

INDIA PERSPECTIVES

Volume 34 | Issue 01 | 2020

SANITATION FOR ALL

Success of the Swachh Bharat Mission

LESSONS IN SUSTAINABILITY

Ancient step wells and water conservation

PICTURESQUE DELIGHTS

The pristine lakes of Northeast India



CELEBRATING FRIENDSHIP

US President Donald Trump's immensely successful maiden visit to India

POTPOURRI



9

MARCH, 2020

ATTUKAL PONGALA

Each year, Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, witnesses the arrival of millions of devotees who come to celebrate one of the oldest Pongala festivals in the state. Festivities last for 10 days at the Attukal temple in Thiruvananthapuram. On the ninth day, millions of women gather to prepare a special rice meal to be offered to the temple deity. In 2009, a Guinness book record was set when 2.5 million women gathered at the temple for the festival.

WHERE: Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

1-7

MARCH, 2020

INTERNATIONAL YOGA FESTIVAL

Rishikesh, popularly known as the yoga capital of the world, hosts practitioners, conscious yogis and paradigm-shifting philosophers from over 80 countries for this event each year. The seven-day festival offers the ideal opportunity to learn and embrace every major style of yoga

WHERE: Rishikesh, Uttarakhand



10

MARCH, 2020



HOLI

One of the biggest highlights of the Indian festival calendar, Holi celebrates the advent of spring. Over the years, this vibrant festival has been celebrated in many different hues across the country. Be it the playful celebrations in Mathura, the musical renditions in Varanasi or the royal processions across Rajasthan, Holi has correctly been called India's very own cultural fiesta.

WHERE: Across India



12 APRIL, 2020

EASTER

One of the largest celebrations amongst Christian communities in India, Easter marks the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The most vibrant version of the festival is observed across the states of Goa and Kerala with people distributing sweets and specially-prepared local delicacies amongst friends and family.

WHERE: Across India



14-20 APRIL, 2020

RONGALI BIHU

The biggest agrarian festival in the state of Assam, Rongali Bihu is celebrated to commemorate the advent of spring and the Assamese new year. An air of enthusiasm prevails throughout the festivities as people welcome the new year with Bihu (local folk dance) and delicious local cuisine throughout the seven-day festival.

WHERE: Assam

23

APRIL-23 MAY, 2020

RAMADAN

The holy month of Ramadan precedes the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. Observed with fervour and devotion by Muslims across the world, Ramadan involves fasting throughout the day with scrumptious meals that are shared amongst friends and family after sunset. The month of Ramadan inculcates a sense of devotion, sacrifice and charity through ritualistic fasting and celebrations.

WHERE: Across India



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FOREWORD

As the world ushers in a new decade, India's global image has undergone a gradual change to present to the world a more resolute, mature and proactive diplomatic front. India has achieved tremendous progress – be it digitising governance processes, moving towards a USD five-trillion economy or providing basic sanitation to all its citizens. But through the years, our traditions, culture and artistic heritage have remained relevant and govern our lifestyle even today.

In a world where distances are increasingly becoming shorter, the Sanskrit phrase, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family) is a defining factor for India's multilateral diplomatic initiatives. We look at the Raisina Dialogue, a multilateral conference which has emerged as an innovative initiative to address the most challenging issues facing the global community and how it helps project a firm and pragmatic image of India, a country ready to take part in defining the global governance architecture.

Starting a busy schedule of diplomatic engagements, India played host to the President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, who was also the chief guest for the 71st Republic Day celebrations. The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa also visited New Delhi on his maiden overseas visit as the PM, followed by the visits of the Vice President of Vietnam Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh and President of Portugal Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, to New Delhi. The highlight of course was the visit of the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, to India and the grand reception at the 'Namaste Trump' event in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The US President also visited the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra followed by extensive bilateral discussions in New Delhi.

With sustainable development and climate change coming to the forefront of all our policies, we travel to Auroville in Puducherry to witness first hand, the successful day-to-day affairs of a natural and sustainable Utopian society. We then visit ancient step wells across India in an effort to understand the age-old water conservation techniques that can inspire efforts to boost ground water levels across Indian cities.

The unprecedented transformation that India has seen also involves reinvention of some of our most prevalent traditions. Take for example, block printing techniques from Sanganer and Bagru in Rajasthan, that were designed according to the geographical conditions of the arid Thar desert. While in Rajasthan, we also visit the Manganiyar community, known for pleasing the gods with percussion instruments resembling thunderclaps. We then journey across the country to understand how alternative music in India is taking its inspiration from folk traditions that have always been defined by the environs in which they were practiced.

We then look at how sports biopics in mainstream Hindi cinema have changed the general outlook towards sporting heroes whose achievements bought pride and honour not only to themselves but to the entire nation. Finally, on Martyr's Day that falls on January 30, we remember the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi and understand the relevance of his teachings in a rapidly changing global scenario.



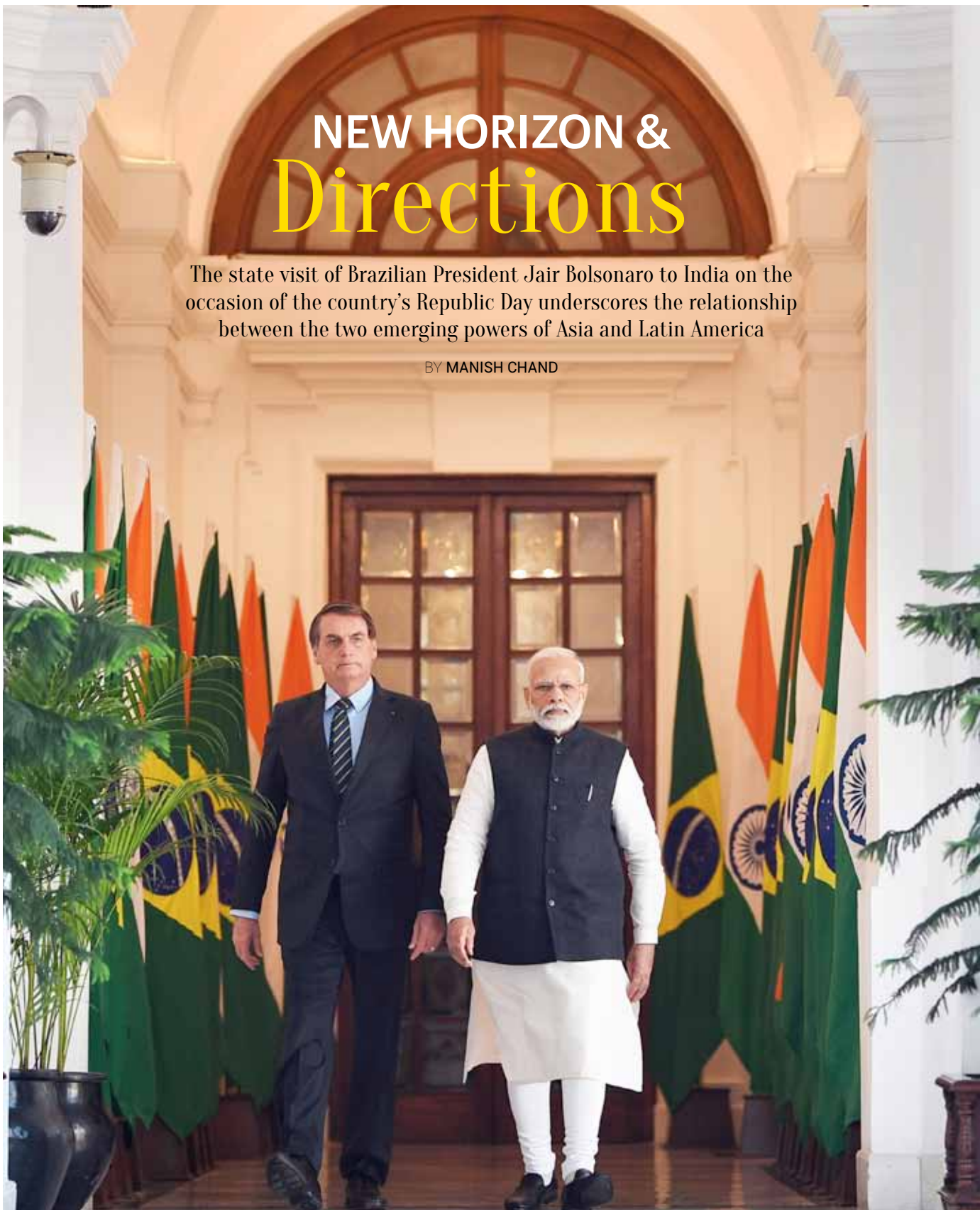
Raveesh Kumar



NEW HORIZON & Directions

The state visit of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to India on the occasion of the country's Republic Day underscores the relationship between the two emerging powers of Asia and Latin America

BY MANISH CHAND



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi with Jair Messias Bolsonaro, President of Brazil, at Hyderabad House in New Delhi

Thousands of miles away, but united by shared values and global aspirations, India and Brazil took their multi-faceted ties to new heights during the state visit of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to New Delhi between January 25 and 27.

In a gesture reserved for only special friends of India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had invited President Bolsonaro to be the chief guest at the country's Republic Day celebrations when they met in Brasilia for bilateral talks on November 13, 2019. This is the first time in many years that a leader from Latin America has been invited for India's national day festivities, which highlights the growing importance of the region in India's foreign policy calculus.

The meeting between the two leaders in Brasilia, on the margins of the BRICS summit in 2019 was the second time the

leaders were meeting after the successful bilateral discussions on the sidelines of the G20 summit (Osaka, Japan) in June 2019. The meeting in Brasilia brought out vividly, diverse strands of the India-Brazil partnership. Mapping the road ahead, the two leaders had agreed to "comprehensively enhance strategic partnership," and identified major focus areas for bilateral trade and investment. These included, among others things, agricultural equipment, animal husbandry, post-harvest technologies and biofuels. The two leaders had also discussed expanding cooperation in areas such as space and defence, which will provide greater strategic depth to the burgeoning partnership. The talks provided "further boost to the strategic partnership between the countries based on common global vision and shared values," said an official statement.

Right: (L to R) Defence minister of India Rajnath Singh with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, President of India Ram Nath Kovind (with wife) and Vice-President of India Venkaiah Naidu



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro attended India's Republic Day celebrations as the chief guest in New Delhi

Dynamic associations



In 2018 India was the 11th biggest exporter to Brazil and 10th biggest importer from Brazil.

While the Brazilian companies have invested in automobiles, IT, mining, energy, biofuels, footwear sectors in India, the Indian companies have invested in diverse sectors, including IT, Pharmaceutical, energy, agri-business, mining, engineering and automobiles.

NATURAL PARTNERS

The forging of strategic partnership between India and Brazil in 2006 was an important milestone in the evolving relationship between the two nations. A decade later, Brazil's then President Michel Temer's visit to India in 2016 provided a fresh momentum to this multi-layered partnership. Prime Minister Modi, who has visited Brazil twice (Fortaleza in 2014 and Brasilia in 2019), has famously described India and Brazil as "natural partners." "Though separated by geography, Brazil and India are natural partners linked by common values of democracy, rule of law and shared aspirations for development, peace and prosperity," PM Modi had said after talks with President Temer in Goa in October 2016.

ECONOMIC SYNERGIES

As two emerging economies of Asia and Latin America, India and Brazil, whose combined GDP is around \$5 trillion, are set to infuse new economic vitality in their partnership. The economic aspect of the relationship was showcased by a large business delegation, comprising CEOs of top Brazilian companies, that accompanied President Bolsonaro to India for the January 25-27 visit. The interaction between top business leaders of India and Brazil fleshed out a blueprint for upscaling two-way trade and investment. Buoyed by economic synergies, the two sides raised the bar and set ambitious targets for doubling current bilateral trade of around \$8 billion in the next couple of years. PM Modi, who has described Brazil as



PM Modi delivers his address at Leaders Dialogue in 11th BRICS summit

Takeaways from the visit



An **Action Plan** has been adopted to strengthen the strategic partnership, outlining :

- Political and Strategic Coordination
- Trade & Commerce, Investments, Agriculture, Civil Aviation and Energy
- Science, Technology and Innovation; Space Cooperation
- Environment and Technical Cooperation; Health
- Defence and Security
- Culture and Education
- Consular Issues, Social Security and Legal Cooperation



Vice President Venkaiah Naidu meets Jair Bolsonaro, President of Brazil, in New Delhi

among “India’s most important economic partners in Latin America,” offered India’s full support to President Bolsonaro’s economic resurgence agenda and exhort Brazilian companies to invest in India and forge long-term commercial partnerships with Indian companies.

India, on its part, will be pitching for greater market access and investment opportunities for Indian products and companies in Brazil.

The economic ties are set to be galvanised further as both India and Brazil look at each other as a zone of new opportunities. Brazil is 2.6 times bigger in area than India and has a five-fold per capita income than that of India, but has a population one-sixth of India. Brazil has huge reservoirs of natural resources and mineral deposits like iron ore, manganese,

As the two large economies of Asia and Latin America, India and Brazil are set to enhance their coordination to reform the global governance architecture

nickel, tungsten, diamonds, potassium, phosphate, gold, lead and graphite. The Latin American powerhouse is also increasingly looking at India as a knowledge power with its proven expertise in IT sector and its prowess in biotech and pharmaceuticals industries. In particular, plans to expand cooperation in areas like agriculture and energy security will see enhanced cooperation in months to come. In the agriculture sector, India can learn a lot from Brazil’s emergence as an agricultural superpower as it sets

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“ DESPITE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE, BOTH INDIA AND BRAZIL ARE TOGETHER ON VARIOUS GLOBAL ISSUES AS THERE IS CONVERGENCE IN OUR VIEWS, YOUR (PRESIDENT BOLSONARO’S) VISIT TO INDIA HAS OPENED A NEW CHAPTER IN TIES BETWEEN INDIA AND BRAZIL.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

new benchmarks in productivity and modernises its technology of storage, distribution and agri-processing industries.

Brazil is one of the most important trading partners of India in the entire LAC (Latin America and Caribbean) region, an aspect that highlights the country’s importance as the largest

destination for Indian upstream investment in the oil and gas sector. During the visit, two MoUs were also announced on Bioenergy cooperation and cooperation in the field of Oil and Natural Gas between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas of the Government of India and the Ministry of Mines and Energy of the Government of Brazil. With Brazil’s proven record as an energy power, the two countries are planning to collaborate in research and development of second-generation biofuels.

CULTURAL CONNECT

It’s not just economics, geopolitics and energy that are driving India and

President Kovind and PM Modi extend a ceremonial welcome to Brazilian President Bolsonaro ahead of the former’s inspection of the Guard of Honour at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro lays a wreath at the samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat, New Delhi



New Delhi to Brasilia

- India and Brazil signed 15 agreements straddling diverse areas, including trade, energy and innovation.
- The two sides agreed to enhance collaboration between their defence industrial bases and work together to conclude an agreement in combating international terrorism and transnational organised crime.
- They decided to strengthen established institutional mechanisms and promote coordination on bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral issues of mutual interest based on the principles of equality and trust.
- In a landmark step, India and Brazil signed an investment cooperation and facilitation treaty that provides a framework to increase trade and investment in high growth areas. The two agreed to set a target of \$15 billion in bilateral trade by 2022.
- Agreements in areas of energy security and agriculture were also signed. Separate pacts were signed in areas of oil and natural gas and bio-energy. The two sides also agreed to set up a Centre of Excellence in Cattle Genomics in India with Brazilian assistance.
- President Bolsonaro reiterated his country's support for India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Brazil to forge a deeper partnership. Brazilians are known for their deep love for Indian culture, the arts, dance and philosophy. "They love Indian culture. There are more yoga centres in Brazil than in India," says Hardeep Singh Puri, India's former ambassador to Brazil, who is now India's Minister of State for Commerce and Civil Aviation. Setting the stage for enhancing people-to-people contacts, the Brazilian President recently announced a scheme for granting visa-free travel to Indian citizens for tourism and business.

