is the portrayal of an autocratic ruler, the overwhelming presence of social media in our lives or a TV media shamelessly baying for blood.



Consider the scene where two news channel anchors are demanding answers (Thebes wants to know!) but are also answering their own question: “Who deserves the sympathies? The choice is clear.” The media here is the emperor’s stooge that wants not answers that speak truth to power, but those that are most profitable.

In *Antigone 24x7*, the medium is king and the entire content has been structured around the many constraints of online streaming. However, online theatre also offers flexibility to attempt new things and the director uses it well to make the world of the play seem truly relatable.

Every scene in the play has been rehearsed and shot multiple times and the best takes have then been meticulously stitched together by editor Abhishek Gupta to form a cohesive whole – like in cinema.

But the play also follows a one-take format in every scene – like in theatre – with the actors positioned in front of a laptop or a smartphone. So the play is a unique product that clubs the ‘rigour of theatre with the process of cinema’ as Khemani says, and one that we probably shouldn’t rush to name or define.

Further, substance takes precedence over style as the director’s experiment with fixed frames allows for very little movement or production design, and that is evident in the script.

For example, the very nature of the chorus has been stripped off its theatricality, thanks to the ‘zoomed in’ gaze of the webcam. As if aware of being fully exposed, the Chorus is no more bothered with being the conscience-keeper, and is instead cynical, irreverent and real – this is captured in a brilliant sequence where visuals of the Chorus’ WhatsApp chats play out on our screen.

The liberal use of social media and millennial lingo also feels like an organic addition to this universal text – Instagram pages smartly crafted to reflect the age and personalities of the characters, Antigone ‘liking’ Haemon’s old posts, trying to take in all their love saved on a digital grid of smiling faces, her phone password (screwcreon), the Chorus’ WhatsApp chat, etc.

Considering the contemporary tone of the play, technology is not new to these characters, and therefore, not a temporal anachronism. But it is quite possible that the actors’ own frustrations with the shoot and glitchy internet connections could have blended into the uncertainties and anxieties of the characters’ circumstances. If the tragedy of *Antigone*, circa 441 BC, was controlled by the hand of fate, the tragedy of *Antigone 2020*, or at least its performers, is controlled by the hand of Wifi-enabled devices!

What *Antigone 24x7* lacks in terms of spectacle, it more than makes up for with a moving

background score composed by Aryan Easwaran and an original song, “I know it’s hard to breathe sometimes”, written and sung by Jonita. The song sounds like Ismene’s lullaby for Antigone, and words of comfort for her own self, adding depth to the angst and anguish of sisters united by their love for each other and torn by their widely different sense of duty and allegiance.

The actors play their parts with great conviction and confidence. It helps that they have had over six years to internalise the characters, explore their relationship with the text and integrate it into the script they are performing. They first performed this in 2014, then 2016 and now in 2020, and the play, apart from having moved from the physical stage to the virtual, has also grown with them. Because surely, it seems absurd that 12-year-olds would have had the maturity to grasp the moral and ethical dilemmas present in this adaptation or a fragile sense of self-worth tied to Instagram likes.

*Antigone 24x7* is a refreshing, immersive, well-adapted play but some scenes, performed and perfected many times over, lack the raw energy and realness of a live performance. Maybe live streaming of the play in future could offer the audience a different experience where there is more scope, and equal forgiveness, for the errors of humans and technology. **A**



**Nalme Nachiyar**

Freelance journalist and an aspiring Kathak dancer. She was formerly a sub-editor with Deccan Herald.

# OTT

# Seizing the Screen and How!

 Shwetha H C

**W**e Indians, unanimously agree about our admiration for cinema. Cinema has dominated our favourites list for decades now. When theatres closed down owing to the COVID-19 crisis and with the lockdown that followed, we knew where to find entertainment – the OTT (Over-The-Top) platforms.

With innovation in technology and the arrival of multiplexes in the early 2000s, the popularity of traditional single screen theatres faded. Cinema became a lifestyle component that tagged along with food, beverages, gaming and shopping activities, and the audience found these multiple sources of entertainment in one place and thus multiplexes started ruling the roost.

COVID-19, here to stay indefinitely, has given a further blow to the business of single screen theatres. The shutting down of the iconic Shanthala Talkies in Mysuru is an example of how the pandemic has affected the cinema industry. Famously known as the Family Talkies, Shanthala Theatre ran the show successfully for 44 years since 1976, before being pushed into the annals of history. If we are to go by industry reports, then at least 100 plus single screen theatres out of the existing 615 are looking at shutting down in Karnataka.

Though the theatres have reopened in the fifth phase of lockdown, there is a looming uncertainty about cinema halls operating to full capacity. Besides, the movie viewer's focus has shifted to virtual theatres and OTT



platforms offering unlimited opportunities for entertainment. This has given rise to customized design, dissemination and absorption of content according to consumer needs. OTTs have, over the past few years, proven to be commercially viable for the pocket-sensitive Indians. While a viewer spends close to Rs. 300 in theatres, now there are a plethora of options – films, web series, documentaries of different genres at their fingertips – for as low as Rs. 40 per month. Besides the audience has become too comfortable watching movies in their homes and this is thus a good time for multiplex authorities to re-consider ticket pricing, which is unaffordable for many.

### Rise of OTT

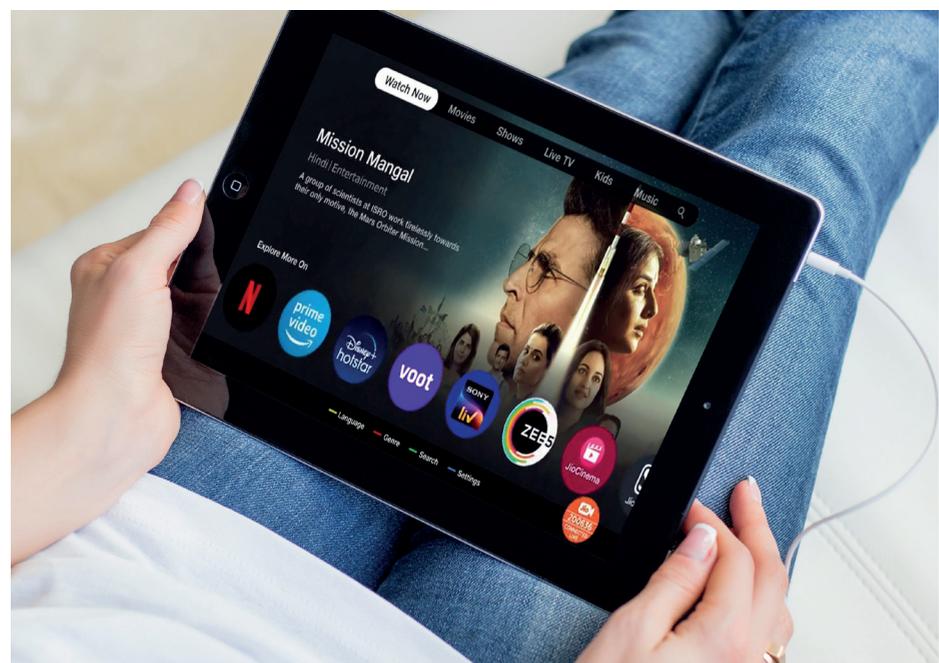
The emergence of OTT technology a few years ago in India, marked a significant change in media consumption trends, especially when Netflix announced its entry to the Indian market with a splash. Since then, this platform has unfastened in a massive manner and has enabled existing artists to delve into

zone, but were ready to seize the baton at the right time. Seems like COVID-19 has only given them the required push and they have proved the hare and tortoise story – needless to say, OTT being the tortoise. The growth of OTT channels has also gradually changed the television market as most tele-series are being aired on digital platforms even before they are aired on television channels.

OTT videos have made film-watching easy, available and affordable across a broader consumer group. At such unprecedented times, when working from home is the new norm, stepping outside to meet friends is risky and opting for home delivery of essentials is a given, one cannot help but binge watch shows and movies, and virtual platforms have become a boon to this section of people.

### Content is King

OTT channels have opened up extensive content distribution to global markets and are working on globalising the local content



unchartered territories. Additionally, it has opened up an ocean of possibilities for artists and technicians who are not too conscious of the production budget. OTT platforms made their way slowly into the entertainment

every day. For example, web series are gaining popularity on streaming OTT platforms and the idea of being able to tell a story beyond cinema, beyond television in this new world is what excites the new age audience.