THE WAY AHEAD

Looking ahead, current trends and synergies are set to propel the India-Brazil relationship onto a higher trajectory. Enhancing trade and investment will certainly add more substance to this partnership, but what will impart it greater content is a growing convergence of strategic and global interests. As the two large economies of Asia and Latin America, India and Brazil are set to enhance their coordination to reform the global governance architecture.

The global canvas of the India-Brazil partnership is set to widen further with closer cooperation in a host of multilateral platforms, including BRICS, IBSA, G4, G20, BASIC and the United Nations. Taking a long-term view, Brazil's Ambassador to India Andre Aranha Correa do Lago says: "Both our countries are going to continue to be extremely important for the next decades. We should mainstream this relationship in all dimensions as much as we can." The visit of President Bolsonaro to India not only made mainstream this crucial partnership, but also opened new vistas in a wide array of areas ranging from trade and investment, agriculture and food security, energy security, science, technology and innovations to climate change, counter-terrorism and UN Security Council reforms.



Manish Chand is Editor-in-Chief of India and the World magazine and India Writes Network, a portal focused on global affairs

THE INDIA WAY IN Foreign Policy

Over the last decade, India's foreign policy initiatives have undergone a metamorphosis. India's new global image now projects a more mature, sound and efficient force driving the country's diplomatic initiatives

BY MANISH CHAND



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi with global leaders at the inaugural session of Raisina Dialogue 2020, in New Delhi on January 14



Purposeful, pragmatic and proactive. Shaper, not an abstainer; stabiliser, rather than a disruptor; a net security provider and a dispenser of global good.

India's foreign policy has found a new vocabulary and framework, as articulated with masterly precision by the country's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at the 5th edition of the Raisina Dialogue held in New Delhi recently.

In foreign policy, words matter, and hence this new lexicon of a rising India fittingly encapsulates the current form and trajectory of the country's foreign policy in a world undergoing unprecedented transformation.

Purposeful pursuit of national interests, pragmatic issue-based alignments with

countries, big and small, and proactive diplomatic outreach have come to characterise and configure India's foreign policy and diplomacy in the 21st century.

SHAPER & STABILISER

A new India is emerging in the second decade of the 21st century, which is proactively shaping the international agenda on a wide array of cross-cutting issues, including climate change, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, maritime security and the reconfiguration of global governance architecture.

In a wide-ranging conversation on The India Way at the Raisina Dialogue, Dr Jaishankar illuminated key features of a new foreign policy for a new India. "The India way would be to be more

PM Modi with ministerial delegations from various countries, on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue 2020

PARTNERSHIP



External Affairs
Minister of India
Dr S Jaishankar
during a
discussion at the
Raisina Dialogue
2020

of a decider or a shaper rather than an abstainer,” he said, while stressing that India has made a difference in the last few years on issues like climate change or connectivity. Most important, he fleshed out the kind of power India will be in the next few years. “It is not the India way to be a disruptionist power internationally, we should be a stabilising power. It’s also not the India way to be self-centred and to be mercantilist. The India way would be a country which brings its capacities to bear on the international system for global good,” he said.

Driven by the ethos of mutual empowerment, India has shared

funds, technology and expertise with countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. This development cooperation, channelised through Lines of Credit and grants, includes assistance in capacity building, training and enhanced cooperation in education and health. In the spirit of South-South solidarity, India has committed around USD 29 billion in Line of Credit for a host of development projects in 160 countries.

DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH

As India’s global stature rises, the Indian government has also embarked on an unprecedented

In building a New India, the 25-million strong Indian diaspora, spread across different countries and continents, will play an important role

diplomatic outreach to mobilise international support for national resurgence. Cutting across hemispheres, the last few years have seen a record number of high-level incoming and outgoing visits at the level of the President, Prime Minister, Vice-President, External Affairs Minister and other ministers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi alone has travelled to over 70 countries in the last five and a half years. In an evolving multipolar world, India has chosen the path of multi-alignment, which entails forging issues-based alignments with like-minded countries and major power centres.

DIPLOMACY FOR A NEW INDIA

What animates this multifarious diplomatic outreach is the mantra of diplomacy for the country's

Driven by the ethos of mutual empowerment, India has shared funds, technology and expertise with countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and East Europe

development. With the Indian government setting an ambitious target of creating a \$5-trillion economy, the foreign policy is being directed to harness the network of partnerships with all friendly countries to create a 'New India' by 2022, the 75th anniversary of India's independence, as promised by PM Modi. Development-focused diplomacy is seen in the interweaving of flagship schemes of national renewal like 'Make in India' 'Smart Cities,' 'Skill India' and 'Stand-up India' with India's diplomatic outreach. Forging robust and sustainable



EAM Dr Jaishankar meets Urmas Reinsalu, minister of foreign affairs of Estonia during the Raisina Dialogue

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partnerships in technology, innovation and start-ups will be crucial to creating a New India, and making India count on the global stage.

SHAPING GLOBAL AGENDA

Looking ahead, with its growing global stature and rising expectations the world has of a resurgent India, PM Modi has advocated reformed multilateralism to create a new world order that reflects the ongoing shift of power and realities of the 21st century. India has also taken the lead in combating climate change by fulfilling its commitments under the Paris Accord and taking a series of initiatives for promoting a low-carbon economy. In a recognition

of New Delhi's leadership role in this area, more countries are joining the International Solar Alliance that seeks to usher in a white revolution for a clean and green world. India has launched a new international initiative called the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which is finding greater global support.

BRAND INDIA

In mapping the way ahead, cultural diplomacy and civilisational values will acquire a greater salience in India's foreign policy. Home to all major religions and diverse cultures, the idea of India as a vibrant pluralistic society has struck a chord making the world more amenable to India's aspirations. This

PM Narendra Modi meets Dr Mohammad Javad Zarif, minister of foreign affairs of Iran, on the sidelines of the 2020 Raisina Dialogue





“OVER THE YEARS, THE RAISINA DIALOGUE HAS EMERGED AS A VIBRANT FORUM FOR DISCUSSING IMPORTANT GLOBAL AND STRATEGIC ISSUES. I ALSO HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET LEADERS WHO ARE GREAT FRIENDS OF OUR NATION.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

Prime Minister Modi addresses the United Nations General Assembly during his visit to USA in September 2019

cultural connect is reflected in myriad ways, ranging from the worldwide celebrations of the International Day of Yoga and the recognition of Kumbh Mela as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

In building a new India, the 25-million strong Indian diaspora, spread across different countries and continents, will play an important role. As Dr Jaishankar puts it: “The India way would be really Brand India. Brand India in terms of what is unique to us as a power,” he said while alluding to the extraordinary Indian diaspora and Indian culture and heritage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has encapsulated the essence of Brand India. “All our endeavours are centered on 1.3 billion Indians. But the dreams that these efforts are trying to fulfil, are the same dreams that the entire world has, that every country has, and that

every society has. The efforts are ours, but their fruits are for all, for the entire world,” said PM Modi in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in New York this year.

Going forward, as it scripts its global ascent on its own terms, India will have to relentlessly assert its strategic autonomy as it navigates geopolitical rivalries to make independent decisions that benefit people of the country. This will entail dovetailing diplomacy with development and interweaving foreign policy with an unclouded vision of India as a leading power with a unique voice and narrative in a rapidly transforming world order.



Manish Chand is Editor-in-Chief of India and the World magazine and India Writes Network, a portal focused on global affairs

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Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi meets Donald J Trump, President of the United States of America, at Hyderabad House in New Delhi

A PATH TO THE Future

US President Donald Trump's visit to India from February 24-25 was indicative of continuity in high level bilateral interactions between the two countries. Former Ambassador **Anil Wadhwa** highlights why this visit was of utmost importance

US President Donald Trump has completed a highly successful maiden visit to India from February 24 to 25, 2020. The First lady of USA, Melania Trump, the President's daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner accompanied him for the visit, covering Ahmedabad, Agra and New Delhi. This included a hugely successful public event at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad, where a capacity crowd turned up to cheer Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Trump. The US President was impressed by the rousing welcome he received from the large number of people

who lined the route between the airport and the stadium and was fulsome in his praise for India and PM Modi, with whom his camaraderie was palpable. President Trump and PM Modi have met frequently over the past eight months, and have developed a friendship and rapport, which prompted President Trump to call PM Modi “an exceptional” and “a tremendously successful leader”.

Indo-US relations have seen an all-round upswing over the past few years, including trade, investments, defence, counter terrorism, energy, coordination on regional and global issues as well as people to people exchanges. The visit of Indian foreign and defence ministers

The relationship between India and the USA has transformed dramatically. Bilateral trade has grown manifold over the past two decades, and now stands at USD 142 billion

to USA for the second edition of the 2+2 ministerial dialogue in December 2019 had seen the signature of the Industrial Security Annex (ISA) and three agreements under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative to secure technology transfer and co-production of critical technologies.

Both countries have moved on to sign key agreements of secure communication and sharing of military

PM Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump and the First Lady of the US, Melania Trump, during their visit to the Sabarmati Ashram, also known as Gandhi Ashram, in Ahmedabad



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The way forward

President Trump welcomed India's role in continuing to provide development and security assistance to help stabilise and provide connectivity in Afghanistan. In the context of Indo-Pacific, it was emphasised that "a close partnership" between them was "central to a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region" which "is underpinned by recognition of Asean centrality; adherence to international law and good governance; support for safety and freedom of navigation; overflight and other lawful uses of the seas; unimpeded lawful commerce; and advocacy for peaceful resolution of maritime disputes in accordance with international law".

logistics like Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). It was agreed during the visit to move swiftly towards signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for geospatial cooperation. These agreements open up the possibility of joint operations in the future. However, India as a major defence partner, will look for transfer of technology and co-production with a view to making India a production hub for American equipment. Building on the STA 1 (Strategic Trade Authorisation) status, further legislative adjustments, including amendment of the US Arms Export Control Act, need to be

carried out to ensure predictability and reliability of supplies. India will also be keen to move quickly on establishment of Maintenance repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities in India for American platforms.

Trade was another important item on the agenda. In 2018, the US levied global tariffs of 25 per cent and 10 per cent on steel and aluminium, also affecting India. On June 5, 2019, the US withdrew GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) status accorded to Indian goods, affecting USD 6.3 billion worth of Indian exports. On June 16, 2019, India levied additional duties on 28 American products. The US has been pushing for lower duties and market access for medical devices, information



US President Donald Trump with PM Narendra Modi during the 'Namaste Trump' event at Motera stadium, Ahmedabad



Top: President of India Ram Nath Kovind meets US President Donald Trump at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi

Above: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump try their hand at a *charkha* (spinning wheel), during their visit to Sabarmati Ashram. PM Modi guides them

and communications technology goods like smart watches and iPhones, Harley Davidson motor cycles, market access for its dairy products and agricultural commodities like almonds, blueberries, pecan nuts and walnuts. India would like to see its GSP beneficiary status restored, additional duties on steel and aluminium removed and also be able to get market access for its fruits like grapes and mangoes.

The definition of employment and speciality occupations under H1 B visa and its impact on the Indian IT industry is a pending issue and India continues to stress on the importance of the contribution made to the growth and development of the US economy by

the highly skilled Indian professionals. During the visit, PM Modi also raised the issue of finalising a totalisation agreement that will benefit Indian professionals working in the US. India's trade surplus with the US has narrowed down drastically over the last two years, with bilateral trade jumping to USD 142 billion in 2018 mainly due to Indian energy imports from USA.

A delegation from the US Nuclear Energy Institute was in India before President Trump's visit, to discuss policy support for American nuclear exports to India, besides promoting American products and services to Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd and other potential customers. This includes six Westinghouse nuclear reactors, on which negotiations will need to continue. The US-India energy trade has reached USD 20 billion in the last four years alone and will be a new driver in commercial relations between the two countries. The US International Development Finance Corporation

PARTNERSHIP

THERE IS SO MUCH THAT INDIA AND THE US SHARE: SHARED VALUES AND IDEALS; SHARED SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION; SHARED OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES; SHARED HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS... PRESIDENT TRUMP'S VISIT TO INDIA MARKS A NEW CHAPTER IN INDO-US TIES

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

has decided to establish a permanent presence, and has announced a USD 600 million financing facility for renewable energy projects in India. President Trump, while addressing a press conference, stated that the two sides had discussed the importance of a secure 5G wireless network and “the need for this emerging technology to be a tool for freedom, progress and prosperity, not to do anything with where it could even be conceived as a conduit for suppression and censorship.”

The two sides agreed to upgrade

their relationship to the status of a “Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership”. In the joint statement, the two leaders came down heavily on the “use of terrorist proxies and strongly condemned cross-border terrorism in all its forms”. They called on Pakistan “to ensure that no territory under its control is used to launch terrorist attacks, and to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators of such attacks, including 26/11, Mumbai and Pathankot”. Both sides recognised the importance of connectivity, which they stated should be linked to the respect for “territorial integrity,

US President
Donald Trump and
First Lady Melania
Trump at the Taj
Mahal in Agra



Talking numbers

- The US has just become India's largest trade partner, having invested USD 30 billion into India. India has also invested USD 11 billion into USA. Around 200,000 Indian students study in the USA, contributing USD 6 billion as tuition fees for the US universities.
- The Indian Cabinet Committee on Security approved a USD 3 billion dollar purchase of 24 MH-6 or Seahawk helicopters with radars, torpedoes and Hellfire missiles for the Indian navy as well as six additional Apache helicopters for the army. Since 2007, India has bought equipment worth USD 20 billion from the US. Many more defence agreements are being currently negotiated.
- It was also agreed that both sides will start working towards a larger and comprehensive Trade Agreement, but they will also put into legal terms the "limited" trade package with the understandings reached so far, "promptly" over the next few months.



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump pay their tribute at Raj Ghat, New Delhi

sovereignty of states, good governance, transparency, and accountability". The statement recognises India as a net provider of security, as well as developmental and humanitarian assistance in the Indian Ocean region. The sides agreed on a new partnership between USAID, which has announced USD 400 million for the Indo-Pacific, and India's Development Partnership Administration for cooperation in third countries. They took note of efforts towards a meaningful Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, and urged that it does not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of all nations according to international law. They looked forward to enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness sharing among the US, India and other partners. The US reiterated support for India's permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council and an

entry in the Nuclear Suppliers Group. India expressed interest in the "Blue Dot Network" mentioned by the US President, which is a multi-stakeholder initiative, unlike the BRI, which will bring governments, the private sector, and civil society together to promote high quality trusted standards for global infrastructure development.

Both sides can look back with satisfaction on the visit, which was high on optics, but also rich in substance, and has set the path for an even more comprehensive engagement between the US and India in the future.



Ambassador Anil Wadhwa has served as Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, and as the Indian ambassador to Poland, Oman, Thailand and Italy. He has also been posted to Indian missions in Hong Kong, China and Switzerland and worked for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

Diplomatic roundup

With a successful start to a busy diplomatic schedule, the President of Portugal, Vice-President of Vietnam and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka visited India during the month of February



Above: Marcelo Rebelo De Sousa, President of Portugal with President of India Ram Nath Kovind during the ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhawan

PRESIDENT OF PORTUGAL TO INDIA (FEB 13-16)

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the President of Portugal, visited India on his maiden state visit to the country. The last visit by a President of Portugal to India was in 2007. The Portuguese President met with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and held extensive delegation level discussions. President Sousa also met President of India Ram Nath Kovind and the two sides exchanged 14 MoUs and agreements in areas like maritime development, migration, start-ups, intellectual property rights, aerospace, nano-biotechnology, audio visual co-production, yoga, diplomatic training, scientific research and public-policy.

VICE PRESIDENT OF VIETNAM (FEB 11-13)

Vice President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh was on an official visit to India from February 11-13. During the visit, the Vietnamese VP held bilateral delegation level talks with Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu and discussed views on political, defence, economic and security issues of mutual interest. VP Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh also called on the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, imparting momentum to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership established in 2016 between the two countries.



Right: Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Mahinda Rajapaksa, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, at Hyderabad House, New Delhi



Left: Vice President Venkaiah Naidu meets Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh, Vice President of Vietnam in New Delhi

PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA (FEB 7-11)

After assuming office following a successful election in November, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa, visited India on a five-day state visit. On his maiden overseas visit, the Sri Lankan leader met with the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, and held extensive delegation level talks. The two leaders agreed that stability, security and prosperity in Sri Lanka, coupled with the SAGAR doctrine (Security and Growth for All in the Region), will boost efforts to bring stability to the entire Indo-Pacific region and strengthen ties between the two countries.

External Affairs Minister of India Dr S Jaishankar visited Niger, Tunisia, Germany and Belgium



NIGER (JAN 20-21)

External Affairs minister of India Dr S Jaishankar visited Niamey in Niger on an official visit that highlighted the importance India associates to bilateral relations with Niger. During the visit, EAM Jaishankar jointly inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre with the President of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou. EAM Jaishankar also held extensive discussions on bilateral and regional issues with Kalla Ankourao, minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Regional Integration of Niger.



TUNISIA (JAN 22-23)

EAM Dr S Jaishankar visited Tunisia for an official visit spanning two days, making it the first high level visit from India after the successful presidential and parliamentary elections in Tunisia last year. During his visit, Dr Jaishankar met with Tunisian President Kais Saied and held extensive discussions with his counterpart Sabri Bachtobji, the minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. An MoU was also exchanged between the two countries on establishing an India – Tunisia centre for innovation in ICT in Tunis, the Tunisian capital.

Clockwise from top left: External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar with Issoufou Mahamadou, President of Niger in Niamey; EAM Dr Jaishankar meets Sabri Bachtobji, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia; EAM attends Munich Security Conference 2020 during his visit to Germany; EAM Dr Jaishankar meets Philippe Goffin, minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of Belgium on the sidelines of European Union Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels



BELGIUM (FEB 17-18)

At the invitation of Josep Borrell Fontelles, European Union's High Representative/Vice President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EAM Dr S Jaishankar visited Brussels on February 17th for a discussion with the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union. On his first visit to the EU after the assumption of office of the new Commission in December 2019, EAM shared with the council, India's foreign policy priorities and regional and global perspective.



GERMANY (FEB 14-16)

EAM Dr S Jaishankar visited Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference. During his visit, EAM was a part of discussions related to security relations in the Asiatic region and multilateralism across the world. During his three-day visit, Dr Jaishankar also met the foreign ministers from various countries on the sidelines of the conference.



TOWARDS A HIGHER growth trajectory

Renowned economist and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council chairman **Bibek Debroy** explains how India is on the right path to become a USD 5-trillion economy

Over the past few years, India has often been tagged as one of the fastest growing world economies, a scenario that looks even brighter when pitted against the global economic slowdown. The Indian government has announced an aspirational target of making India a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25. While some have been calling this

unachievable, most ignore the massive size of the Indian economy while making predictions. Even if it grows at a slower pace, India's contribution to the world economy will be larger due to its volumes.

A GDP growth rate of eight per cent is required to meet the USD 5 trillion target and the government's initiatives of efficient public expenditure, efficient land, labour and capital markets



“INDIA HAS ALREADY EMBRACED NEW PARADIGMS SUCH AS THE SHARING ECONOMY WITH AGGREGATOR PLATFORMS DISPLACING CONVENTIONAL BUSINESSES. GOVERNMENT HAS HARNESSSED NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO ENABLE DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFERS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION ON A SCALE NEVER IMAGINED BEFORE.”

Nirmala Sitharaman
Minister of Finance of India

and stimulating productivity and entrepreneurship are meant to trigger this. Needless to say that there is enough slack in Indian states to deliver an eight per cent growth. A higher GDP is not just a number. It translates into higher incomes, more employment, better living conditions, lower poverty and improved socio-economic indicators. While a slowdown has been witnessed in the last quarter, India's monetary and fiscal stimulus has already begun to kick in and will show soon. Looking at the current status, one can assume

that in the financial year 2019-20, India will have a real GDP growth of around five per cent. Next year, in 2020-21, the growth rate will increase to at least six per cent and inch towards another half per cent more.

One of the successes of macroeconomic management since 2014 has been control of inflation. Inflation is a regressive tax. It hurts the poor relatively more than it hurts the relatively rich. Six per cent real growth and four per cent inflation yield 10 per cent nominal growth, while six per cent real growth and nine per



The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, arrives at the Parliament House to present the General Budget 2020-21, in New Delhi on February 1, with Anurag Singh Thakur, Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs



“ I THINK WHILE WE HAVE SEEN TEMPORARY PAINS, WITH THE LEADERSHIP THAT THE FINANCE MINISTER PROVIDED, WE’RE JUST GOING TO GET OUT OF IT. EXTERNAL TURBULENCE (HAS) HIT US, BUT I AM VERY OPTIMISTIC.

Mukesh Ambani
Chairman and Mg. Director,
Reliance Industries



“ THE INDIAN ECONOMY HAS BEEN GOING THROUGH A PROCESS OF DETOXIFICATION. THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF DISRUPTIONS IS NOW OVER AND THE ECONOMY IS EXPECTED TO SEE AN UPSIDE IN FY21.

Anand Mahindra
Executive Chairman,
Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd



“ GOING FORWARD, THE REAL GROWTH SHOULD BE HIGHER AT 6-6.5 PER CENT IN THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR. WE HAVE FOCUSED A LOT ON RURAL CONSUMPTION.

Krishnamurthy V Subramanian
Chief economic advisor,
Government of India

cent inflation yield 15 per cent nominal growth. While 15 per cent nominal growth may make one feel better than a 10 per cent nominal growth, but the latter, with lower inflation, is preferable.

However, the aim is to move India to a higher growth trajectory. Since 2014, and the policies of the second Narendra Modi government are a logical continuation of the first, the building blocks are being put in place to ensure precisely that. But first, the external environment is unkind, global uncertainty affects India’s export and growth prospects too. Not too many countries are likely to grow at six per cent. Second, there is plenty of internal slack in the system and endogenous sources of growth.

Historically, India’s governance has been excessively centralised. Since 2014, there has been institutional change, making governance more decentralised. An example of this is the way GST (Goods and Services Tax) Council functions. Decentralised governance is more than mere fiscal devolution, though this too has occurred through recommendations of 14th Finance Commission. (Recommendations of 15th Finance Commission are expected in 2020.)

Third, inclusion has to be interpreted in the sense of public provisioning of physical and social infrastructure. Dashboards, available in the public domain, illustrate improvements in availability of roads (and other forms

While a slowdown has been witnessed in the last quarter, India's monetary and fiscal stimulus has already began to kick in and will soon show

of transport), electricity, gas connections, toilets, sanitation, housing, schools (and higher education), skills, medical treatment, insurance, pensions, bank accounts and credit. The veracity of what dashboards show has been confirmed through third party validation. This improvement is especially evident in rural India. That's the reason the UNDP's recent Human Development

Report highlights sharp drop in multi-dimensional poverty. Inclusion is also about subsidising the deprived. This is now done through decentralised identification (a census, not a survey),

using what is known as SECC (Socio-Economic Caste Census). This survey is used to identify beneficiaries, both for Union and state-level schemes, eliminating leakage and multiplicity. Subsidies are now channelled into bank accounts and linked to Aadhaar (Aadhaar is an identification number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India to every resident of the country). Productivity gains



Rural economy constitutes 46% of national income and it is imperative that widespread growth and development are inclusive of rural and small scale economy

Improving India's global rankings



In World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings, India has leapfrogged to 63rd position



In the resolving insolvency rankings, India has moved from 108th to 52nd position



In the Global Innovation rankings, from 74th to 52nd position



India improved international ranking by 10 points on Logistics Performance



India moved from 52nd to 34th position in World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness rankings

from such inclusion initiatives and empowerment cannot be immediately quantified in economic terms. But they are palpable (and confirmed anecdotally, such as in the switch from firewood to LPG, or provision of toilets, or Mudra loans) and will enable India to reap the demographic dividend contribution to growth.

Fourth, that inclusion and economic empowerment agenda is against the background of improving both the citizen's ease of living and the entrepreneur's ease of doing business. An entrepreneur is not

necessarily a corporate entrepreneur. Nor is ease of doing business only about World Bank's ease of doing business indicators, where too, India's rank has improved. The ease of doing business initiative under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) or the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, has improved the business and investment climate in all states. Modernisation of land records and cleaner titles is also work in progress. Investment figures (including FDI) show improvements.



WHAT THE ECONOMIC SURVEY SAYS ABOUT THE FUTURE

The Finance Ministry's
flagship annual document
projects growth

PROJECTIONS

According to the Economic Survey 2019-20 prepared under Krishnamurthy Subramanian (Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India), India's GDP growth is expected to grow in the range of 6.0 to 6.5 per cent in 2020-21. The survey has projected India's growth at 6 per cent to 6.5 per cent in the next financial year starting April 1. The growth in 2020-21 compares to a projected 5 per cent expansion in 2019-20



GROWTH TO COME

Economic growth is expected to pick up and a strong rebound could be seen in FY21 on a low base.

Easing of monetary policy by the Reserve Bank of India and several measures announced by the government in the last year present green shoots for growth.



FUELLING THE HIKE

India's exports increased by 13.4 per cent for manufactured products and 10.9 per cent for total merchandise.

India gained 0.7 per cent increase in trade surplus per year for manufactured products and 2.3 per cent per year for total merchandise.



GREEN RESOLVE

India is also pushing towards sustainable economic growth.

Forest and tree cover increased and has reached 80.73 million hectares covering 25.56 per cent of the geographical area of the country.



SPACE FOR NEW

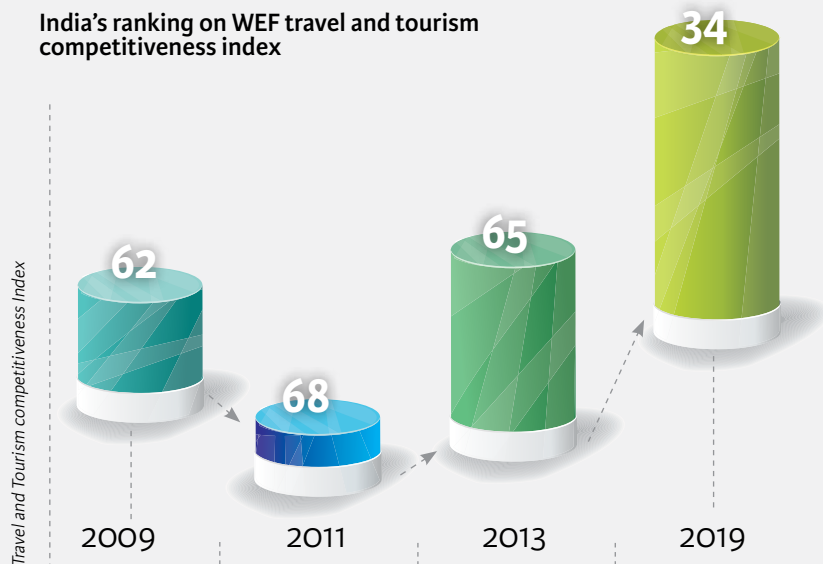
India ranks third in terms of number of new firms created.

According to the survey, from about 70,000 new firms created in 2014, the number has grown by about 80 per cent to about 1,24,000 new firms in 2018.

www.indiabudget.gov.in

BOOMING TOURISM FOR A GROWING INDIA

India's ranking on WEF travel and tourism competitiveness index



Inclusive progression

An all-India growth rate is largely a function of state-level growth and many states have historically grown at rates lower than 6%. However, structural reforms under way will ensure such states increase their growth rates, thereby incrementally increasing all-India growth rates closer to 8%.

The economic survey for 2020 is focussed on creating favourable conditions for investments to boost the economy towards the USD 5 trillion mark

Fifth, the institutional cleaning up is bound to have adverse consequences for growth in the short run. Examples of such institutional cleansing are the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, scrutiny of illegal financial transactions, clamping down on shell companies, an insolvency and bankruptcy code and improved tax compliance. These will lead to immediate growth costs, traded off against efficiency gains in the future.

Broadly, India is in the process of making land (and natural resources), labour and capital markets more competitive and efficient, with not just entry, but exit as well.

Union government finances have been managed well, with no deviations from the goal of fiscal consolidation. Tax reform is a work in progress and the corporate tax rate has already been

reduced. For both direct and indirect taxes, the agenda is simplification and elimination of exemptions, leading to lower compliance costs. Thus, the broad message is that a five per cent GDP in 2019-20 shouldn't lead to gloom and doom; there is a higher growth trajectory in the offing.



Bibek Debroy is currently serving as the Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. A member of the NITI Aayog, he was the Chairman of the committee to restructure Indian Railways. He has authored and translated several books in the field of Economics, Polity, Indology and Sanskrit.

THE BIG switch

It is always heartening to see the intended implementation of government initiatives in India. However, the success of the Swachh Bharat Mission, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 has become the new benchmark. In just five years, it has been recognised as the world's largest sanitation drive, says **Parameswaran Iyer**



Children participate in a campaign to spread the message of Swachh Bharat through street plays in Mumbai

In his maiden address to the nation on August 12, 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his concerns about the issue of open defecation in India, becoming the first PM of the country to do so, on a national platform. In his address, he resolved to eliminate the widely-prevalent practice in just five years. To achieve the goal, he launched the ambitious Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on October 2, 2014. Prime Minister Modi has stayed true to his words and in five years, more than 55 crore people in rural India have shunned the practice of open defecation, and as many as six lakh villages in the country have declared themselves Open Defecation Free (ODF). The unexpected success that this initiative has achieved in the country, especially in the rural pockets, is being lauded the world over and for good reason. It is a mass movement that involved over 1 billion people, who altered an age-old habit that once seemed impossible to curb. It is being recognised as the world's largest sanitation drive.

The journey has been demarcated by six important guiding principles that can be applied to any large transformation scheme – the ABCEDF policy of implementation.

A - ALIGN

People at various hierarchies may have competing priorities. After PM Modi announced the mission, the Department of Drinking Water and

Sanitation (DDWS) had to ensure a goal that was congruent across the administrative ecosystem. Team SBM-G (*Grameen/Rural*) visited each state multiple times and engaged directly with district collectors through learning workshops, informal gatherings and WhatsApp groups, ensuring that sanitation stays on top of everyone's agenda. The three layers of the PM-CM-DM (Prime Minister-Chief Minister-District Magistrate) model worked in cohesion like never before.