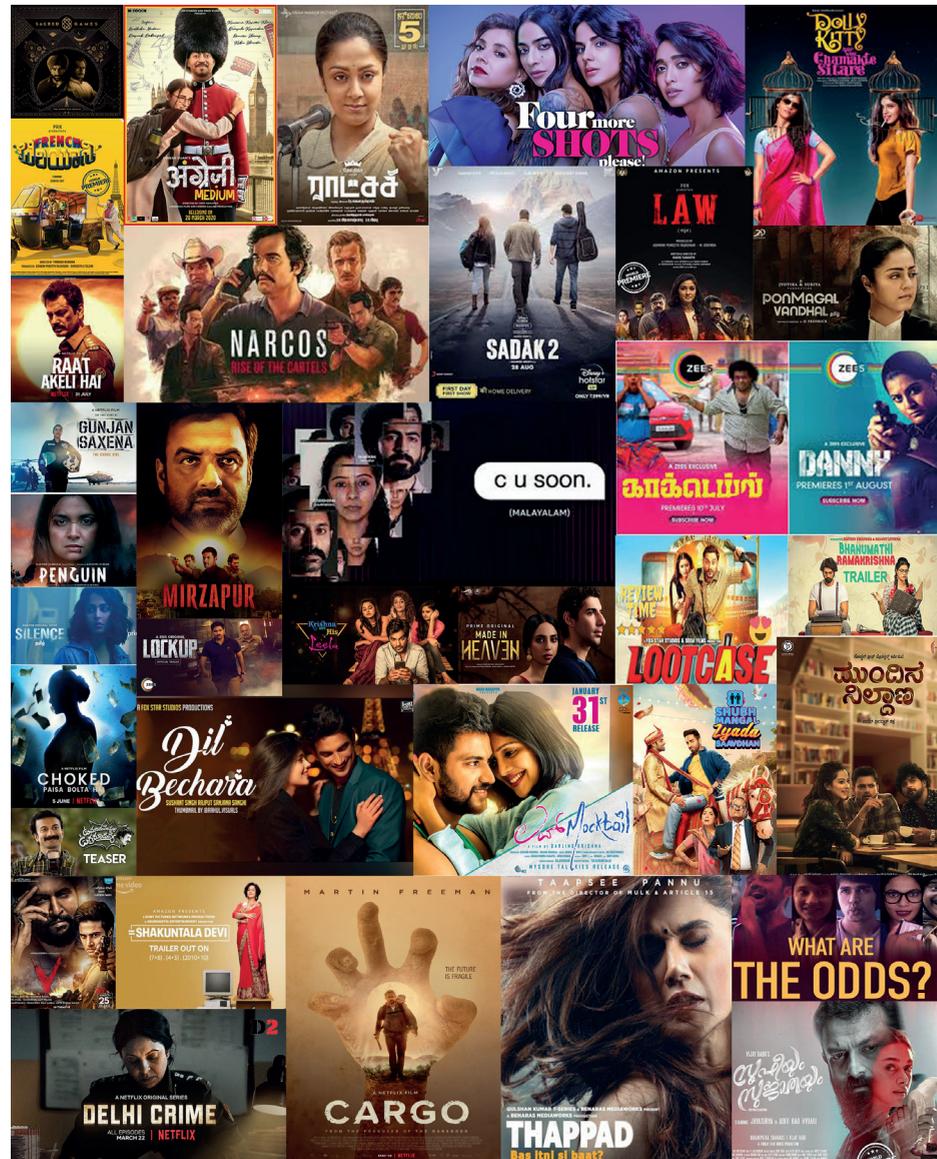
## Review | Film

The web-series format scores high in its writing and has a cinematic touch to it that makes it stand out from the rest. In comparison to conventional media, the content and treatment is original, sporting technical finesse and not heavily limited by time, censorship or advert-breaks. Series like Sacred Games, Mirzapur, Four More Shots, The Family Man, Narcos, Delhi Crime, Made In Heaven and many more have succeeded in exploring concepts that the television had avoided for decades. These web series have a structured screenplay and the story unfolds in a few episodes, without protracted and unnecessary melodrama. The drivers of the content of web series are India's internet audience who account for a massive 440 million millennials and are considered a persuasive market force for the next two decades.

Movies like Thappad (Hindi), Angrezi Medium (Hindi), Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan (Hindi), Mundina Nildaana (Kannada), Raatchasi (Tamil), Love Mocktail (Kannada) garnered more viewership on OTT compared to their theatre release and reached global audiences with impressive reviews pre lockdown.

Bollywood flicks like Dil Bechara, Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl, Shakuntala Devi, Choked, Raat Akeli Hai, Lootcase, Sadak 2, What are the Odds?, Cargo, Dolly Kitty Aur Who and South films such as Ponmagal Vandhal, Penguin, Cocktail, Danny, Lockup (Tamil), Uma Maheshwara Ugra Roopasya, Silence, Krishna and His Leela, Bhanumathi Ramakrishna, V (Telugu), C U Soon, Sufiyum Sujatayum (Malayalam) and Law, French Biryani (Kannada), produced under average banners and released on OTT platforms have fetched themselves a considerable viewership, which would not have been the case in normal theatrical releases since big players would have outdone them in terms of the number of shows and theatres.

And if not for the pandemic and OTTs, movies like Fahad Faasil's C U Soon would not have been possible at all. The story is one we all 'may have heard or read somewhere', the treatment is what makes the movie a golden egg. Again, this movie is more relatable to the social-media obsessed generation than the TV-



viewers or theatre-goers. In fact, they would have dismissed this movie in one go. But for millennials, this is a one-of-its-kind cinema that resonates with their idea of filmmaking.

### Flexibility - The Key Factor

A response to whether OTT launches will actually mean lower sales for filmmakers remains elusive. Even if theatres start functioning to full capacity, the rush to release films would surge and smaller films, though good in content and performance, may get lost in the race and delay their release. This would only urge the small banner film makers to opt for OTT platforms to reach out to a multi-lingual

audience within the country and of course the Indian Diaspora globally. Thus a blessing in disguise for small-time film makers! Owing to the rising demand for OTTs, if big-budget commercial cinemas manage to get glitz and attention on the silver screen, small-budget filmmakers possibly will prefer to adhere to OTT platforms considering its unlimited and unprecedented fan base.

The lockdown and its extension for over 5 months has only facilitated the OTT to procure audiences from tier II and tier III cities, who found this to be the go-to place for entertainment that is just a click away. The fresh bounty of audience from small towns can also

be attributed to Internet penetration. The OTTs are ready to bend backwards to lure consumers, what with Hotstar's Rs. 399/year plan, and Netflix's Rs. 199 Mobile only plan. The MX Player, which had two big releases – Queen and Aashram, is still free. While one cannot rule out the subscription-driven premium version in the near future, right now, MX Player is ruling the roost with unlimited free content, for many Indian users who have been price-sensitive, especially in these difficult times.

The first popular actors' film to get the OTT release is Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushman Khuranna-starrer Gulabo Sitabo. The film, a report says, was sold for a whopping 65 crores. Though the film received average reviews, many people did give it a try in the comfort of their homes and at a time that suited them. Unlike theatres, OTT is a flexible platform. Hence, for experimental and artistic films, it seems best suited, for it can be accessed by people at any time, even after years.



Gulabo Sitabo was followed by a bunch of entertaining films, which made a headway towards OTT platforms. The Hindi-filmmakers first gate-crashed the streaming party and then the regional filmmakers too started getting the necessary gate pass. These films were a good mix of both superstars and newbies and lockdown extensions too worked in their favour. These platforms also gave small films a big reach. However, the only glitch here is a lack of measure of success rate. Most of these films trend for some time and vanish, without giving much insight their likeability factor. A high percentage of films that released on OTT have opened to mixed reviews online, including the movies with superstars.

### Career Boosters

OTT has also helped many actors who were slowly fading away from public memory, grab the middle-ground. Actors like Madhavan, Abhishek Bachchan, Sushmita Sen and Bobby Deol featured in OTTs' web series Breathe, Breathe into the Shadows, Aarya and Aashram respectively—have successfully become audiences' favourites again.

While the Indian OTT industry is fertile ground

for intense competition, it is still providing space for social media stars who are making the best out of these platforms. Social media stars like Yashaswini Dayama (What Are The Odds?), Danish Sait (French Biryani), Barkha Singh (House Arrest and Breathe), Amol Parashar (TVF Tripling), who were initially part of a YouTube series or social media vines are currently cracking it big on OTTs because of their popularity. OTTs ride on them for two reasons - one, they are more affordable compared to A list actors and stars, and two, they are stars in their own right on social media platforms which the OTTs know can snowball in their favour.

### Swift Migration

The fact that most of the digital audiences are millennial, Gen X and Gen Y who spend a lot of time on social media, it is natural that they are drawn towards OTTs. The presence of these social media stars and the fact that the content is an organic extension of trending formats rather than the run-of-the-mill TV serials, which thrive on outdated cliff-hangers attracts them towards OTT content.

Though nothing can surpass the larger-than

“  
While the Indian OTT industry is fertile ground for intense competition, it is still providing space for social media stars who are making the best out of these platforms.  
”

life drama, charisma, grandeur and the fond memories associated to cinema halls, the migration of the audience is inevitable, and is forcing digital players to sway them with good content for long-term engagement. If commercial films work only on entertainment, digital platforms swear by only one thing – content and only good content. Theatrical releases are said to generate extensive profits than that amassed from OTT platforms. Nevertheless, OTTs have rattled the entertainment industry and this cannot be brushed off as marginal. Going by the drift, perhaps the next normal in the realm of entertainment and the future of the cinema and entertainment industry as a whole could possibly be the OTT. **A**

# AI Led Evolution Towards Fully Autonomous Driving



As we sit in the middle of a once-in-a-century global pandemic, affecting directly and indirectly almost everyone on the globe, the sheer scale of the phenomenon can overwhelm - 1 million deaths, 30 million affected and still rising. Numbers, while they do not tell the whole story, do communicate the scale of things. On that note, consider this - each year 1.35 million people are killed on roadways around the world. That's 3700 lives daily that end too early, as a result of human error, vehicle malfunction, road and weather conditions, and multiple other factors.

The point of the jump from one tragedy to another is not to create an equivalence between them. Far from it, as they are very different phenomena. However, it does highlight that despite all the innovations around automobiles there are an inordinate number of lives being lost every day, which we are desensitized to because, ironically, it has been accepted as a part and parcel of living in the age of automobiles. That, however, is about to change. **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** driven innovations are at the forefront of that revolution in automotive safety. All major automakers, new entrants like Tesla, and

silicon valley giants like Google/Waymo are working on self-driving car projects with the ultimate goal of removing human error as a cause for accidents, and drastically reducing the number of fatalities and injuries from current levels.

While the end-goal is worthy, even the most aggressive estimates suggest that we are at least a decade, if not more, away from fully self-driving cars. What happens in the interim, then? Fortunately, a lot, and it is important to view autonomous driving as not a jump, but a gradual evolution, with improvements in safety



**Perception** - This relates to the ability of the vehicle to ingest inputs from multiple sensors in and around the vehicle, like cameras, LIDAR and radar to detect, identify and track different objects in its immediate environment, and determine its position with respect to them - objects like pedestrians, other vehicles, bicyclists, or even a piece of debris lying on the road. AI algorithms process these multi-sensory inputs in a similar way to the human visual cortex, doing billions of calculations every-second to understand the vehicle's surroundings.

It is in the area of perception that significant improvements have happened and which are available in some form of application or other in numerous new vehicles sold today. Occupying the space between Level-0 to Level-2, these vehicles have features like lane centering and adaptive cruise control under the umbrella of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), and also driver monitoring systems (DMS).

ADAS based systems that are available today are either active or passive. Passive systems like Lane Departure Warning (LDW) and Forward Collision Warning (FCW) give the driver audible or visual alerts to warn them of imminent danger, and it is the responsibility

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**AI algorithms process these multi-sensory inputs in a similar way to the human visual cortex.**  
 ”

of the driver to take corrective action like braking or swerving away. Active systems also take corrective action themselves, like in Auto Emergency Braking (AEB) where the vehicle will detect an imminent collision and brake automatically.

DMS based systems on the other hand exclusively monitor the inside of the cabin, and specifically, the driver, primarily through cameras pointed inwards. AI algorithms monitor in real-time the driver's attentiveness, drowsiness and micro-sleep patterns, distraction and more, with the goal of making sure that the driver is ready to take control whenever necessary. As is clear from the J3016 standard, up to Level-4 the driver is required to be attentive and ready to take control at a moment's notice, making DMS systems critical to the evolution of self-driving cars.

every step of the way. Important enough, that the Society of Automobile Engineers (SAE) has created the J3106 standard that formally describes this evolution. When experts talk about full-autonomy, they are talking about Level-5, where the vehicle can drive itself in all conditions without the need for any human intervention - these vehicles might not even have a steering wheel for a human operator to use.

Broadly speaking, the software (brains) that power a self-driving car can be broken down into the following principal components:



## SAE J3016™ LEVELS OF DRIVING AUTOMATION

	SAE LEVEL 0	SAE LEVEL 1	SAE LEVEL 2	SAE LEVEL 3	SAE LEVEL 4	SAE LEVEL 5
<b>What does the human in the driver's seat have to do?</b>	You are driving whenever these driver support features are engaged – even if your feet are off the pedals and you are not steering			You are not driving when these automated driving features are engaged – even if you are seated in "the driver's seat"		
	You must constantly supervise these support features; you must steer, brake or accelerate as needed to maintain safety			When the feature requests, you must drive	These automated driving features will not require you to take over driving	
	<b>These are driver support features</b>			<b>These are automated driving features</b>		
<b>What do these features do?</b>	These features are limited, to providing warnings and momentary assistance	These features provide steering OR brake/acceleration support to the driver	These features provide steering AND brake/acceleration support to the driver	These features can drive the vehicle under limited conditions and will not operate unless all required conditions are met		This feature can drive the vehicle under all conditions
<b>Example Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• automatic emergency braking</li> <li>• blind spot warning</li> <li>• lane departure warning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lane centering OR</li> <li>• adaptive cruise control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lane centering AND</li> <li>• adaptive cruise control at the same time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• traffic jam chauffeur</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local driverless taxi</li> <li>• pedals/steering wheel may or may not be installed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• same as level 4, but feature can drive everywhere in all conditions</li> </ul>

## Bits and Bytes

Most ADAS and DMS systems are primarily dependent on visual perception - that is, the processing of video from cameras mounted in and around the vehicle. The processing of images and video to extract, identify and track objects is known as Computer Vision, and this field has been revolutionised over the past decade, especially in the field of Deep Neural Networks (DNN). Several innovations in DNNs and a specific subset of them related to visual processing called Convolutional

use of GPUs and other specialized hardware like Application-Specific Integrated-Circuits (ASICs). Solving for inference in a reasonable enough energy budget remains an open problem that needs to be solved for self-driving vehicles to become mainstream.

**Planning** - The planning function refers to the ability of a self-driving car to process the various low-level inputs it receives (objects detected and its relative spatial location to

AI systems, especially DNNs, play a crucial part here as well. The planning function can be realised by deep neural network(s) trained over a large corpus of driving scenarios and actions gathered from human operators driving in the real world, along with some hard rules on top.

**Control** - The control function translates a high-level plan into action by controlling actual hardware (actuators) on the vehicle to realise the desired output. For example, on seeing a vehicle slowing down in front and finding an empty right lane, the planning module in a self-driving car can decide to accelerate and change lanes, realised by pressing on the accelerator and steering to the lane on the right.

Now that we have addressed the main components of the autonomous driving technology stack, let us look at how the incremental progress towards full-autonomy will be driven by a virtuous cycle of more and more vehicles feeding data back into a learning system, in a feedback loop that accelerates over time.



*ADAS: Traffic Sign Recognition, Lane Keeping Assistance, Following Distance Monitoring*

Neural Networks (CNN) have made possible previously unheard of performance gains in object detection, recognition and tracking.

Like other forms of AI, DNNs need to be trained for a particular task, which in this instance is called Deep Learning. One of the main challenges in training an AI system for a self-driving car is the sheer complexity and variation in the data that a vehicle encounters in everyday driving, which needs to be reflected in the training data sets used (which needs to be painstakingly curated and manually labelled). The other challenge is in the field of inference, which refers to the ability of a trained network to process data in real-time and output predicted values - e.g. this is a car, that is a traffic sign, etc. The computing power required to execute large neural networks in real-time is significant, which has led to the

them, location, velocity, etc.), and reason out a high-level course of action. In this context, the action could be swerving, slowing down, acceleration, changing lanes etc. To do this, the system also incorporates a base of pre-existing policies (stop when a pedestrian jumps in front) and a knowledge base built from analysing millions of hours of driving.

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One of the main challenges in training an AI system for a self-driving car is the sheer complexity and variation in the data that a vehicle encounters.  
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*Driver Monitoring System*

### Crowd-Sourced Data Acquisition

As we referred to above, the robustness of AI-based systems is directly related to the quality of data it is trained on. It is difficult to capture all driving scenarios by manually gathering data globally in all conditions, at scale. To solve this, automakers are taking an incremental approach by selling vehicles laden with cameras and other sensors with Level-1 or Level-2 functionality, and gathering and pushing valuable data to the cloud. So, instead of simulating real-life driving scenarios in virtual environments, real drivers out in the world dealing with the entire spectrum of environmental and other conditions are helping provide the data to improve and launch the next version of the self-driving system. As more and more vehicles come online and start contributing more data, the pace of improvement of AI models increases, ultimately converging to performance levels that lead to the realization of Level-5 autonomy. Among OEMs Tesla has been prominent in taking this approach, by launching vehicles that are capable of software upgrades, and are constantly feeding back data into their system.

### HD Maps

Most automakers and experts now believe that just ADAS based perception systems and GPS based mapping services will not be enough. High Definition (HD) maps are going to be a critical part of the solution. HD maps, as the name suggests, provide centimetre level accuracy to key features on the road and surrounding environment. From the width of lanes, road boundary location, information on dividers, curves, road signage and more, these are nothing like the maps we are used to for navigation. The human brain is sophisticated enough to infer most of the details in the immediate surroundings to a high degree of accuracy, so the meter level accuracy of smartphone GPS systems is sufficient. For autonomous driving though, a high degree of localisation based on high-accuracy GPS along with a fusion of the data from cameras, LIDAR, IMU and other sensors, all working on top of a mapping layer that provides precise information about the environment are a must. Collecting this data globally, in all the roadways



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*HD Maps. Image Credit: TomTom N.V.*

that one expects a self-driving vehicle to navigate to, is challenging to say the least. It is a mammoth undertaking to map all roads around the world at a level that has never been attempted before. Yet, right now, major OEMs and mapping companies are attempting just that. As before, this is achieved gradually, starting with limited coverage, and expanding as more and more vehicles laden with sensors organically map out an increasing expanse of roadways globally. Some OEMs are taking the strategy of only allowing some autonomous capabilities to be enabled in areas with HD map coverage, and increasing it over time.

The technical challenges in the realisation of fully-autonomous driving are just one aspect governing the widespread acceptance of this technology. Vexing open questions remain around the regulatory and legal frameworks that need to be put in place to guide how this technology is to be rolled out. Will the technology be geo-fenced, with only certain sections like some highways allowed for autonomous driving, and others requiring drivers to take over? What happens when accidents do occur, who will bear liability for fatalities and damages? And ethical dilemmas like the famous trolley problem, which have been only thought-experiments till now, how will they affect the decision making built into self-driving cars? Answers to all of these, and more, will be required before the general public is widely accepting of self-driving cars on roads.

While significant challenges remain, the groundbreaking innovations in AI and other domains over the past decade have kick-started a process that is already leading to vehicles on the roads today that are much safer than the ones that came before. The coming years and decades are going to be equally eventful, as technological and regulatory breakthroughs converge towards the day when fully-autonomous driving is finally realised. It would have been worth the wait. ▲



### Soumik Ukil

CEO of LightMetrics, a startup providing AI-based driving safety solutions that help commercial fleets mitigate risk and drastically reduce losses from accidents, high insurance premiums and fraudulent insurance claims.