B - BELIEVE

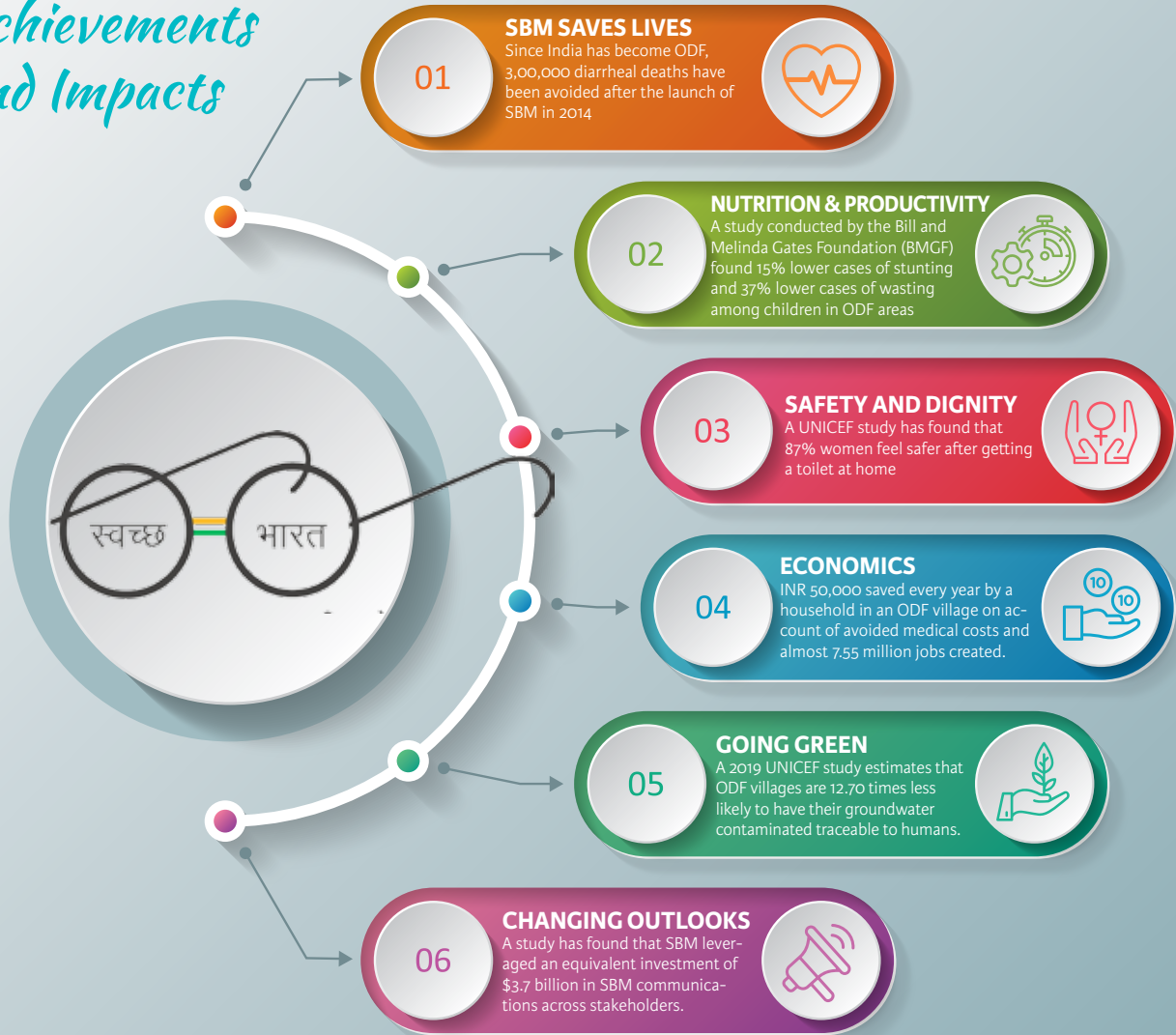
When faced with a difficult situation, teams which do not believe that a set goal can be achieved, are often unable to find motivation. As a result of which, they do not try hard enough. To ensure optimum productivity, the SBM created teams at the centre and in respective

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a promotional 'plogging' run at the beach in Mammallapuram, Tamil Nadu



Photo: The Telegraph

Achievements and Impacts



www.sbm.gov.in



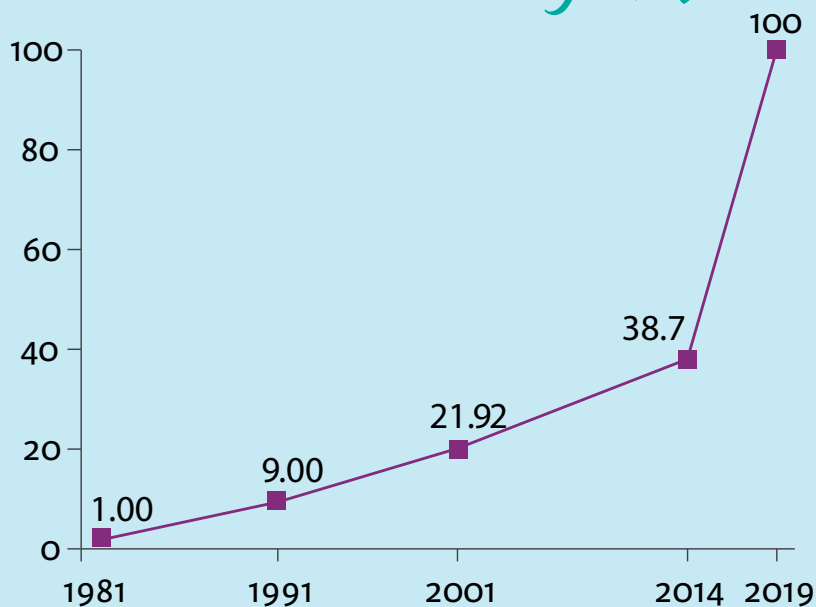
“ JUST LIKE THE MILLIONS WHO JOINED MAHATMA GANDHI’S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE, MILLIONS TODAY HAVE VOLUNTEERED WITH OPEN HEARTS TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR TIME AND EFFORTS TOWARDS A CLEANER INDIA.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India



Heads of various villages (*sarpanch*) pledge support to SBM as they attend celebrations for the ‘Swachh Bharat Divas’, on the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in Ahmedabad, in October 2019

Sanitation coverage (%)



Source: SBMG IMIS as on 24.09.2019

Swachhta pledge

We take this pledge that I will remain committed towards cleanliness and devote time for this.

I will devote 100 hours per year, that is two hours per week, to voluntarily work for cleanliness.

I will neither litter nor let others litter.

I will initiate the quest for cleanliness with myself, my family, my locality, my village and my work place.

I believe that the countries of the world that appear clean are so because their citizens don't indulge in littering nor do they allow it to happen.

With this firm belief, I will propagate the message of Swachh Bharat Mission in villages and towns.

I will encourage 100 other persons to take this pledge which I am taking today.

I will endeavour to make them devote their 100 hours for cleanliness.

I am confident that every step I take towards cleanliness will help in making my country clean.

states that comprised a unique blend of young professionals with lesser administrative baggage and a fresh perspective, as well as experienced but driven bureaucrats, who believed that the goal is truly achievable and focussed on finding creative solutions.

C - COMMUNICATE

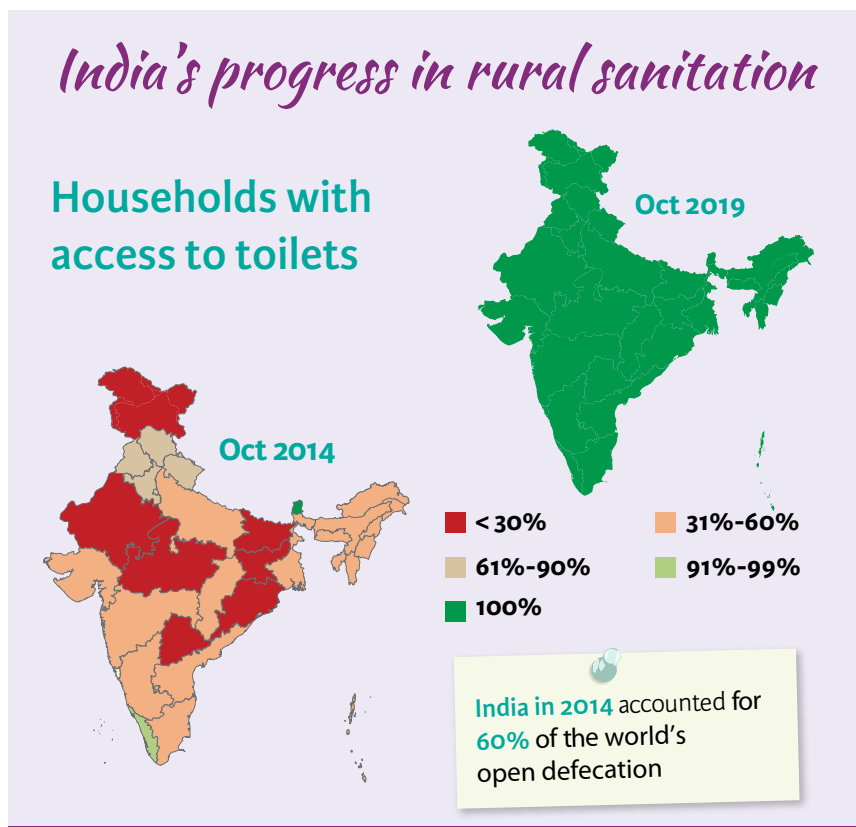
At its core, the SBM is a programme that results in behaviour change. Communication at all levels – above and below the poverty line, and mass and inter-personal – was fundamental to SBM. Nearly 6,50,000 grassroots sanitation champions called *swachhagrahis* were trained, who went from door to door to communicate and deliver the message of *swachhata* or sanitation. Following that, the SBM attempted to make sanitation glamorous by extensively engaging with the media, leveraging popular

culture and associating Bollywood celebrities, sportspersons and other influencers to promote the cause. Mainstream movies such as *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* and *Padman* have also managed to capture the attention

Bottom: Indian cricketers Suresh Raina (L) and Jasprit Bumrah (R) take part in a game of cricket with local kids during the Team Swachh cricket clinics in Nagpur. Team Swachh supports the government's Swachh Bharat Mission and is co-led by UNICEF and WASH united in partnership with the BCCI and ICC



PROGRESS



of the masses and create awareness towards the benefits of an ODF state. And the mission kept the buzz alive through regular large-scale events with the Prime Minister at important milestones, ensuring sanitation stays on top of public recall.

D - DEMOCRATISE

Over the years, the SBM has become a *jan andolan* (mass revolution), a fact that the Prime Minister has reiterated on many occasions. Everyone became a stakeholder and sanitation became everyone's business. People constructed their own toilets and motivated others; communities planned activities and monitored progress, and villages declared themselves open defecation free. Even corporates, NGOs, civil society organisations, and other government ministries and departments played a role in mainstreaming the cause.

E - EVALUATE

As progress started surpassing expectations, many questioned the veracity of SBM's progress figures. Therefore, it became even more important to encourage third party monitoring to reinforce the credibility and keep the volunteers motivated. Such organisations as the World Bank, UNICEF, BMGF and WHO conducted various assessments of sanitation



swachhbharaturban.gov.in

SWACHH SURVEKSHAN, conducted by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs since 2016, is the world's largest urban sanitation and cleanliness survey. It aims to encourage large scale citizen participation and create awareness amongst all sections of the society. So far, it has been instrumental in improving delivery of services to citizens and creating cleaner cities by positive behavioural changes.

In his first Independence Day speech of his second term, the Prime Minister announced an ambitious goal – of providing piped water supply to all households by 2024



Top: Several Indian embassies across the world have organised cleanliness drives to support and promote SBM. Volunteers from the Indian diplomatic mission in Bali, Indonesia, pick up waste during a cleanliness drive at a beach; **Right:** Volunteers from the Indian embassy in Havana, Cuba, after a cleanliness drive

Global Impact

- Inspired by SBM, Nigeria has announced national open defecation free campaigns.
- Further, recognising the mass impact of SBM, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded the prestigious Global Goalkeeper Award to PM Narendra Modi.

OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED

Urban:

Total individual toilets

6,114,402

Community and public toilets

552,692

Total cities declared free from open defecation

4,320

Rural:

Total individual toilets

101,926,000

Toilets built in 2019-20

1,587,617

Total ODF Villages

603,175

coverage and usage, successes and areas of improvement, as well as the health, economic and social impacts of the SBM. India became the global laboratory of sanitation.

F – FOLLOW THROUGH

When all states declared themselves ODF by October 2, 2019, the Prime Minister mentioned that it was just a milestone and not the finish line. There still exists a strong focus on ensuring that the ODF behaviours are sustained and that no one is left behind. DDWS recently released the forward-looking 10-year sanitation strategy, articulating the goal of moving from ODF to ODF Plus, the broader goal of overall cleanliness in India's villages. Some of the important factors to become ODF Plus include ODF-Sustainability, Solid Waste Management (biodegradable and plastic) and Liquid Waste Management (village water and fecal sludge management).

The Indian government is continuing its quest to deliver basic



services to its citizens. In his first Independence Day speech of his second term, the Prime Minister announced an even more ambitious goal – of providing piped water supply to all households by 2024. Aligning with this goal, the Jal Jeevan Mission is being designed to deliver, based on the policy of implementation. Hopefully, that target to will be met successfully!



Parameswaran Iyer is the Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and is leading its flagship Swachh Bharat Mission. A 1981 batch IAS officer, he joined the World Bank in 2009 and has previously worked in Vietnam, China, Egypt and Lebanon



MAKING THE Entrepreneur

A set of new-age organisations have for the first time, created a new environment of doing smart business in India by focusing on providing innovative solutions to the country's problems, say start-up mentors **TN Hari** and **MS Subramanian**

Imagine a scenario where a farmer in a remote Indian village is able to check the soil quality of his field and receive location-specific weather forecast before sowing of seeds, or keep track of his livestock remotely, using a mobile phone. Interestingly, with the advent of advanced mobile technology in the country and the spurt of innovative agritech startups, this is no longer an imaginary situation. And agriculture is not the only sector in which tech-based start-ups in India are solving micro-level problems. This is a phenomenon being observed across genres. However, until very

recently, many first generation Indian entrepreneurs shied away from solving local problems or working on cutting edge technologies. One can attribute this partly to the lack of bold venture funding, as a result of which businesses had to be built around solving problems that could quickly generate positive cash flows. Many of these businesses leveraged the wage arbitrage between India and the West to build companies that provided outsourced services. Solutions to local problems needed change in consumer behaviours and low price points. Invariably they involved longer gestation periods and initial

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the gathering at the launch of Start-Up India, a government-funded initiative to support the country's new-age businesses



Indigenous innovation

- Over 18 per cent of all start-ups in India are now leveraging deep-tech, which means there are over 1,600 such companies in India. This number constituted only 8 per cent of start-ups incepted in 2014, and has seen a 40 per cent compound annual growth rate.
- Indian startups have created an estimated 60,000 direct jobs and 1.3-1.8 lakh indirect jobs in the country
- India has the third largest number of venture capital companies in the world. This is projected to rise four-fold by 2025.
- Of around 9,000 startups founded in India till 2019, 1,050 are healthtech and 20 agritech; 18% of startups leverage AI, blockchain, BigData, robotics, etc. The Aadhaar Stack, and over the next 5-10 years, the Health Stack, show the Indian startup ecosystem is not just focused on copying global models

New-age Indian entrepreneurs and companies are empowering communities and solving problems people face in day-to-day life

cash burn. This called for investors with deep pockets, nerve and even audacity. Given the relatively small size of market opportunities in India, such investors had stayed away.

THE BIG SHIFT

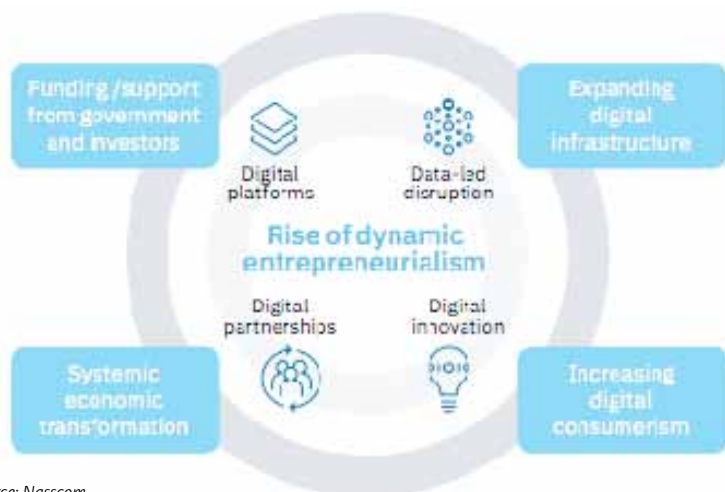
However, BRICS, an acronym coined in 2006 (South Africa added in 2010) to reflect the power of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – an association of five major emerging national economies that would reshape the world economy – triggered a shift in economic activity and power from the developed world to the emerging economies. This changed the world view on the size and potential of the Indian consumer power. A shift that presented enormous opportunities for capital

– opportunities on a scale that had shaped the destinies of Europe, after the industrial revolution, or USA, after World War II. This shift exposed the macroeconomic potential of India to the world and investing in India’s growth story became the new investment thesis of venture capital and hedge funding companies, fuelling startups, which, using technology started focussing on solving local problems. In a manner of speaking, the new world order had arrived! Over the last few years, the current Union government, helmed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, through a combination of pragmatic policy making and execution focus, has accelerated this process tremendously.

NEW FRONTIERS

Solutions provided by programmes of the Union government like Start-up India and Digital India support the new-age entrepreneurs to innovate more smartly and effectively. An apt case in point is India Stack that has become the underlying platform for the growth of Digital India. An ever expanding set of APIs, it provides a technical and collaborative infrastructure upon which technology companies and the government can grow and innovate. It has not only made the process of digital innovations easier but has solved the basic issue of cost. India Stack

START-UP STRUCTURE



Source: Nasscom

#startupindia



Patent application and protection

Easy application, expedited processing and massive rebates of upto 80%

Easier public procurement norms

Start-ups can be listed as sellers to the government and benefit from exemptions on EMD

Easy Winding up

Companies are free and can declare insolvency under bankruptcy code easily within 90 days

Income tax exemption

Exemptions on investments, capital gains and investments above fair market value

Self Certification

Easy and hassle-free compliance under three environmental and 6 labour laws

is significantly lowering innovation costs, which makes it easier for businesses to build digital solutions. It is also demonstrating how a loose network of professionals in the country are replicating what Opens Source triggered 20 years ago in Palo Alto (an American multinational cybersecurity company) achieved. Other such successful solutions are India's payments infrastructure and a

unique digital identity, which is now the envy of the world. With focus on financial inclusion, that is, bringing those without bank accounts into the formal banking system, India's payments infrastructure UPI or the Unified Payments Interface, has been a huge success. The bane of this is Aadhaar, the unique digital identity of each Indian. Launched about a decade ago, this unique 12-digit number

system today includes about 1.2 billion Indians. This is linked with UPI, which enables easy and instant transfer of funds. It has been hailed as one of the most efficient payment systems in the world and is extremely affordable.

Creative use of technology can address many basic problems as well as plug leakages and inefficiencies in existing systems, as Aadhaar has amply demonstrated

SUCCESS

OTHER SOLUTIONS

Creative use of technology can address many basic problems as well as plug leakages and inefficiencies in existing systems, as Aadhaar has amply demonstrated. Innovation in the use of technology can either come from profit-seeking entrepreneurs or from a visionary government that develops innovative and freely available public goods that can be used to increase efficiencies or minimise leakages and friction.

New-age entrepreneurs have created a whole ecosystem of micro-entrepreneurship. That entrepreneurship has the potential to change the employment paradigm and landscape in the country if managed well. An example is the startup Bigbasket, one of India's largest online food and grocery stores. It is not just offering services to urban customers, it is also working closely with nearly

10,000 farmers and educating them on scientific farming practices and, in the process, bettering their livelihoods.

Similarly, many other indigenous technology platforms like Ola (a ride sharing company), Swiggy (online food ordering and delivery platform) and Urbanclap (offering home and lifestyle services) have not only fulfilled urban needs but also



Clockwise from Top: Bhavish Aggarwal, CEO and co-founder of ANI Technologies, the owners of ride-hailing service Ola; Co-founders of Zomato Deepinder Goyal/CEO (L) and Pankaj Chaddah/COO at their office in Gurgaon, Haryana; UrbanClap co-founders Abhiraj Bahl, Varun Khaitan and Raghav Chandra



The Start-up India Hub is a platform for all stakeholders in the startup ecosystem to interact among each other and form successful partnerships

Left to right: Clementine Chambon and Amit Sarogi, the cofounders of the start-up, OORJA, an eco-friendly initiative that is electrifying villages in the state of Uttar Pradesh; Founders of Bengaluru-based Bigbasket that delivers everyday kitchen essentials to eight million customers in 25 Indian cities

helped create a level playing field for smaller entrepreneurs, create jobs and generate incomes. In the genre of travel and tourism, online startups TripAdvisor and Zomato have suddenly increased the discoverability of smaller tourist destinations and restaurants. Small boutique home-stays and resorts that could never have hoped to compete with established players have suddenly become a force to reckon with.

The big callout is that these new-age entrepreneurs and companies are not just offering smart services; they are empowering communities and solving problems people face

in day-to-day life. It's not surprising then that most educational institutions now have entrepreneurship cells and students have begun pursuing entrepreneurship even before they graduate. There is no doubt that future business historians will refer to this decade as a watershed for entrepreneurship in India!

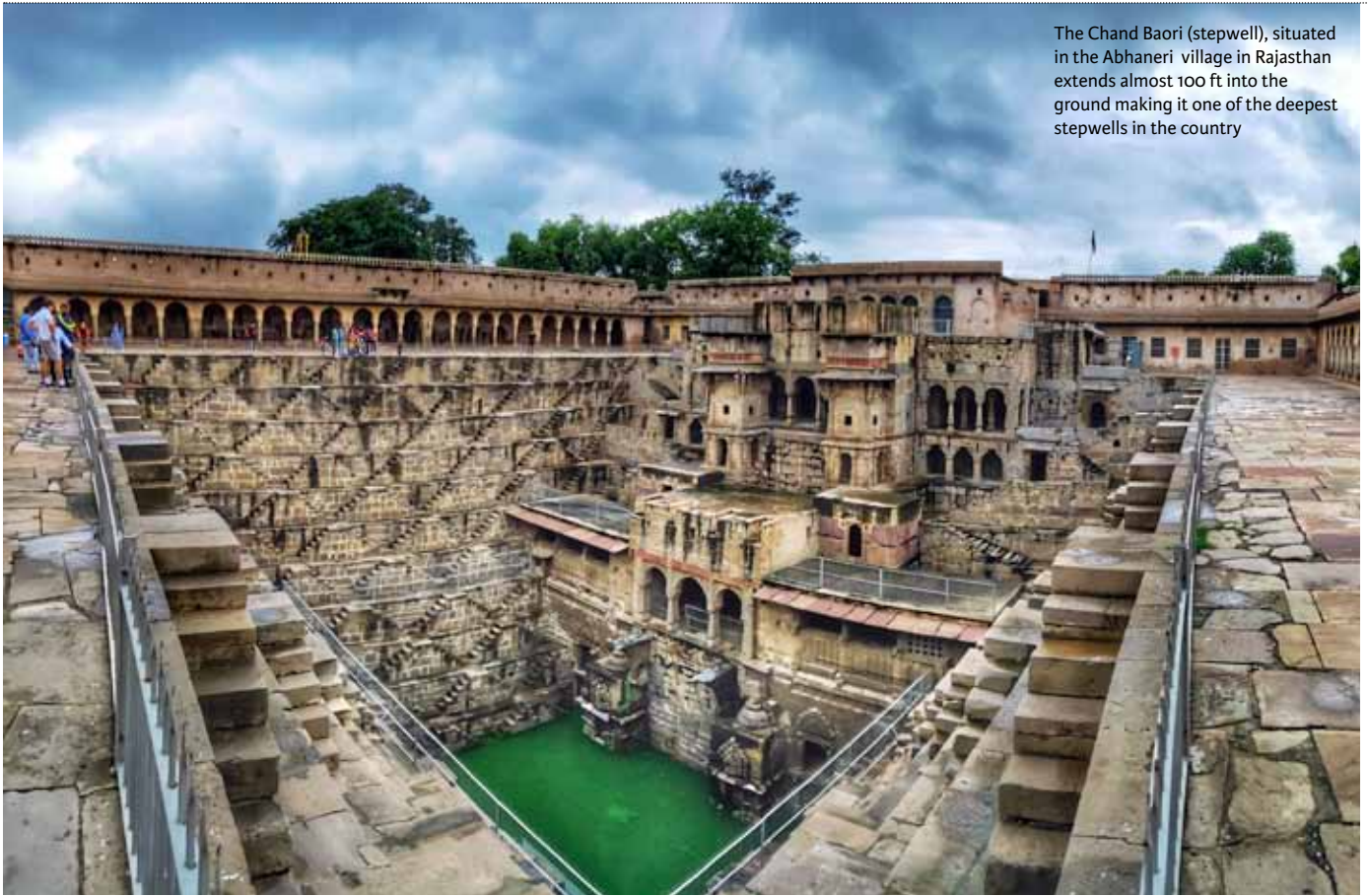


MS Subramanian currently heads the analytics function at Bigbasket. An engineer with an IIM-degree, He has an experience of more than 20 years in analytics leadership, Mani, as he likes to be called, is a frequent speaker in industry and academic forums as an analytics expert



T N Hari is an advisor and mentor to numerous young entrepreneurs and startups. He is also a Strategic Advisor at Fundamentum (a growth Fund set up by the doyens of the Indian Startup world). He heads the HR division at Big Basket and is now known as the start-up HR guy. An IITian and IIM graduate, he spent long years at Tata Steel, first as an engineer and then in HR.

HERITAGE



The Chand Baori (stepwell), situated in the Abhaneri village in Rajasthan extends almost 100 ft into the ground making it one of the deepest stepwells in the country

MAKING EVERY drop count

Wells, stepwells and reservoirs in ancient India were not just sources of water but a part of a larger network of natural water conservation techniques. While they can be revived to reduce today's urban water scarcity, they can also inspire modern sustainability ideas

BY VIKRAMJIT SINGH ROOPRAI

The stunning architectural beauty of Ugrasen ki Baoli (also called Agrasen ki Baoli) in the heart of New Delhi is among the top 10 sites to visit in the city. This 14th century *baoli* (stepwell) with three storeys connected by 108 steps, is not just a popular tourist spot but was a part of India's water conservation system.

If one looks back at the history of civilisation, one will see that the first human settlements came up close to waterbodies. Slowly, people spread out to different parts of the mainland, which had alternate sources of water. Over time, people learnt that water not only flows on the surface but also under their feet. They then started developing the art of digging wells. From

the Great Bath of Mohenjo Daro (one of the largest settlements of the ancient Indus Valley civilisation) to tanks built in the Mughal era, we have many such examples.

THE BIRTH OF THE BAOLI

With the passage of time, however, people in ancient India realised that fetching water from the well would become tiresome when the population grows. So, they came up with alternative concepts like Persian wheels, where an arrangement of pulleys, wheels and buckets was made that could easily fetch water from deep wells. But even that required manual labour as storing water in pots and carrying them back home was not easy. Later, in medieval India, architects and engineers started working on another alternative - constructing steps to reach the

water level. An example of which can be seen in Rajon ki Baoli in New Delhi. These stepwells were not only a place to fetch water and perform chores but also places where people gathered to stay cool during harsh summers.

To reap optimum benefits, these stepwells began to be aligned in such a way that the deeper area of the stepwell (the tank) remained towards the south, while the steps descended from north. This was helpful because as India is in the Northern Hemisphere, sunlight would not reach the water surface in the tank. This prevented the

If we can create a strategically-planned network of water recharge pits that connect to underground aquifers, we can bring back the water level of any city



The iconic carvings and the stairway leading to the Dada Hari Baoli stepwell, constructed around 1485 in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

How wells were dug in the ancient times

Earlier, masons used to make a wooden ring and place it on the surface, where excavation was to be done. They would then start digging and slowly, as the pit was formed, the ring was pushed lower. They would add another ring on top of it or a series of bricks or stones, which ensured that the wall of the well didn't collapse as the masons were digging it. Once the water level was reached, the masons would fetch buckets of muddy water and throw it on the ground around the well. Water would seep in and form natural aqueducts to reach the cavity created at the bottom of well. After repeating this process several times over, the well would develop a large cavity, which would get filled with underground water, recharged by rains, reaching it through catchment area around the well via the tiny aqueducts. Water would get filtered through sand and if any foreign particle reached the collected water inside well, it would settle at the base, leaving potable water on top.

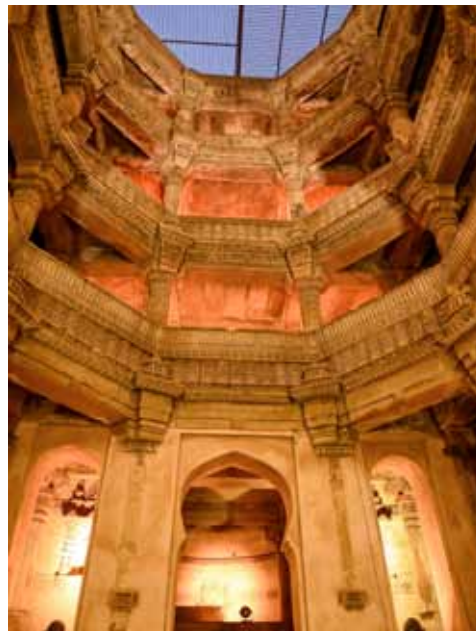
Top: The Adalaj-Ni-Vav stepwell illuminated on the occasion of the 'Water Festival', an initiative to reintroduce heritage monuments to people, at Adalaj in Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Bottom: The picturesque Panna Meena Ka Kund, an ancient stepwell in Amer, near Jaipur, Rajasthan

water from heating up and evaporating. As a result, the temperature of water and the chambers around the water level always remained cooler than the surface.

WELLS AND TANKS

Ancient India's water management was



not limited to *baolis* alone. There were also tanks (*kund*) and sluice dams. In fact, religious shrines, which are frequented by hundreds of devotees always had a *kund*, a stepwell or at least a well attached to it. Gradually, most of these water structures began to be tagged as blessed and miraculous. Even today, devotees at such shrines line up to fetch water from these holy sources and bring them back to their homes as a mark of blessing. Interestingly, this became a practice across most major religions. From stepwells like the one at Nizamuddin Dargah in New Delhi to tanks like the one at Golden Temple in Amritsar, water became an important element of the pilgrimage.

HELP FROM THE PAST

As civilisation developed, the use of tanks and *baolis* was reduced. Pipelines reached our homes and water was available literally at our fingertips. As we started taking our natural sources of water for granted, stagnant water in lakes, ponds, *baolis*, and wells was not recycled for long and hence





Baolis (stepwells), were not only a place to fetch water but also a site for social gatherings during summers

Top: The town of Bundi in Rajasthan is home to several ancient stepwells. Seen here is the Dhabhai Kund, the biggest stepwell in Bundi

Right: Gandhak ki Baoli is a 16th-century stepwell in Mehrauli, New Delhi. The water in the *baoli* is said to have sulphur content known for its curative properties

started developing algae and harmful bacteria. We must understand that most of the medieval water structures are interconnected via underground aquifers.

Polluting one will affect all in the vicinity. At the same time, if we can clean any one well or *baoli*, it will have a positive impact on nearby water structures and the ground water level.