# On Slippery Ground



## All Yellow is Not-GOLD!

**R**ecent research studies have established that people are consuming the most adulterated forms of edible oils in the garb of 'pure' oils, irrespective of bringing home the most popular brands. It is time to change the game; it is necessary to bring people close to the concept of ethical and natural production processes; and, warn consumers of the alarming levels of contamination we consume in our daily foods!

A deeper analysis shows edible and essential oils are amongst the most easily adulterated products in the market. Golden colour, flavour and odour-free edible oils, increasing shelf-life, in addition to voluminous requirements from consumers, over the years have put manufacturers and distributors on the path of risky-mechanization! Studies, research reports and best practices have emerged over the years, to bring greater awareness into what we put into our plates, literally.

Manufacturers package these oils in 'good-looking' design and packaging and price it competitively, thereby, increasing the wide consumption and increased usage. Looks are deceptive, as the saying goes, and there is danger lurking in every single oil-based meal we eat.

Did you know there is a low-ebbed yet, powerful movement working tirelessly to change some of our lifestyle habits, which are passively and significantly affecting our health and fitness? A movement that is much-needed to ensure we make paradigm shifts in our approach to consumerism.

This movement is going to affect one of our most common habits, a part of our lifestyle that has gone unnoticed for generations. This movement is towards a complete transformation in the way edible and essential oils are extracted, processed and packaged. With this bold step, the age-old wood-pressed method of oil extraction is back, and it is called the Ghana method of natural seed/oil extraction.

## Modern Manufacturing Methods-Health Impact

"At every step of manufacturing, from the quality of seeds chosen, to the method of

extraction and finally the packaging, is replete with unhealthy practices and chemicals," says Bengaluru-based Manohar Iyer, Founder of Saptham Food and Beverages Pvt. Ltd. He adds, "With only profits in sight, cultivators of oil seeds, have compromised on quality and cultivation methods. Usage of chemical pesticides and insecticides and excessive fertilizers result in poor quality and chemically infused seeds." For instance, the pesticides used on sunflowers are known to cause liver dysfunctions over long periods of seed consumption.

The new age solvent extraction method for edible and essential oils essentially guarantees a higher yield of oil and therefore its popularity. While crushing the seeds, a solvent is blended to enhance its extraction value, using the distillation process. A method of diluting quality, contaminating it with harmful chemicals is almost standardized and mechanized. The solvent used is primarily Hexane, as it enables higher quantity of oil recovery, narrow boiling point and excellent solubilizing abilities. It is almost a universally accepted chemical solvent, if used in safe permissible limits. "It is mandated that the solvent contents are to be removed before final packaging. However enough harm is already done," says Manohar Iyer. When used in higher quantities and over prolonged periods, which often is the case since edible and essential oils are staples, hexane residues are known to impact neural human health in a big way, whether inhaled or consumed. Besides, it impacts the environment, when it is released during separation from oil.



Once the oil is produced it is processed – the refining process which involves the rinsing-bleaching-deodorizing (RBD) process which is extremely dangerous for human consumption! Oils manufactured in this process are criticised for their high saturated fat content, which can have harmful impacts on cardiovascular health. A safe and healthy alternative is pure and toxic-free coconut or groundnut oil for daily consumption.

Refined oils are subject to very high levels of heating and mixing of chemicals to prevent them from turning rancid and to enhance shelf-life, which rids of all nutrient value. When subjected to high heating the oils undergo chemical changes and become trans fats which rids the oil of all antioxidants, vitamins, and natural flavor of the oil.

Besides, most vegetable oils that are refined have high levels of Omega 6 contents which are known to cause chronic inflammation, which is an underlying symptom in heart disease, arthritis, cancer among others.

Reports and studies have shown that manufacturers mix residues of petrochemicals to these edible oils in the packaging processes. Of course, as one would now know it, these definitely have carcinogenic and other harmful contents, with the potential of causing fatal illnesses – including cancer, diabetes, kidney

and renal failure, cardiovascular diseases, skin diseases and more!

Some players in this space even use paraffin, white oil or mineral oil and brand them as edible oils. Mineral oil is banned in Europe and should be banned here too. Unfortunately, many leading cosmetic companies, skincare,

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**A method of diluting quality, contaminating it with harmful chemicals is almost standardized and mechanized.**  
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lip care, hair care and other beauty products are using mineral oils in their ingredients. Paraffin is clearly known to be a carcinogenic!



Harmful preservatives, anti-foaming agents, colouring agents are all packaged into the deceptively good-looking oil packages we bring home every month! Various studies have shown that synthetic food colourants have considerable toxicological effects, including but not limited to carcinogenicity, hypersensitivity reactions, and even altered behavioral effects.

Plastic as we know is not a natural material. Several chemicals go into the making of plastic. Storing oil or any other edible in plastic packets over prolonged periods leads to the infusion of the chemicals into the stored food, especially bisphenol A and phthalates. These chemicals are known to cause hormonal imbalances, changes in tissue structure, genetic damage and even cancer. Besides, think about the number of hands the packets have changed before reaching your home and the types of bacteria and virus they can carry.

## Health & Fitness

### Long-term effects on health :

- **Carcinogenic**

Increased risk of cancer from the use of nickel in some popular brands.

- **Digestive Disorders**

Sodium hydroxide used in some oils increases risk and disturbs the digestive system causing illnesses like ulcers, gastro-enteritis, cysts and tumours.

- **Respiratory Disorders**

Bleaching, de-waxing, de-odorizing, de-gumming and other core processes result in harming and weakening the respiratory system. Some reports indicate that they also reduce blood circulation to the brain.

- **Cardio-Vascular Disorders**

High temperatures used to refine the oil removes the natural substances, nutrients in the oil. This also significantly increases the fat content in the oils causing cardio-vascular health issues.

### A 'Pure' Form of Extraction – A Revolution in the Making

Interestingly, and with a promise to transform the compromised space of edible oils, a new crop of entrepreneurs is working towards transforming the entire lifecycle of edible oil extraction and distribution. Here, the entire lifecycle is reformed, from collection of authentic, pesticide-free raw materials, to traditional methods of extraction and also plastic-free storage and distribution.

The changes are guaranteed to give us the gift of wellness. Manohar Iyer, founder of Saptham, who is one such conscientious entrepreneur in this space explains, "Pure groundnuts and best quality coconuts in the wood-pressers yield pure oil in their natural form, with absolutely no additives, colours, flavours or chemicals. The oils are collected in steel containers, also coming from a conscious decision to stay away from plastic usage."



^  
*Traditional oxen-driven gana*

A transparent method of manufacturing processes, where companies can put up their production methods, for people to experience and then buy, should be the mandate. Every consumer who buys, who is likely to buy is eligible and has a right to know how it is made!

"This movement has to become a consumer led movement now" he says, "for every consumer has to benchmark the product on the shelf not only for its good looks, or false promises but for real value for money, for wellness, for nutrition and safety, for being cruelty-free, and no negative health impacts through a high level awareness. These and more should be the guiding force behind every product that is placed and bought off-the-racks! Beauty and health are really skin-deep," he says categorically.

An emerging methodology is actually a resurgence of a 13 Century method of oil extraction called, Ghana Method of Oil Processing. A traditional method of oil processing, this involves the use of oil extraction using wood from Albizia Lebbeck trees. If you have lived in rural India or have heard tales of life in rural India, you would know that consuming edible oils from wood-pressed methods, was the only way to having it! Over time, with extreme mechanisation and automation, this tradition waned and almost was on its last steps to extinction!



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*Manohar Iyer*

The ideal way of bringing edible oil to the consumer has an entire process in place: Raw materials are to be sourced from well-bred seeds in their 100 percent natural forms and are cultivated in an environment that is exposed to organic fertilizers and pesticides. They are to be untouched by hand and collected and stored in hygienic environments. The oils are to be neither bleached nor refined, ethically sourced, produced, packed and supplied.

### Resurgence of Traditional Oils

A generation which has grown up seeing, consuming only packaged refined oils has no idea about traditional oils at all. "One type of oil being produced and gaining popularity is from Niger seeds, also called *uchellu* locally. Bringing these 'extinct oils' back is also a great way to familiarize next-gen and the millennials on the different types of traditional oils like *uchellu*, *castor* and *mustard* oils," points out Manohar Iyer.

Niger Oil has a host of benefits for users : Prevents gastrointestinal problems, boosts the immune system, supports weight gain, fights inflammation, supports cardiovascular health, induces sleep, repairs cells and tissues, supports blood circulation and relieves pain.

Castor Oil was especially used for hair and scalp health, to regulate body temperatures and as a potent and safe laxative.

Mustard Oils has anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory properties and promotes cardio vascular health among others.

"The philosophy is around extracting oils in their most natural, un-contaminated, nutrient-embedded forms and of course, in the most hygienic methods," points out Manohar.

"Natural oils are extracted in room temperature, under 40 degrees to retain the nutrients and making it absolutely safe for human consumption, and this is possible only with

the Ghana method. With the mechanized, bulk processing methods, the temperatures soar, leaving the oils rid of all nutrients and causing harmful chemical changes," informs Manohar Iyer without mincing his words.

The farming community is another direct beneficiary of promoting the manufacture and consumption of such oils. A single act of a conscious and informed decision by a consumer can add significant value to the other end of the ecosystem. It is important that the farmers get a premium price and not a discounted price for growing such healthy crops, for playing a critical and imperative role in growing organic crops.

Many emerging brands in this space are also advocating a no-plastic philosophy. In some brands and their outlets, all team members also follow a no-plastic policy. All utilitarian elements on the shop-floor are either glass or steel. This is a conscious endeavour to make the ecosystem more sustainable and biodegradable!

As we all know, less consumption of plastic means less exposure to carbon dioxide. It is established that long-term and continual use of plastic increases the risk of terminal illnesses among humans, endangers animals and contaminates our water, air and food! In fact, at these outlets, customers are encouraged to bring their own steel or glass containers to carry the oils.