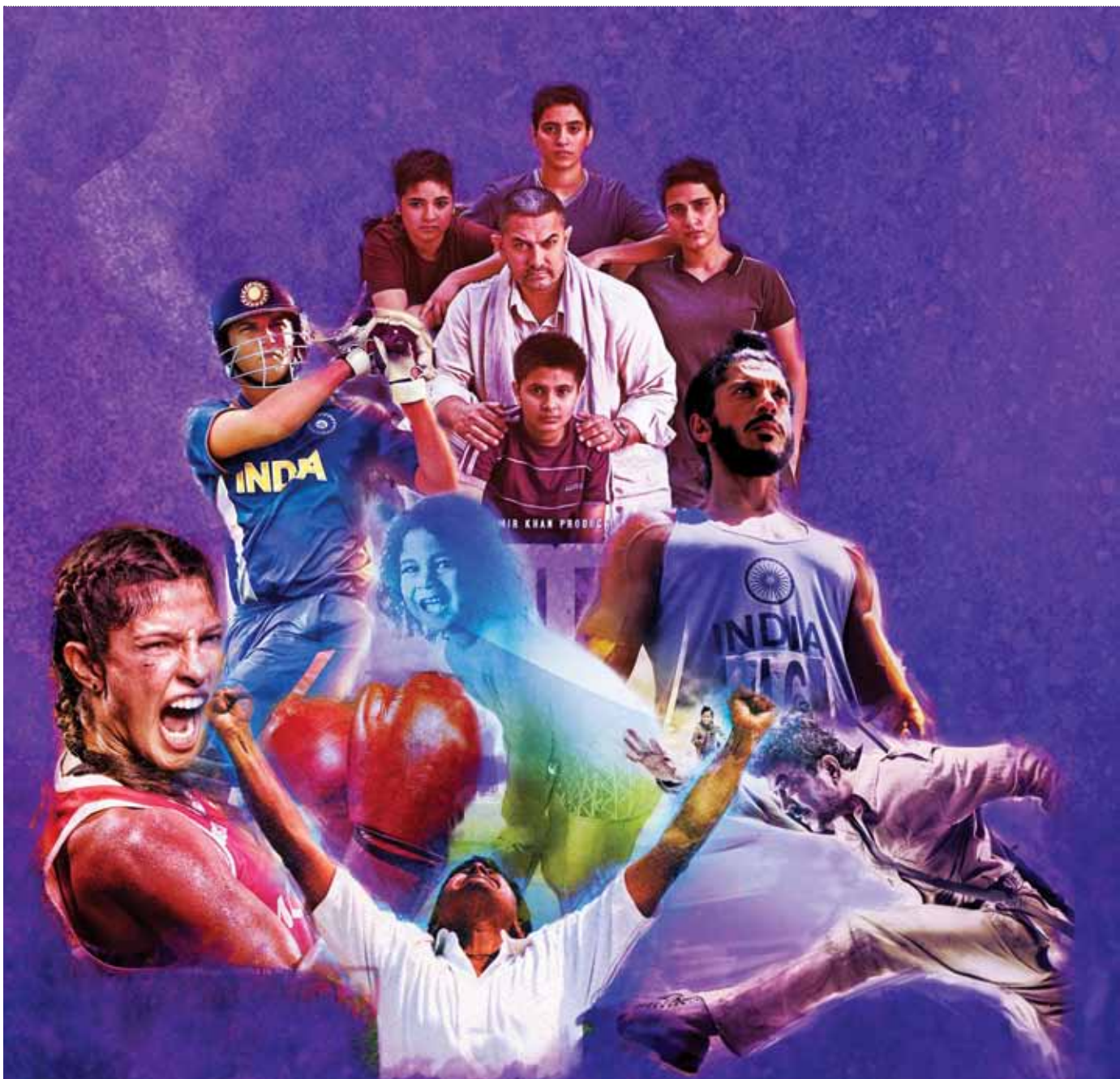
If we recharge one *baoli*, several others nearby also get their water back. So, if we can create a strategically-planned network of water recharge pits, that connect to underground aquifers, we can help increase the underground water level of any city. An example of one of the oldest water recharge pits is Humayun's Tomb in New Delhi, a monument built on the bank of River Yamuna in the 16th century. Perhaps, the architects then knew



that a river might change its course with time, so they planned for the future so that residents around it won't have to depend only on the river. Today, as India faces water scarcity, we can take lessons from *baolis* that highlight traditional wisdom and are a sort of guidebook for water conservation. It is time that we adopt the old methods with new technology and save our planet.



Vikramjit Singh Rooprai is a heritage activist and an educator. He has been exploring north Indian monuments to promote the country's rich heritage. He has established heritage labs in various schools and can often be found mentoring young adults to develop a new way of looking at our past.



THE ACT OF the game

Films based on sportspersons are entertaining, inspirational and relatable. They not only promote sports but ensure that sporting legends are not forgotten

BY AARTI KAPUR SINGH

The story of a fighter who wins against all odds has eternally inspired humanity. The passion to succeed, the struggle of the journey and finally, the joy of winning has been the most popular storyline ever. In India, sports has always been high on entertainment and the line between the two have often blurred, leading to films being based on lives of sports persons.

Recently, the Hindi film industry has been experimenting with sports-related movies and *Dangal*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, *MS Dhoni: The Untold Story*, *Mary Kom*, *Azhar*, *Budhia Singh: Born to Run* and *Soorma* are some of the sports biopics that have released over the last few years. The financial and critical success of these projects have encouraged more filmmakers to delve into the genre.

INCREASING SCORES

Movies on sportspeople allow filmmakers to combine three essential ingredients: drama, euphoria and action or heroism, besides cashing in on the fame and fan following of the subject. "Sport lends itself to thrilling moments. For a director, it's easy to



choose a character, show him going through vigorous physical training, add jingoism and a sports film with mass appeal is ready," says Tigmanshu Dhulia, who directed *Paan Singh Tomar* (2012) based on the life of the soldier-turned-athlete. Expanding on why sportspeople appeal to filmmakers, he adds: "Sports films are made because the lead character is known to many, if not a star already, which helps in marketing the movie."

The advantage perhaps also lies in unique stories of these personalities that are waiting to be told. The stories present themselves and the promotions ride on the back of

Ranveer Singh (left) is all set to play Indian cricket legend Kapil Dev (right) in a film tracing the latter's successful career

As Indian sportspersons keep winning on the field, filmmakers are getting more options to narrate their stories

curiosity about the life of a person already popular. If not known, movies help tell the story of these real legends. “Cinema audience like larger-than-life heroes. It’s the reason stars like Salman Khan and Rajinikanth are so famous, because they are shown to be pulling off superhuman feats in their films. Sportspeople are real-life heroes as they perform physical feats regular people cannot. So, when their story transitions to the screen, the heroism is easy to replicate,” says actor Harshvardhan Kapoor, who is gearing to play Olympic gold medalist shooter Abhinav Bindra in a biopic. Agrees

actor Parineeti Chopra, who is set to play badminton ace Saina Nehwal in the latter’s biopic titled *Saina*. “Saina has achieved a lot at her young age and her story truly inspires me. But it’s also challenging because the audience is aware of her and any mistake I make in my depiction will be highlighted,” says Chopra.

Another factor that helps is that sportstars are ordinary people with extraordinary passion and grit. Their stories are relatable. “Mary Kom was an ordinary girl till she started winning medals. The audience recognises her circumstances and struggles. In the

Left: Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra during the promotion of his movie *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, which was based on the life of Milkha Singh, a celebrated Indian sprinter.

Right: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas (right) played the role of Olympic boxer Mary Kom (left) in the latter’s biopic





end comes the hope that if an ordinary girl like Mary Kom can succeed, so can we!” says Ajit Andhare, chief operating officer of Viacom18 Motion Pictures, which has been backing several projects on Indian sports.

NEW FLAVOUR

There is also an argument about changing tastes of the evolving audience of Indian cinema and movies on sports are refreshing when compared to the staple fare. “Currently Bollywood is looking at stories beyond romance and revenge. We have dispelled standard templates and our films have stopped being monochromatic in themes. Also, movies represent the different conversations that are taking place in society and as India accepts sports other than cricket as a career option,

people are becoming eager to see more success stories from the field,” says Andhare.

Agrees Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, who directed *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and is working with actor Farhan Akhtar to make *Toofan*, which is based on the story of an Indian boxer. “The audience has evolved and wants to watch fresh content. People are also becoming more patient about creativity and looking for out-of-the-box ideas, irrespective of who the cast is,” he says.

HAPPY ENDINGS

Finally, it’s the feel-good factor to

Actor Sushant Singh Rajput (left) with Indian cricketer MS Dhoni (right). Singh played the role of Dhoni in a movie made on the sports star

A well-made sports biopic helps in the promotion of sports and inspires youngsters to make a career in the same

Sports-based movies to look out for

'83

Starring Ranveer Singh as **Kapil Dev**, this movie is going to be a glorious retelling of India's triumph at the 1983 Cricket World Cup.

Saina

Parineeti Chopra is set to play badminton champion **Saina Nehwal** in this biographical film.

Toofan

Filmmaker Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and actor Farhan Akhtar are back together for *Toofan*, a fictional story of a boxer.

Rashmi Rocket

Starring actress Taapsee Pannu, it is believed to follow a girl's journey as a runner in a Gujarati village and how she overcomes various obstacles to achieve victory.

Maidaan

This Ajay Devgn starrer is a biopic on the life of football coach **Syed Abdul Rahim**, who is known as the architect of modern Indian football.

Jersey

Shahid Kapoor is all set to play a cricketer in the Hindi version of *Jersey*, which was originally a Telugu film.

Shabash Mithu

This is a biopic of **Mithali Raj**, captain of the Indian Women's Cricket team, starring Tapsee Pannu.

Abhinav Bindra's biopic

The under-wraps film on ace marksman **Abhinav Bindra** has Harshvardhan Kapoor playing the lead role.

The Pullela Gopichand biopic

An untitled biopic on ace badminton player **Pullela Gopichand** has been announced by Fox Star Studios.

Dhyan Chand biopic

Filmmaker Pooja Shetty has announced a film on the life of the great hockey player.

PV Sindhu biopic

Actor Sonu Sood is producing a film on the young badminton player.

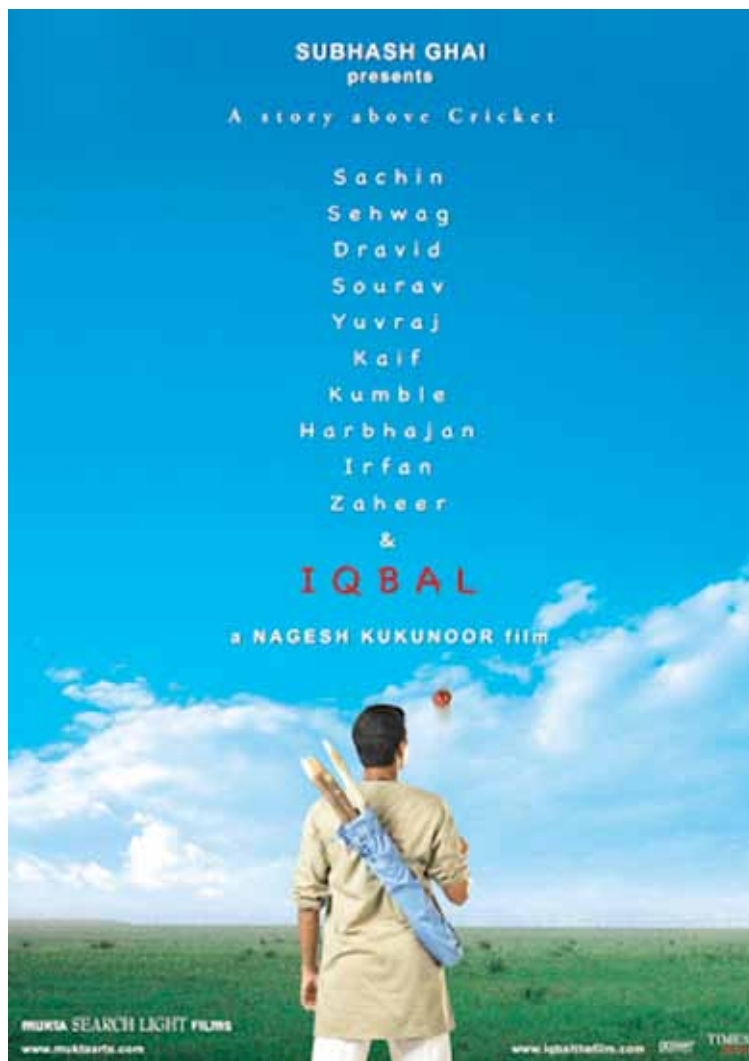
PT Usha biopic

Director Revathy S Varmha will make a film on the legendary athlete in English.

Murlikant Petkar biopic

Actor Sushant Singh Rajput has reportedly been signed on to play the differently-abled sportsman who won the gold at the 1970 Commonwealth Games.

Movies on sportspeople allow filmmakers to combine three essential ingredients: drama, euphoria and action or heroism, besides cashing in on the fame and fan following of the subject



The movie *Iqbal* is said to have been based on the life and struggles of Baba Sidhaye, the first speech and hearing-impaired cricketer in India



Left: Actresses Taapsee Pannu (left) and Bhumi Pednekar portray sharp shooters Chandro and Prakashi Tomar in the movie *Saand Ki Aankh*.
Right: Indian film actors (from left) Angad Bedi, Diljit Dosanjh and Tapsee Pannu during the promotion of *Soorma*, the biopic of Indian hockey player Sandeep Singh. Dosanjh played the role of Singh in the film



sports that makes films about them appealing. Industry experts say that movies with sad endings do not do well at the Indian box office. A well-deserved triumph is what every filmmaker looks for. Euphoria is integral to a sports film, which gets audiences involved on an emotional level. In 2001, when *Lagaan* — a sport-related film, though not a biopic — was released, audiences in cinemas cheered in the end when a last-ball boundary gave the Indian villagers, a win over their colonial challengers.

Most filmmakers say there is a part of the story, of the athlete's life, that most people do not know about. This becomes a focal point for the film. For example, the audience was familiar with cricketer MS Dhoni's on-field success but when his biopic released, the talking point became his struggle off the cricket pitch.

As Indian sportspersons keep winning on the field, filmmakers are getting more options to narrate their stories. Even if a sportsman loses a championship, the story still remains positive and inspirational. The genre of sport movies has the ability to highlight challenges the masses face, albeit in an entertaining fashion. It stands for such values as liberation, resilience and unflinching spirit, among others. A well-made sport movie provides the thrill as well as the wisdom. It also helps in the promotion of sports and inspires thousands of youngsters to make a career in the same.



Aarti is an independent writer with close to two decades' experience in various media. After securing a doctorate in film studies, she is now indulging in her passion to discover the world. She writes on food, luxury, films, travel, wellness and celebrities.

The aromatic *Pakki Murgh Biryani*. A preparation of marinated chicken which is then cooked with rice in a dough-sealed vessel



A PLATEFUL OF Tradition

Unlike any typical meal, a customary Bohri spread starts with dessert. Influenced by the tastes, flavours and culinary practices of Gujarat and the Middle East, the Bohri cuisine has finally started to generate a following in the Indian gastronomic scene

BY MUNAF KAPADIA

When I was about 10 years old, I was asked by a classmate what religion I belonged to. I responded by saying I am a Bohri Muslim. My classmate probed further and asked what that meant and I had nothing more to add. When I returned home that evening, it was the first of many times that I began to ask more pointed questions to my parents about our community's roots.

All through my adulthood I have wondered why our identity, culture and cuisine remained a mystery to many. Especially our food, that has several similarities with tastes from Gujarat, where our ancestors first settled, and includes dishes popular with other Muslim communities of India, yet has an identity of its own. Equally interesting are our culinary traditions, which are followed even today.