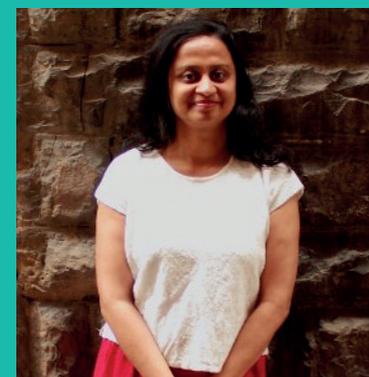
While the future for organically and naturally produced oils is bright and encouraging, there are some challenging realities too. This particular method of oil extraction is definitely cost and capital intensive. Acquiring the machines is only one aspect of the investment. The business takes a very long time to break even and yield profits, albeit, marginal. Selling the byproducts is absolutely essential to break even. There are other issues like machine wear and tear, maintenance and so on! Reports indicate that Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have a higher number of traditional oil-extraction set-ups than Karnataka.

This is not only a commitment towards a global and ethical method of manufacturing



and selling edible essential oils, but also an endeavour to ensure people get seamless and trusted access to nutrient-rich and healthy oils for daily consumption.

This is not only about healthy food, this is, as I said, about something larger, meaningful and valuable for the current and next-gen. This is not only going to transform the products we use; this is going to change how we CHOOSE, how we transform the entire lifecycle, thereby safeguarding our ecosystem. How we choose to live will eventually determine how we contribute to larger goodness and of course, preserve the environment. Make that CHOICE, here and now. 



**Aparna Shivapura**

Founder, THOUGHT FLOWS is a thought leader, brand development and marketing professional with diverse experience in enabling brands and leaders, realise their personal and organisational goals. She writes regularly on carnatic classical music, ancient healthcare systems etc.



# Highs and Lows of Sports Shooting in India

**I**nterest and passion for sports shooting is exploding among the youth of the country. The reservations surrounding 'guns' seems to be abating as more and more parents are willing to allow their children to explore the sport, without of course, throwing caution to the wind. Also factor in that the millennial are an adventurous lot, keen on exploring new territory! With that, the demand to set up shooting ranges by independent investors and institutions is spiralling.

Meet Bengaluru-based Anand C K Shashidhar who has been deeply engaged with sports shooting for the past 4 decades as a player, coach, promoter and administrator. Apart from training budding talent, proactively promoting and standardising the various facets of the sport, he is a leading consultant

for those interested in setting up shooting ranges across the country. According to him, "India has a huge young talent pool that is soon going to debut and outshine its international counterparts."

The paucity of credible information about the sport in India spurred him to author *10X*, a compendium on sports shooting, the only one of its kind published in India. It is hailed as the 'Bible for Shooting' by coaches and sportspersons alike.

In this interview with *Shubha Srikanth*, Founder and CEO of Kadamba Sports, a federation dedicated to promote and manage sports coaching in educational institutions, talks about several facets of the sport.



### Let's talk about how your interest in shooting was sparked, and your foray into professional shooting.

Guns and shooting have always been a big part of me. I drew guns behind bus tickets and while my friends read novels, I binged on books related to guns and its history! M Narayan Rao, my NCC officer and mentor at school was the first to encourage my interest in shooting. I attended more than 16 NCC camps, faring as the best shooter of Karnataka & Goa Directorate and won several medals and a chance to participate at the national level.

In 1997, late Nagraj Rao Jagdale, a sports shooting enthusiast set up Karnataka's first professional shooting range inside the Sports Authority of India (SAI) campus. That year, Karnataka hosted the National Games for the first time and shooting was included as an event. Inspired, young shooters like me enrolled to train in competitive sports shooting. Impressed by my performance, and aware of my difficult financial situation, Mr. Jagdale sponsored my membership to Karnataka State Rifle Association (KSRA), because membership was mandatory for competing.

We did not fail him! In our very first stint at representing the state that year, in the G V Mavalankar Championship, Karnataka won all three (Gold, Silver & Bronze) medals in the 50m Prone Rifle Match. This record of one state clinching the complete podium stands unbeaten!

### What was your practice regimen like?

The range would remain open only for half-day on weekends. Upon our insistence, Mr. Jagdale ensured the range remained open for several days before every match. Most of us could not afford expensive ammunition so we had to make do with 'Dry' practice - mentally convince ourselves that the gun is loaded for every shot, and re-live proper match training. Besides, there was no dearth for time, energy and passion!



Shooters follow one of the two training regimens -

Russian method - participants reach the venue country weeks in advance of a tournament to acclimatise themselves to the weather conditions, cuisine etc.

English method - participants make everything 'even' in the host country to suit their home environment, be it food or temperature, so

that home-training conditions continue till the match.

Since I could not afford either of these, I developed my own -- I lived the life of the competition venue locally. If, for instance, the next match was in Punjab, in winter, I would practice under a fan, sleep under a fan, and eat samosas for breakfast, etc. So, when I did end up at the match venue, the conditions there would not shock my body and mind.

### What is your assessment of the Indian sports shooting scenario?

Shooting is one of the fastest growing sports in India, and the future for our country is most promising, considering the ace performances of our players and the global recognition that our players are garnering. With stalwarts and ex-champions nurturing more talent across the nation, a new breed of young talent, yet in their teens, have acquired top seeding in the world.

The national governing body is working with very efficient protocols in terms of competition rules and guidelines, selection, support, etc., but, other administrative bodies are carelessly allowing just about anyone to open and run shooting ranges, especially the Indoor Air Gun 10 meter ranges. Thousands have mushroomed, and there are absolutely no checks on safety standards, training quality, member verification, etc. Although, understandably, part of the growth curve, these issues can snowball into a complex chaos in the near future, if not addressed.

That said the sport has definitely evolved. Not long ago shooting accessories and gear had to be imported from Germany and Italy at exorbitant prices, which most couldn't afford. Lazlo Szucsak, a foreign coach of the Indian team, for the first time procured foreign gear - quality jackets from Korea, and that alone changed our international ranking for good. Neelesh Rane, a reputed sports gear manufacturer is manufacturing high quality gear like jackets and trousers in India. Others eventually joined the league and quality accessories are now available at affordable rates. In fact, many foreign athletes prefer Indian brands above German and Italian ones. Dr. Shirsat is

## Sports

turning tables by manufacturing quality air guns in India. In some time, I am sure he will produce guns that supersede the quality of imported guns.

CBSE has introduced Sports Shooting into the curriculum and Khelo India is promoting sports shooting in educational institutions and academies. It's a good thing that children are being introduced to the sport early on. Sports shooting is certainly trending in India!

### Competitive Sports Shooting Events

- Indoor ranges - for the 10m air gun events - Air rifle and Air pistol.
- Outdoor ranges - 50 m rifle with .22 calibre rifle and .22 caliber Free Pistol 25 meter pistol events -firearms like the .22 calibre pistol and the 32 c calibre pistol Trap and Skeet events -- shot guns.
- Longer ranges for Big Bore events -- 300 m events -- high calibre 30-06 and .303 calibre rifles.



### What factors are thwarting the growth of the sport in the country?

- Red-tapism in importing quality competition guns is a big hurdle. The DGFT (Director General of Foreign Trade) waived duty for gun imports only for Renowned Shots (champions with Minimum Qualifying Score (MQS) in national championships). Beginners remain deprived of quality guns. The parallel grey

markets import guns in the names of existing renowned shots, and sells them at premium prices to upcoming shooters. Guns are also available for rent at exorbitant prices! A workable solution would be to import guns, in the name of the beginners, and allow beginners to use them only in the clubs. Eventually, when they become Renowned Shots, the gun can be transferred to the individual's licence. Since, the club can then import in bulk at discounted prices, the grey market will disappear.

- Lack of defined syllabus and teaching methodology for the sport. While many other sports may not need it, and since safety is a big issue in this sport, a syllabus is mandatory. Sports Shooting is the only event for which even the Sports Authority of India (SAI) has not designed and implemented a curriculum. A few years back, the Secretary General of S.A.I., Shri. Neeraj Kansal suggested that my book be made the curriculum in SAI. However, the State Government nod is necessary for such an initiative.
- Lack of standard certification process for range officers. Anyone claiming to 'know' shooting can become a trainer or range officer, as of today. This causes hurdles for proper impartation of right techniques and guidance for beginners.
- Lack of standard guideline for training in a club and running a club; hence training standards vary from one club to another.
- Lack of mandatory process or protocol for establishing an Indoor Air Gun range. The only requirement is to inform the local police before the range becomes functional.

The cumulative effect of all these drawbacks is that safety is being compromised on a large scale in the country. In fact, the safety issues go beyond the sport. Even fire arms license holders and licensed police officers are sometimes not adequately trained to handle weapons, leading to tragedies. Hence, I ran the Civilian Rifle Training mandatory course for all arms licence applicants in Bengaluru for about 8 years, and trained more than 1600 arms license applicants.



### Accomplishments

- KOA 'Best Sportsman of the Year', 2003
- 'Ekalavya' Awardee, 2006
- 'Paarampara Nidhi' Award, 2013
- ISSF 'B' Judge, International Sports Shooting Federation
- Four times 'Renowned Shot'
- Founder & Hon. General Secretary, MDRA
- MC Member & Chief Coach at Sheen Sports Academy
- Ex-Managing Committee member, Karnataka State Rifle Association
- Registered Life Member, Sports Trainer & Competitor with NRAI
- Technical Advisor to the Forest Department
- Coach for MRC Marksmanship Unit, Wellington



### There is an upsurge in the number of shooting ranges across the country.

Yes, there is a fair rise in the number of ranges. The demand is geographically influenced. North Indian states like Haryana, Punjab and UP have invested quite heavily, while South Indian states still lack the motivation, but will pick up in the coming years.