In the Bohri community, meals start with dessert, followed by a small appetiser and then the main course. Bohris eat out of a 3.5-ft-wide steel plate called the *thaal* around which

diners (about seven to eight) sit, on the ground, shoulder to shoulder. It's a highly territorial experience where we break the *thaal* (figuratively) into several pieces, like pizza slices, and serve ourselves the dish that is served at the centre of the plate. Before the meal begins, a smaller *thaal* is placed that has a set of condiments at the perimeter and a *namak dani* (a small container of salt) at the centre. Condiments can range from a mint and coriander chutney, kokum and potato salad and pineapple *boondi raita* (a salad with curd dressing) to a bowl of lemon wedges, pickled onions with jalapenos, Bhavnagari chillies stuffed with mustard paste and peanuts.

Before the first course begins, the youngest person sitting at the *thaal* is encouraged to pick up the *namak daani* and offer salt to the rest. The idea

Below: A contemporary take on the iconic *dabba gosht* – a rare, succulent, meaty delicacy hardly found outside a Bohri home

Right: The delicious *lagan ni seekh* – a popular Bohri dish made with marinated minced mutton set in a casserole and topped with beaten eggs before being cooked carefully over a slow flame



The timeless story

The spiritual conventions of the Bohra faith are rooted in Egypt and Yemen. In about 1567 AD, the mission that the Indian Bohra community follows to present day split from its successors in Yemen and thus created a new order of Bohras – the Dawoodi Bohra, with its seat of power in Gujarat, India. The Dawoodi Bohra clergy's seat has since moved to Mumbai from where the Syedna (the community's version of a High Priest) administrates his flock the world over.

The Dawoodi Bohra community in India today is built on the enterprising gene of its ancestors who turned traders and businessmen early on to assimilate into the Gujarati socio-economic structure of the time. The members of the Bohra community picked up the local language, the attire and the culinary references.

behind starting a meal by tasting salt is attributed to the latter's anti-bacterial properties but more importantly to its ability to activate our taste buds before the actual meal begins!

After the salt tasting, we consider it auspicious to begin the meal with a sweetened rice dish called *sodannu* (100 grains of rice). Cooked with *ghee* (clarified butter), this fragrant dish represents the Bohri tradition of *kharaas-meethas*, where we alternate savory with sweet. This is done to constantly reset the palate and make sure that each course is packed with flavours! Bohri legend also says that having a little bit of sweet between the meal aids digestion.

The more ambitious Bohri *thaals* either replace the *sodannu* or follow it up with ice-cream or a soufflé. This is followed by the first round of starters (or *kharaas*) – usually a plate of smoked mutton *kheema*

patti samosas (flavored and smoked minced meat stuffed inside a hand-wrapped filo pastry). We take our food very seriously; a fact proven when you see a seasoned Bohri community member squeezing a few drops of lemon into a *samosa* (a deep-fried triangular savoury pastry stuffed with spiced vegetables or meat) before biting into it. The logic being that the lemon's acidity activates the smoke treatment given to the meat. The *samosas* can be accompanied with a second *kharaas* – a Russian cutlet (shredded chicken in a gooey white sauce with mixed vegetables, rolled in bread crumbs and egg and deep fried to crispy perfection). Sometimes our Gujarati roots stand out, especially in the *naariyal* kebab. This kebab is made



Clockwise from right: The Mutton *Raan*, the obvious star amongst many Bohri dishes is marinated for over 48 hours before being cooked for a minimum of one-two hours; The *Malai Khaja*, an authentic puff pastry stuffed with dollops of fresh milk cream; An authentic preparation of the delicious *Dabba Gosht*

The Bohri Kitchen

I started *The Bohri Kitchen* (TBK) to harness the cultural customs of the Bohra community and the delicious Bohri food my mother cooks to educate and create awareness about our wholesome cuisine and rich heritage. With these home-dining experiences, our focus was not on volume but instead quality. You can't book a seat at The Bohri Kitchen, you request one!

Today, TBK draws Bohris and other patrons including such Bollywood stars as Rishi Kapoor, Farah Khan, Ashutosh Gowariker, Hrithik Roshan, Aditya Chopra and many more.

Our latest feather is the book deal Harper Collins has signed us on – to write the story of The Bohri Kitchen titled “*The Boy who Quit Google to Sell Samosas*”.

THE GLOBAL SPREAD

The Indian Dawoodi Bohra community is a small cohort, adding up to about 5 lakh followers including the diaspora spread across North America, Europe and South East Asia. The total number of Bohras of Middle Eastern and South East Asian descent, including the Indian Bohra community, is estimated at two million.



Left to right: The crispy and delightful *Keema Samosa*, a light snack filled with minced mutton and then deep fried; Bollywood actor Rishi Kapoor enjoying a meal at *The Bohri Kitchen* (TBK); Munaf Kapadia with his mother Nafisa, the proprietors of TBK

out of desiccated coconut and garlic and is served with kokum chutney.

Once the *kharaas* is over, the *meethas* (sweet treats) course is served.

After resetting the palate with the sweets, arrives the sumptuous *raan* in red masala – a leg of goat, marinated in spices for over two days. The latter is common in Bohri cuisine that believes in cooking in a slow, patient manner. The *raan* is marinated in the quintessential ginger and garlic paste with *dhania* (coriander), *jeera* (cumin), turmeric and a dash of chilli powder. Just before being prepared, it's marinated again for a few hours in curd and then cooked for two to three hours on a high flame until the mutton is melt-in-the-mouth soft. It's served with *salli wafer* (potato sticks) and coriander garnishing. A Bohri chef will avoid placing a carving knife with the *raan* – the idea is that the chef is so confident about the dish, that he/she knows that the meat will come off the bones with just bare hands! We like breaking bread or *raan* together as a community. The *raan* can be followed by the *khichda* or the Bohri variant of *haleem*. In this dish,

various pulses are ground together and cooked with boneless mutton for around eight hours. This rich dish goes best with *khammi roti*, a traditional flatbread common among most Muslim communities.

Finally, the one or two sweet dishes later, the *jaman* or the main course, is served. It's usually a traditional *dum biryani* (a rice and meat dish) cooked with potatoes. In a country as vast and diverse as India, there are uncountable cooking styles, each more distinct and interesting than the other. It is, however, the traditional ways in which it is served that brings out the feeling of cultural integrity. The sense of harmony and the familiarity that comes with sharing a plate of food with friends, family and acquaintances is what allows us to celebrate our many differences together and in style!



Munaf Kapadia is the CEO (Chief Eating Officer) at the Bohri Kitchen, a homestyle eatery where 14 people are treated to a mouthwatering six-course meal. Munaf let go of his 4.5 year career in Online Advertising to pursue his love for the culinary arts and keep his mother occupied with her sincere cooking skills.

SECRETS OF THE seven sisters

Some of the most beautiful and tranquil lakes in India are located in the country's Northeastern frontiers. Experience serene and picturesque meadows as we travel across the seven states and bring to you, some of the most beautiful lakes from the area and its friendly inhabitants



UMIAM LAKE

This picturesque waterbody, locally known as Barapani, is the biggest artificial lake in the state. On the banks of the lake is the Uiam Water Sports Complex, where visitors can try their hands at adventure watersports.

Travel tip: The lake is situated about an hour's drive (about 17 km) from the state capital Shillong on the Guwahati-Shillong National Highway.



SNAPSHOTS

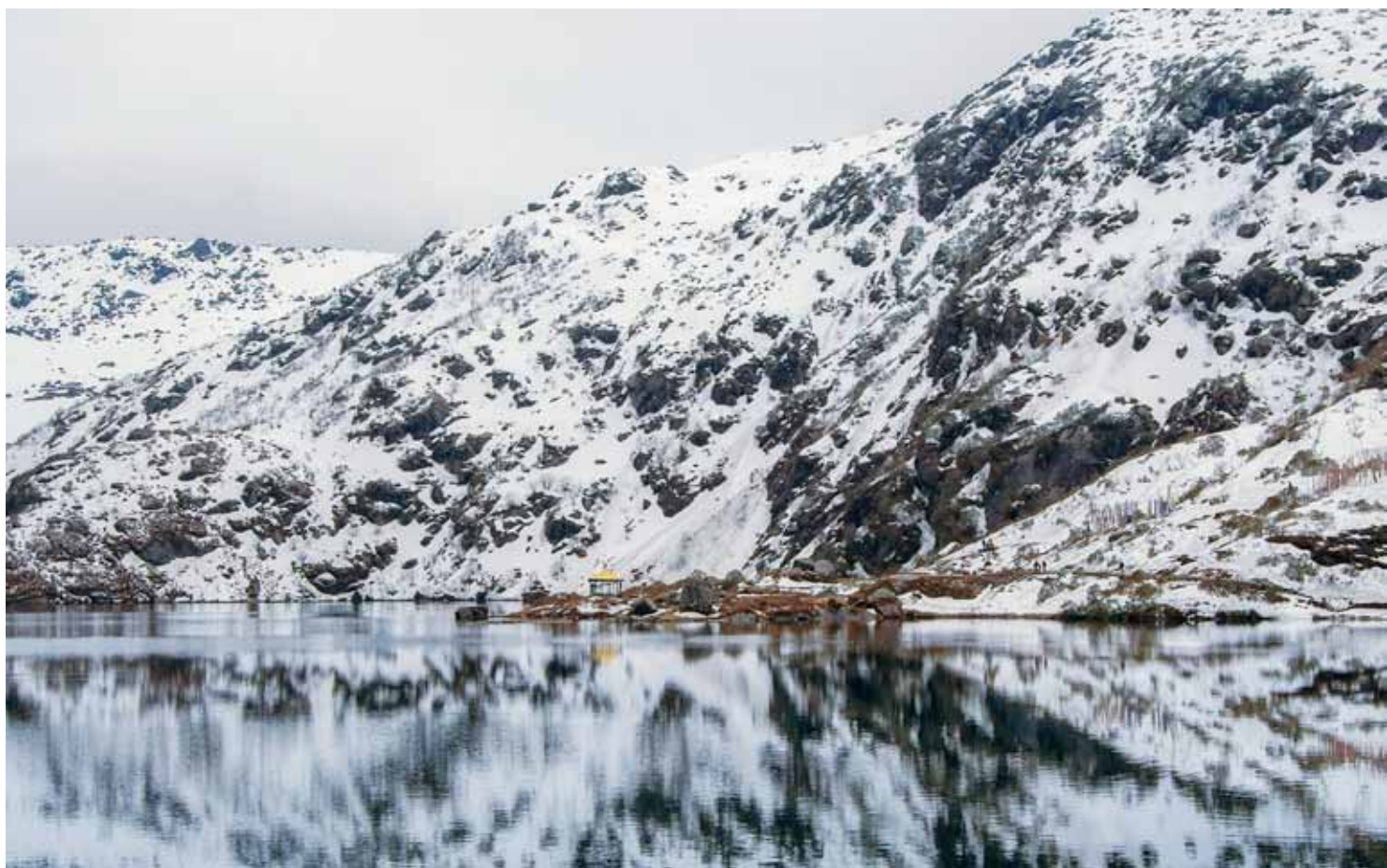


TSOMGO LAKE

Also known as Changu Lake, it is a rare glacial lake in East Sikkim.

This lake, which is revered by locals as sacred, remains frozen during winter and comes alive in spring with the blossoming of flowers in the surrounding.

Travel tip: The state capital Gangtok lies 38 km (a 90 minute drive) from the lake.



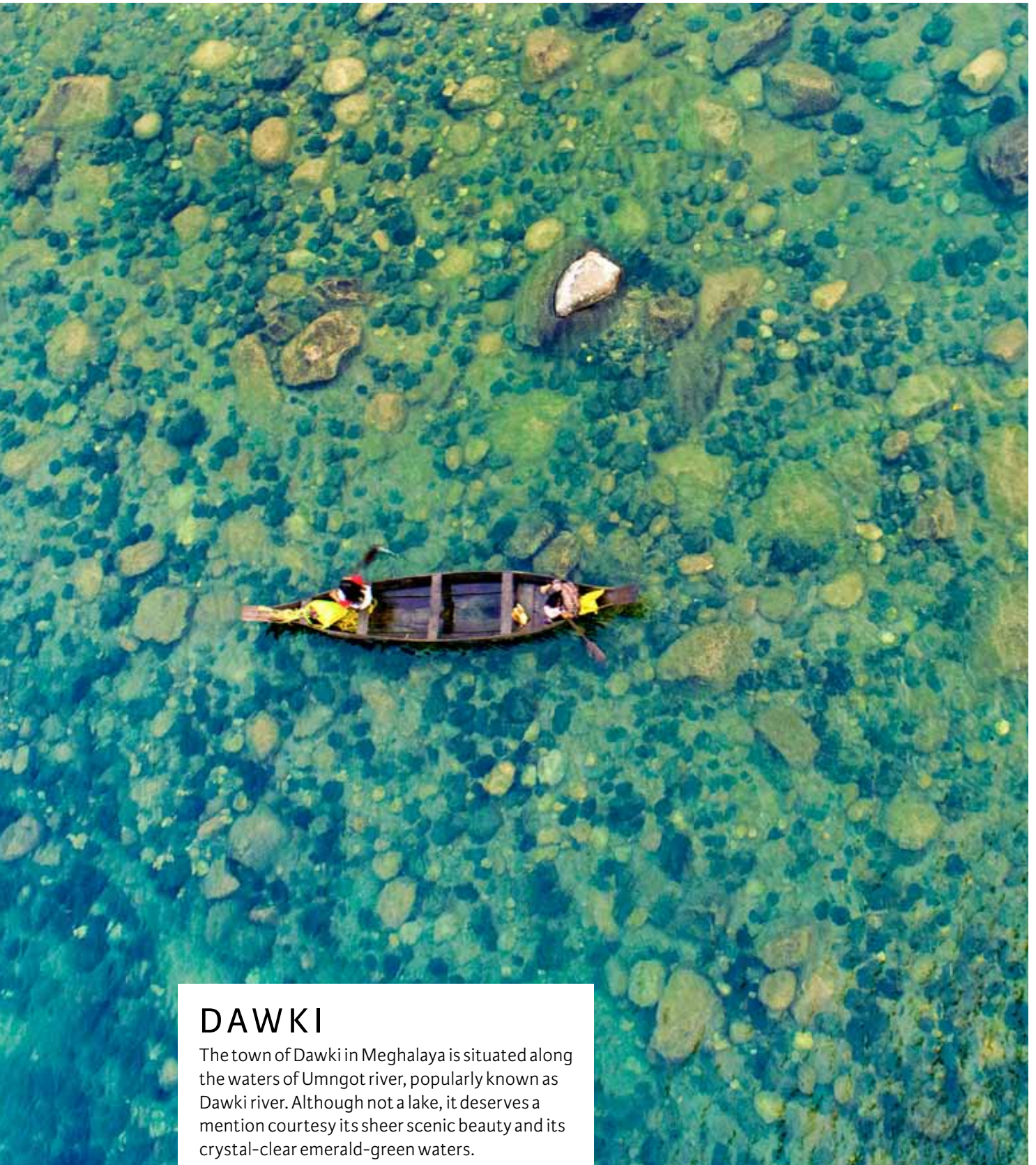
The Umiam Lake, locally known as Barapani, is the biggest artificial lake in Meghalaya



SANGESTAR TSO

Originally known as Shonga-tser Lake and now, Madhuri Lake, it is one of the most popular waterbodies in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Formed by flash floods after an earthquake in 1950, it is best known for the breathtaking valleys and snow-capped mountains that surround it.

Travel tip: Tawang is a day's trip (about 448 km) from the state capital Itanagar.



DAWKI

The town of Dawki in Meghalaya is situated along the waters of Umngot river, popularly known as Dawki river. Although not a lake, it deserves a mention courtesy its sheer scenic beauty and its crystal-clear emerald-green waters.