I get invitations from many North Indian investors to set up ranges in their states and academies, while it is a struggle in South India just to convince the schools and institutions to give me an appointment to discuss setting up an indoor airgun shooting range.

Most investors compare returns from these ranges to real estate investments, and shooting setups require some amount of passion apart from mere commercial interest, which is a rarity.

### Requirements for Setting Up a Shooting Range

Mandatory requirements to set up a shooting range: ample space, targets systems, guns (both Indian and Imported), technically sound interiors, shooting accessories, toilet/changing room, training charter, plan for

active and passive training, certified Range Officer, trained, certified coaches, coaching methodologies, and very importantly, appropriate safety measures.

Minimum space for an ideal Indoor Airgun Sports Shooting Range is 32.4 feet by 50 feet. Complete compliance with technical rules and regulations of the International Sport Shooting Federation (ISSF). Since there are hundreds of technical considerations, hiring only a qualified/certified ISSF Judge to help with compliance is important.

Typical investment is about 15 to 30 Lakhs for equipment, airguns, target equipment, lighting etc. alone. The cost for cosmetic interiors and real estate value of the range obviously vary.

A complex and elaborate process is in place to import guns. Non-compliance can land range owners in trouble.



### How important is nutrition and physical fitness?

Physical fitness and stamina is always a plus, but since shooting is a passive sport, definitive strength is not a must. In shooting, since overall stamina is very important, one must work out for more supple and flexible muscle building than big and strong ones. A flexible body is more important for building a good stance. I have prepared an exhaustive collection of exercises, targeting specific parts of the body, to flex and strengthen them, which I have tested on my marksmen in the army and the police target shooting team in Bangalore. It's good for shooters to engage in an active sport as a hobby, like swimming, badminton, or basketball, which improves

muscle co-ordination, muscle-oxygen levels, etc.

### What are the key skills required for a shooter?

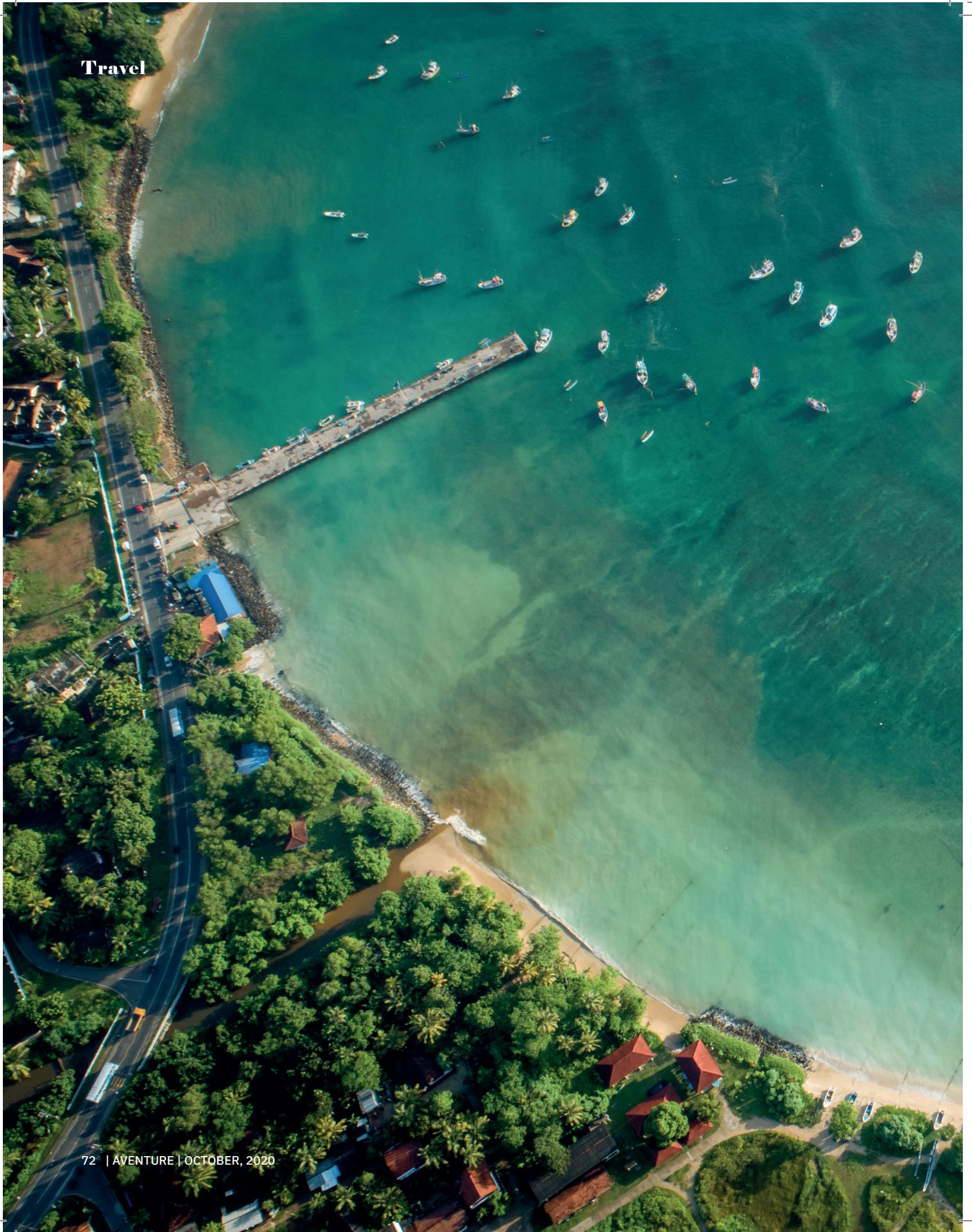
A good shooter must eventually be capable of

- Creating a mind set for precision
- Pursue perfection with the right attitude
- Develop a high level of mental stamina, composure and focus
- Find the right physical and mental balance
- Capable of being a constant for a longtime

As commonly believed, good eyesight is not a big requirement. Slovenian shooting legend, 57-year old Rajmond Debevec, and our own stars Abinav Bindra and Gagan Narang all sport correctional eyewear. None of them look exceptionally athletic but are exceptional performers. So, great eyesight and a very strong physique do not impact the game much.

### Your parting words to young shooting enthusiasts.

- Be completely aware, know and follow all the required safety guidelines. Understand the sport fully, familiarise with all the events and decide what you want to focus on and hone your skills accordingly.
- Do not blindly follow other shooters, be it in selecting an event, stance (posture), technique, etc. Shooting is like a Prescriptive Sport, where evolving one's own technique, breathing pattern, stance, rhythm, emotional composure, mental balance etc., works best. This is because each person's mindset, body type, height, weight, stamina, coping mechanisms etc., vary.
- In the initial years technique, practice, passion, commitment and hardwork are more important than top-quality and expensive equipment. **A**



# Sri Lanka

## A Home Away from Home

 **Shwetha H C**

**T**he pandemic has brought the airlines, travel companies and the tourism industry as a whole to a standstill.

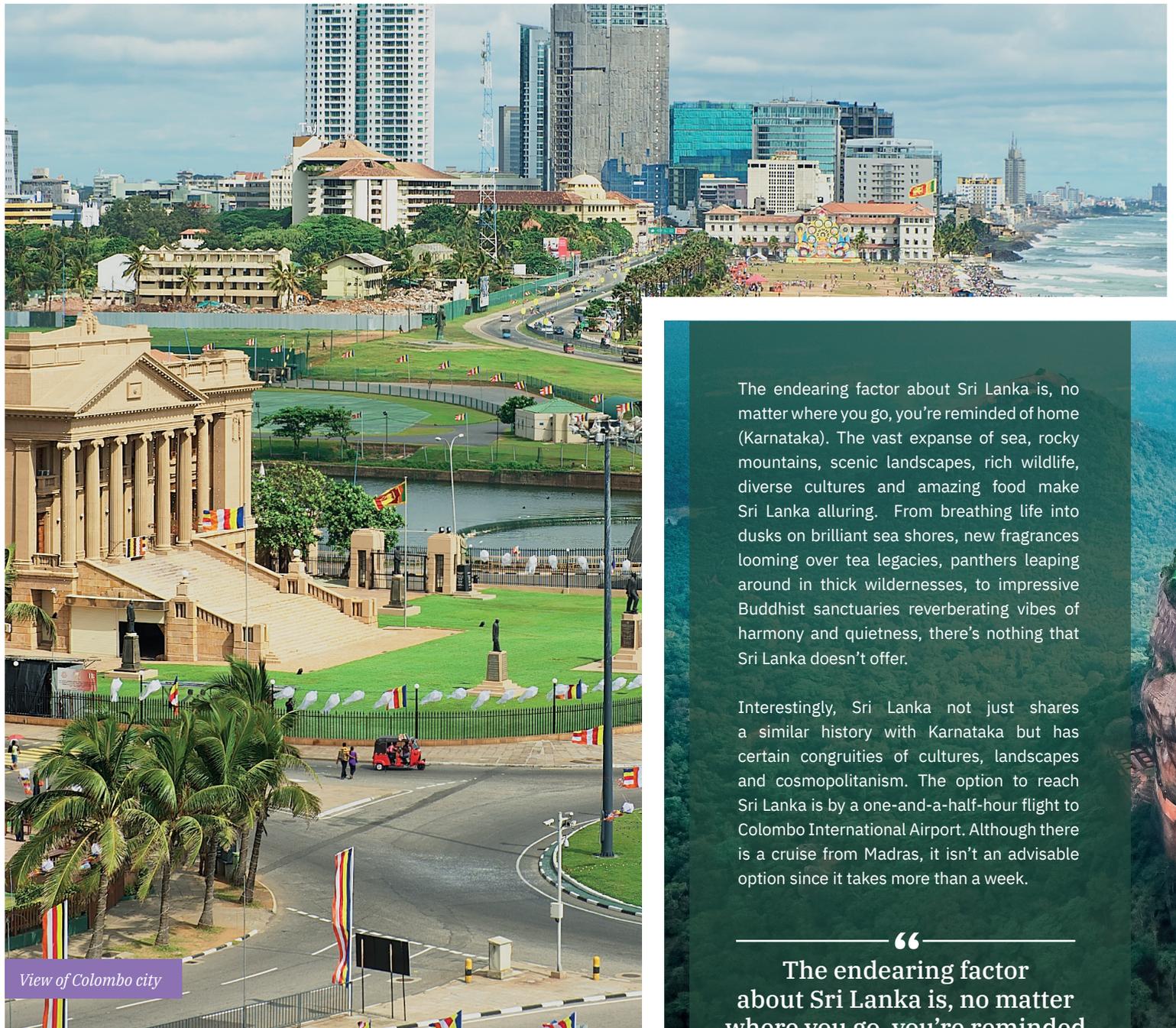
The COVID-19 pandemic that struck the world, has adversely affected economies across the world. The bruise caused by the pandemic on the travel industry is deep and will take quite some time before the bleeding stops.

Social distancing and the lockdowns forced the world to put travel plans whether for business, education or entertainment on the backburner. After nearly 6 months, although it continues to claim lives, borders around the world are starting to open up for travellers again.

With online experiences becoming the new norm, a few tourism companies are providing virtual tours aided by technology to quench the thirst of travel lovers. But no virtual tours can give the experience of how a gentle breeze can make you feel as you reach the mountain top after a long trek. Tourism will breed again, but will be dictated by new norms directed towards sustainable and responsible travel with hand sanitizers and face masks becoming the new travel gadgets.

Spending a lot of time at home during lockdown, gave me time to cherish all the places that I once visited, sans mask, of course. And no place close to home like our neighbour Sri Lanka.

# Travel



View of Colombo city



Casino at Colombo

The endearing factor about Sri Lanka is, no matter where you go, you're reminded of home (Karnataka). The vast expanse of sea, rocky mountains, scenic landscapes, rich wildlife, diverse cultures and amazing food make Sri Lanka alluring. From breathing life into dusks on brilliant sea shores, new fragrances looming over tea legacies, panthers leaping around in thick wildernesses, to impressive Buddhist sanctuaries reverberating vibes of harmony and quietness, there's nothing that Sri Lanka doesn't offer.

Interestingly, Sri Lanka not just shares a similar history with Karnataka but has certain congruities of cultures, landscapes and cosmopolitanism. The option to reach Sri Lanka is by a one-and-a-half-hour flight to Colombo International Airport. Although there is a cruise from Madras, it isn't an advisable option since it takes more than a week.

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Colombo city is about 35 km from the airport, and would take about 45 minutes to 2 hours of travel depending on the traffic. While the density of traffic is the first thing to hit you and remind you of Namma Bengaluru, it's the cosmopolitan culture, rich heritage and a very diverse population that bring it closer to Bengaluru. An auto-rickshaw ride around the city reveals a striking contrast of heritage and rustic buildings from the colonial era against swanky office blocks, luxury hotels and bustling markets, all mesmerising.

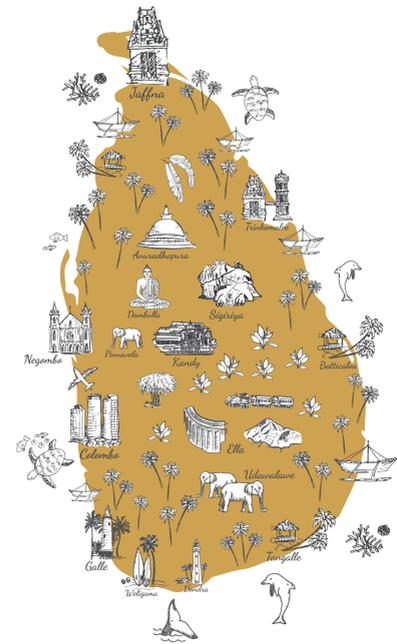
Colombo also boasts of an active nightlife with great live music, dance performances and themed pubs that serve delicious food. However, the highlight of the night clubs in the capital city is its casinos. Gambling is legal in Sri Lanka and it is usually difficult to find a spot at the gaming area as it is fully booked by both locals and tourists. Another favourite spot for many in Colombo is Park Street that hosts shops, boutiques and restaurants offering cuisines from around the world.

It is fascinating to dine under the fairy lights that deck up entire streets. The eclectic vibe of the Pettah Bazaar known for its street food will jog your memory of V V Puram Food Street.

About 70 km away from Colombo is Bentota, a beach town in the Galle district of the southern province of the country, which can be reached via road or rail. Bentota, like Mangalore, beckons travellers with more than long golden sandy beaches and serene beauty of palm trees. It is also known to attract tourists for diving and surfing activities and to catch a glimpse of exotic marine life at Cinnamon Island. The beach town also entices visitors with its seafood.

The town which derives its name from a demon 'Bem' who lived on the riverbanks as mentioned in a mythical text also shares its history with the coastal city of Mangalore in Karnataka. Both the cities were colonies of the Portuguese and British. The Galapata Vihara of the 12th Century is one of the five ancient temples in Bentota. The Buddhist temple with stone architecture reminds us of how Buddhism was also widespread in Mangalore during ancient times. The Kadri Manjunatha Temple in Mangalore built between the 10th and 11th Century shows evidence of both Shiva and Bodhisattva being worshipped together for centuries until it was completely converted into a Shaivite temple.

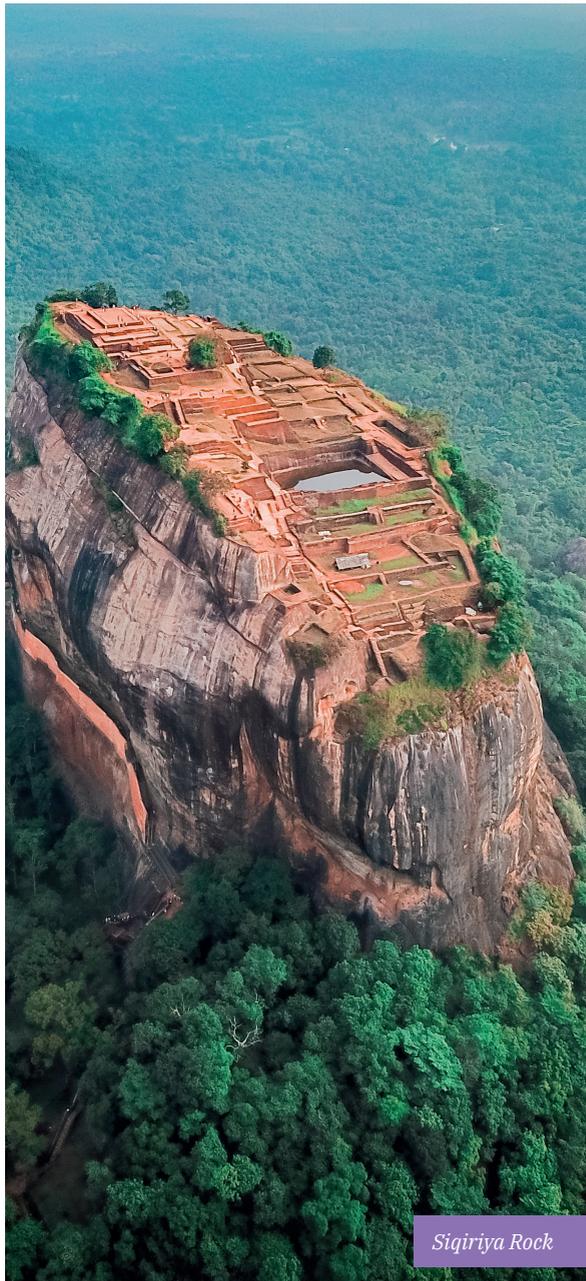
Apart from the stunning beaches of Bentota, Sri Lanka has much more to offer. The panoramic view of the perfect blend of nature and history at Kandy which is about four hours away from Bentota will leave you reminiscing the Malnad region. A stroll around the pristine Kandy lake, known as Sea of Milk, which has a



tiny island with a few palm trees in the middle is picture-perfect. A visit to the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (a sacred tooth of the Buddha), the War Cemetery honouring the British soldiers who lost their lives in World War II, and the Garrison Cemetery of the early 19th Century will take you back in time to school when you read the history of Keladi dynasty in post-medieval Karnataka. Kandy has a lot to offer - the lush greens, rugged mountains and remnants of colonialism. The breathtaking views, fresh air and a good workout while hiking to the world heritage site - 200-meter-square shaped Lion Rock in Sigiriya near Kandy - for soaking in the warmth of sunrise will take your mind off all the stress and anxiety.



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Temple of the Tooth Relic



Sigiriya Rock

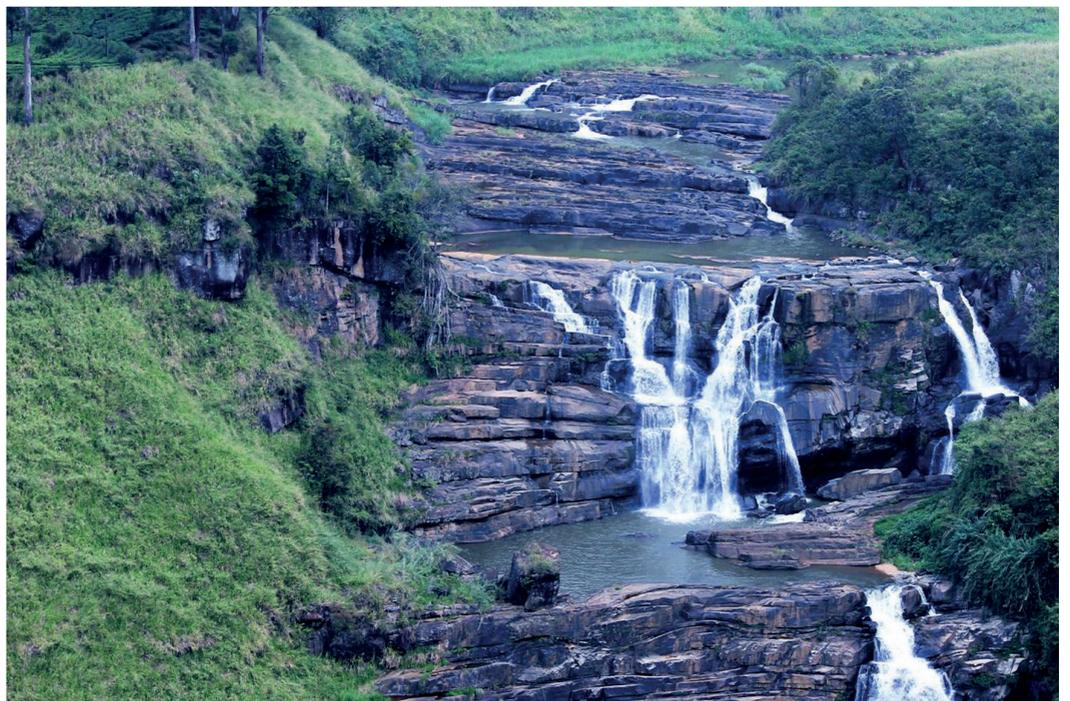
## Travel

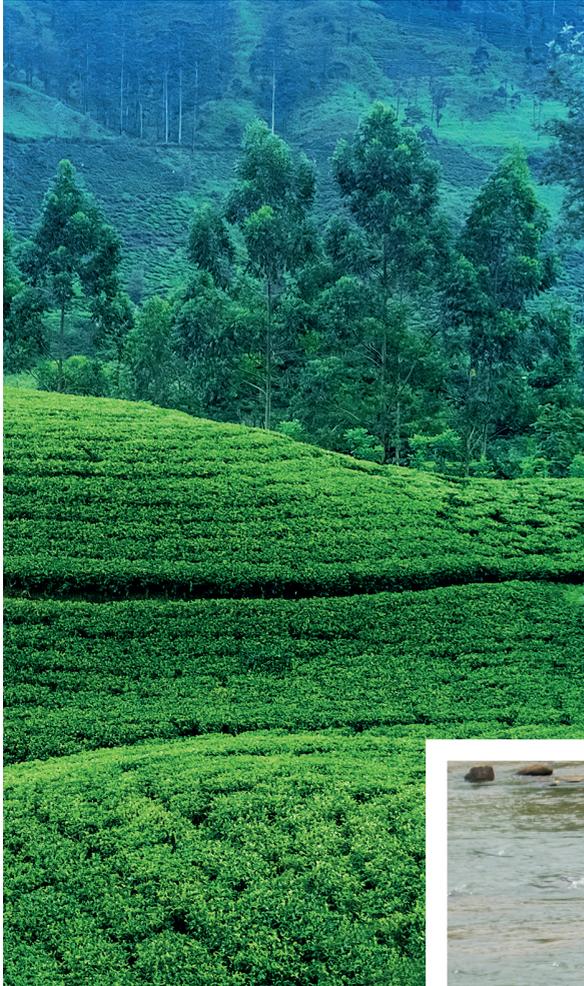


*Nuwara Eliya*

A three-hour ride from Kandy, Nuwara Eliya provides respite from the heat of the coast. Nuwara Eliya is a prime tea-growing district which is often called 'Little England' as it was a popular holiday destination for the Britishers. Besides, the mountainous region has a British-countryside feel to it.

The fresh smell of tea leaves as you lethargically stroll along the terraced tea plantations surrounding the hills will make you look back on days of sipping tea quietly amidst sprawling tea plantations of Chikkamagaluru. Like Chikkamagaluru, Nuwara Eliya is also a host to lakes, waterfalls, gardens and home to diverse wildlife. It has the second largest botanical garden in Sri Lanka.





Several natural streams meander through the 27 hectares garden. A meal in the open or a quick dip in the large natural pools in the valley that rush over huge rocks and boulders forming lovely and astonishing waterfalls is calming. The Victoria Park, in honour of Queen Victoria's 60th Jubilee coronation in 1897, houses several foreign plants and flowering tree species. It also has a playground and a toy train ride for children.

However, the orphanage's conservation programme has been questioned and criticised by animal welfare organisations such as Born Free. A few experts have also raised concerns about the breeding practices at the centre.

With close proximity to the orphanage, Pinnawala Zoo was opened to public in 2015 and is designed to replicate the environment of their natural habitat. The zoo also has a petting area where visitors, especially children, can touch and pet domesticated



animals such as black swan, turkey, peafowl and flap shell turtle. The educational and conservation centre also provides safari services in Ridiyagama. The 500-acre drive through the first safari park in Sri Lanka is a treat to animal lovers.

Now is also a good time to explore Sri Lanka virtually, if the traveller in you is ready to look for alternate options to quench the travel thirst. 



*Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage*

Your

# Million Dollar Question Just Got Answered

 Greeshma Sukumaran

**F**or generations, through socialisation and ingrained human biases, we have been made to believe that our lives are never complete without taking the plunge into the institution of marriage, with offsprings in tow. Such is the situation by which individuals across societies are judged, i.e., based on their marital status, and in the case of women, the demands go to greater lengths, with the added onus of bearing children and leading a ‘happily ever after’, life no matter the hurdles you have to contend with along the characteristically bumpy route.

Interestingly, a growing number of youngsters are revolting against some of these societal expectations, while there are those still rooted in the past burdened with notions of ‘settled careers’, ‘marriage’ and ‘offsprings’.

Just a year into wedlock, I have had to contend with what to me are unwelcome intrusions time and again of the ‘why no good news’ talk from people I consider downright strangers or mere acquaintances. The provocations are often followed by lessons aplenty on the importance of ‘starting a family’ because ‘just two’ is not good enough. In no time, they have made me an object of curiosity. The distress calls I continue to receive from close and distant family members for not being able to fulfill this ‘life-changing’ wish is beyond fathomable. Perhaps they are buoyed by the fact that in the end, willingly or unwillingly, I will fall into the trap of making them ‘happy’.

For girls, it is a tuning that confronts them from childhood. To get married and raise a family is just one of those societal things, dare I say so. The obsession, of an increasingly voyeuristic society, with marriages and children is pretty incessant. If there is a girl or boy of ‘marriageable age’ (which again is a notion), the

neighbourhood, comes together to make their lives one hell of an existence, and they wouldn’t be satisfied until the target of attack gets hitched. Marriage to them is ‘a one-size-fits-all solution’ for all that ails the society. And the people who throw their unsolicited solutions wouldn’t have lived an alternate life to think differently. They will not have any second guesses before brandishing their unwarranted comments suggesting that ‘you are incomplete without these embellishments (read entrapments) in life.’ I often hear people ask, ‘what is she waiting for?’ and ‘is it not late already?’ Surprisingly, these inane and often, obnoxious questions, seem not to diminish

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**Because ‘getting married at the right time’ as defined by society is more important than focusing on other distractions such as ‘career’. To have children at the ‘appropriate age’ seems to be the norm notwithstanding the problems you may encounter along the way or choices you make.**

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even after one succumbs to pressures of getting married. By then, it is justified as the ‘right time’ to settle down (translates to being married and having a baby soon after). Some can take their curiosity to more detestable levels by putting in place measures to gauge how well your marriage is faring in the marital scales. Some go a notch higher by asking, ‘Is everything all right? Did you check with your doctor?’ Again just these societal things, I dare say so.

For long, we have been made to believe that women will remain sad and feel incomplete without some of these so-called ‘basics’ in life. No matter what you may have achieved in life, career, personal accomplishments or life skills, ‘what’s the use of having all these, if you are not in a marriage or can’t bear a child? Come to think about it, a woman’s success eventually boils down to marriage, and the sooner the better. The next task she must embrace immediately is that of childbearing. Because ‘getting married at the right time’ as defined by society is more important than focusing on other distractions such as ‘career’. To have children at the ‘appropriate age’ seems to be the norm notwithstanding the problems you may encounter along the way or choices you make. Woe to you if you opt for the latter as you will be deemed a failure by the same society.

Therein lies my distaste for such dictates. The choice one makes, to get married, remain single or live free of children, selfish as it may seem to some, I insist should be purely a personal decision. And the growingly inquisitive society should not indulge in defining or determining the roles the individual would choose to embrace or choose to discard. Be it physiological or spiritual, the choices remain my sole responsibilities. The inadequacies that arise, to have or not to have a child or partner for that matter, equally rests on the individual’s shoulders. Surely, this cannot be a collective undertaking. That’s why this time round I am well set to take the bull by the horn. Already, I have picked the right baton for my lifetime race. To the rest of the populace, this is my plea. Don’t you think it is time to take a deep breath and step back? Surely, this cannot be the end of the world. Or is it? 



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