Travel tip: Dawki is a two and a half hour's drive (about 83 km) from the state capital Shillong.



LOKTAK LAKE

Located near Moirang in Manipur, it is a part of the Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating national park in the world. Fishermen living in floating islands called *phumdis*, in huts known as *phumsangs*, are unique sights here.

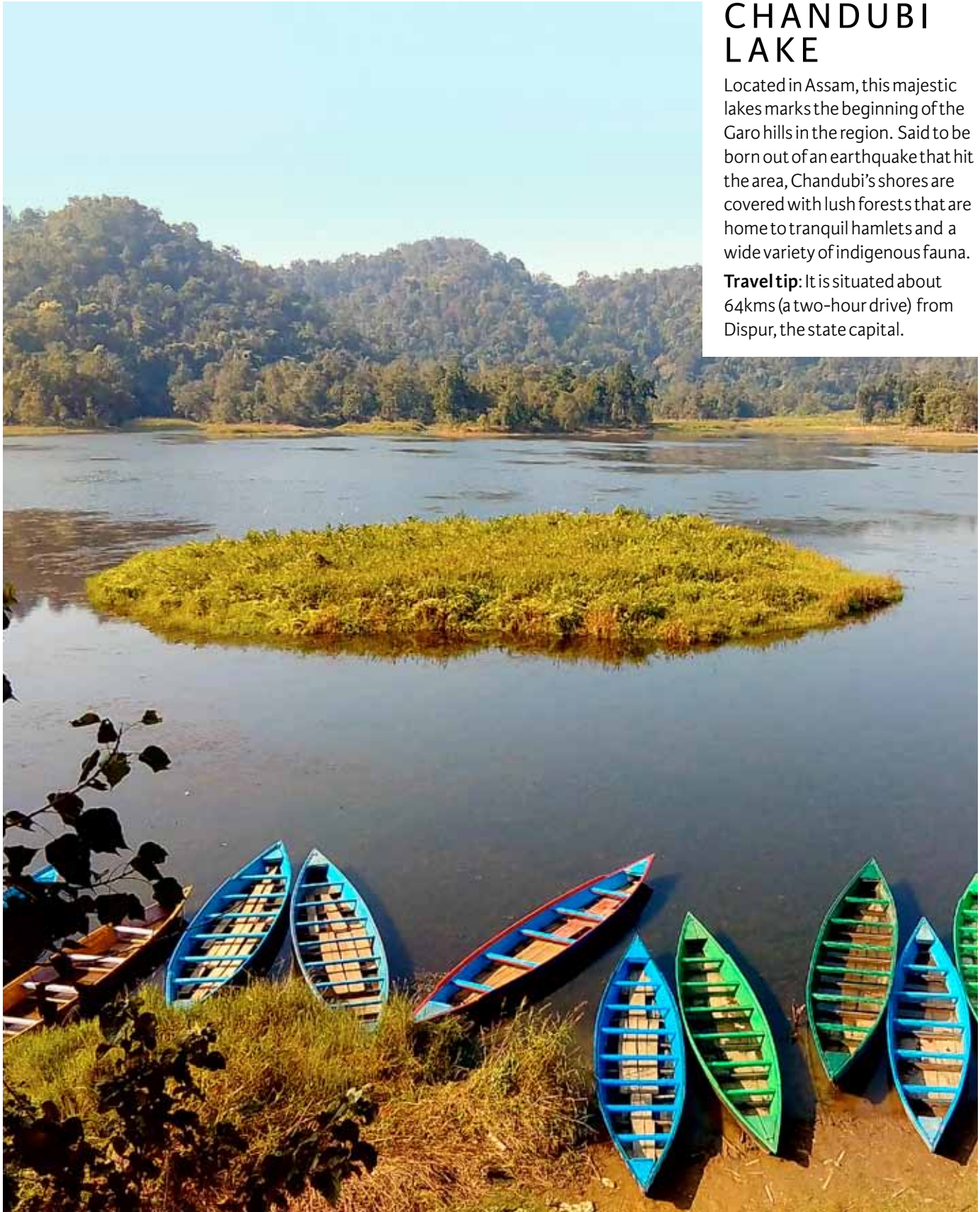
Travel tip: It is a two-hour to drive (about 52 km) from the state capital Imphal to the lake.



GURUDONGMAR LAKE

Located at a height of 17,800 ft in Sikkim, it is one of the highest lakes in the world. Named after Guru Padma-sambhava, who is believed to be the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, it is revered by locals and travellers alike.

Travel tip: The lake is an eight-hour drive (approximately 187 km) from the state capital Gangtok.



CHANDUBI LAKE

Located in Assam, this majestic lakes marks the beginning of the Garo hills in the region. Said to be born out of an earthquake that hit the area, Chandubi's shores are covered with lush forests that are home to tranquil hamlets and a wide variety of indigenous fauna.

Travel tip: It is situated about 64kms (a two-hour drive) from Dispur, the state capital.



SONBEEL LAKE

Located in the Karinganj district of Assam, Sonbeel (or Shon Beel) is one of the largest wetlands in the state. A unique aspect of this lake is that during the winter months, the water level recedes to make way for smaller lakes and farmlands for rice cultivation.

Travel tip: The state capital Dispur is about 326 km (an approximate nine-hour drive away from the lake).

While the Northeast is popularly known for its music, traditions and culture – its tranquil lakes are actually the crown jewel



RUDRASAGAR LAKE

Also known as Twijilikma, it is located in Tripura and has been identified as one of the areas of national importance for conservation and sustainable use. An interesting feature is the Neermahal, a majestic palace that was built on the lake's northern bank to serve as the summer residence of Tripura royalty.

Travel tip: The lake is situated in Melaghar, 53 km away from Agartala, the capital of Tripura (it takes a little over an hour to reach the lake)



A GREEN Utopia

At Auroville, a global township located in Southern India, residents have been practising sustainable living for years. And this maybe the solution to the global climate crisis

BY SAURABH NARANG



The environment-friendly huts in Auroville are built solely from natural materials like timber, palm leaves and coconut rope, sourced locally



Bottom: A resident during a harvest session where all the volunteers work together to get fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers for the kitchen

Left: One of the residents, Cath, helping to harvest green papaya

They grow their own food. Their necessities are powered by solar energy. The waste they produce is recycled. They live in complete harmony with the environment and each other in this global community of people from across more than 50 nations. For tourists, Auroville, or the city of dawn, seems like an utopian destination where people practice sustainable living, bringing to life a once-deserted piece of land located between the Union Territory of Puducherry and the state of Tamil Nadu. Some residents also live off the grid (without any connection with the outside world). Envisioned by freedom fighter and philosopher Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (Mirra Alfassa) the tenets of life here are centered on the concept of inner consciousness by the unity of the mind, body and nature. As a result, there is a very evident social



consciousness of the entire community towards sustainable and green living.

Auroville has two types of residents: permanent and temporary. One can either arrive here for a day's guided tour or opt for a stay in one of the many clusters while participating in the daily work of the township. I

More than just sustenance

FOOD MILES

We need to consider how far the food we eat travels from its origin to us. More the food miles, more pollution it causes while being transported, stored etc, more the resource it demands (to make the truck that transports this food etc) and so on. To avoid harming the environment, we should all try to eat more produce which is cultivated locally.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Some plants have very high ecological value- they grow without needing harmful fertilisers or chemicals, they don't harm other plants around and grow without too much maintenance. These plants should be encouraged over commercial farm produces, which might have much lower ecological value.

volunteered at Solitude Farm, one such community, for 32 days.

SOLITUDE FARM

Within a few hours of my arrival in Solitude Farm, I was greeted by a barrage of questions. "Where does your food come from? Do you know who grew it and if chemicals were used to grow that food? Do you know how your food is transported and how it is stored?" The questions were being asked by a gentleman dressed in a *lungi* (a type of sarong extending to the ankles, worn around the waist) with a piece of cloth tied around his head, a lot like farmers from the Indian hinterlands. He is Englishman-turned-Aurovillian Krishna Mckenzie, the founder of Solitude Farm, an organic cultivation programme in

Auroville. Mckenzie tells me that he moved from the UK to Auroville at the age of 19 to lead a simple life inspired by the teachings he had received in his school – Brockwood Park – founded by Indian philosopher and teacher J Krishnamurti. "I was greatly influenced by the philosophies of Masanobu Fukuoka, a Japanese zen master and farmer celebrated for being a proponent of natural farming. Fukuoka believes in do-nothing-farming, which says that as nature is already perfect and there's nothing one can do to improve upon it," said Mckenzie.

After 25 years of living in Auroville, Mckenzie (though he prefers being addressed as Krishna) is involved closely with the day-to day affairs of the Solitude Farm. Speaking fluent

Left to right: A volunteer cleaning peanuts to help the kitchen staff; A group of children engaged in making natural soap during a workshop at Solitude Farm





Tamil, he tells me about his Tamilian wife and two children, and how they have imbibed the concepts of sustainable farming at the farm. “We have to be conscious not only of organic food but also about food miles and the ecological value of food,” he explained.

LIFE AT WORK

Work for volunteers begins around 8 am every day and continues till around noon. I worked as a volunteer for four hours every alternate day. The volunteers can work in the farm or the attached café or indoors, depending upon the individual’s skills and interests. The weekends are off! Volunteers are taught how to sow seeds, weed, water the plants and harvest the vegetables for meals. Activities also include compost-making or helping in packaging farm produce for the market. One can offer to work



indoors in administrative jobs as well. I chose to work outdoors in the farm and the experience of knowing where our food is coming from and being physically involved with day-to-day cultivation was very rewarding.

Every morning I would wake up to a clear sky and chirping of birds and set off for work. At lunch, we sat together and enjoyed freshly-cooked meals prepared from the produce we had plucked from the

Top: The Matrimandir—an edifice of spiritual significance for practitioners of Integral yoga, is one of the most iconic landmarks around Auroville

Above: Krishna, who moved to Auroville from the UK, is now married to a Tamilian woman, has two children and is the founder of six-acre Solitude Farm

The simplest way to save our planet from climate change is to eat locally-grown food and prevent destruction caused due to industrialised agriculture

farm – the best example of the farm-to-table concept! There are several cafes in Auroville too, where one can pay and eat.

SOAP MAKING

One day, Mckenzie took us to his soap-making area to show us how he makes the organic multipurpose liquid soap that is used at the farm. “Mix three parts of lemon peel, one part jaggery and 10 parts of water. Stir the mix once a day and store in a closed container. Let it ferment for two weeks. After that, add equal amount

of soapnut water (10 parts). Subsequently, the contents of the container will turn soapy and can be used to wash dishes, clothes and even for bathing,” he said, as he demonstrated the process.

Life at Auroville is not just about being environmentally-conscious, it also strengthens the person-to-person connect; an example of how we can repair our social fabric.

After my work was over, I would go around Auroville, meet and photograph its residents. On one such occasion, I was invited to attend a session on sound healing - an innovative technique that initiates a better lifestyle through music and experiments with sound. I also had a chance encounter with Aurelio, who has been heading the sound healing

Solar technology

Solar technology is widely used in Auroville and the largest and most striking example of it is the Solar Kitchen, which serves approximately 1,000 meals per day. The kitchen uses a “solar bowl” that uses hundreds of mirrors to focus sunlight onto the heat receiver. This solar bowl is said to be one of the largest in the world.



A resident preparing the table after the morning harvest



Clockwise from top left: Local women harvesting millets which are then used to bake fresh bread; An old windmill which is now used to pump water for irrigation; International House, a place for volunteers and interns visiting Auroville, was constructed without any toxic building materials; The lush green cornfields surrounding Auroville are another example of sustainable and organic farming techniques

programme at Auroville for the last 35 years! While the sounds Aurelio created instantly soothed me, he explained to me his experiments with sound, music and our changing perceptions.

SLOWING DOWN

Before I had arrived at Auroville, I was apprehensive. But within a couple of days, I had adjusted to the alternative lifestyle. I was surprised how quickly I gave up urban amenities and got used to living without Internet connectivity, and using a dry compost toilet. Once, on a rainy day, I helped McKenzie fetch manure from one end of his farm to another using a single wheelbarrow. It was hard labour and we slipped quite often on the muddy path but the simple activity was so fulfilling.

Be it helping the residents with an afforestation drive at a nearby patch of land called Sadhna forest or

photographing them as they went around doing their daily chores, my time at Auroville was one of the most enriching experiences of my life. Interestingly, I am still following the tenets of sustainable living that I imbibed at Auroville. In my daily city life, I keep a regular check on my carbon footprints: from using public transport and avoiding plastic to washing clothes manually, I have become extremely conscious about decreasing my dependence on automation. Maybe in this remote corner of India lies the solution to the problem that the entire planet is facing!



Saurabh is an award-winning photographer and a creative consultant. Over the years, he has worked with fortune 500 companies, filmmakers, and renowned NGOs in different parts of the world. He has been published and exhibited across the world.



Models sporting exclusively designed block printed dresses during a fashion show by Delhi-based designer Niki Mahajan

THE ART OF THE

block

Indian designers are giving the ancient craft of block printing a new lease of life through the use of innovative designs and products, helping to preserve the cultural heritage of Rajasthan's villages

BY PRIYA KUMARI RANA

Bagru, located around 30 km from Jaipur, is a quintessential small Indian town, with winding lanes lined by simple houses, where doors are hardly ever closed and where neighbours are more like a family. But what catches the eye in Bagru are the splashes of colour that adorn its homes and its streets as swathes of fabric in vibrant shades and prints hang from rooftops and walls, drying in the sun. This is the heartland of Bagru print, one of the most famous hand block printing traditions of India. Here, in workshops

run from homes, members of the Chipka community, continue to stamp cotton and sometimes silk fabrics with hand-carved wooden blocks dipped in dyes, a 300-year-old art form that has been passed down by their forefathers. A very similar art is practised in another small town, Sanganer, around 30 km away from Bagru. Here, too, printers use hand-carved wooden blocks and a variety of colours (natural and chemical-based) to print mostly cotton fabrics. The main difference between these two styles is that while Sanganeri print is done on white or off-white background, in Bagru, rust, ochre and indigo are used.

Traditionally, natural vegetable dyes were used with mordants (metallic salts to ensure the colours stay on the fabrics). Another popular

technique was *dabu*, a mud-based resist-printing technique that creates a unique texture on the fabric.

“During the fiery summer months, these soft cotton fabrics with intricate prints in natural dyes were popular among the royal families of Rajasthan and Mughals in Delhi. Block printed fabrics from India were in demand in Europe too, supplied by British merchants,” says New Delhi-based fashion designer Niki Mahajan, who has worked extensively with this art. But she rues that as this technique is labour-intensive and time-consuming, printers started using screens to print

The prints from Bagru have been awarded GI (Geographic Indication) tag, meaning that the given quality and characteristic of the print is essentially attributable to its geographic origin



A craftsman carefully prints an intricate design on a saree in one of the many home-run workshops around Chipka Mohulla, the centre of Chipka community in Bagru

FASHION



A model showcasing a vibrantly-coloured kurta designed with intricate block printed patterns by designer Niki Mahajan

larger fabric portions at one go and shift to computer-aided digital prints. The rising cost of block carving and natural dyes added to the misery.

“Years of neglect and consumer apathy had forced most of the traditional printers to either quit their art or switch over to large-scale machine printing. Today, however, the focus is turning towards handcrafted and traditional products, and block printing is on a path of revival.” explains Mahajan.

Today, this tradition has become a favourite of designers experimenting with colours, dyes and techniques to create innovative fashion lines and home furnishings.

Mahajan, who retails from stores in major Indian cities and even in the US, has been making block-printed womenswear and menswear for 26 years. Her latest collection, features long, flowy A-line dresses and skirts in vibrant hues, with motifs created by mud-resist block printing. “In this technique, the printer takes a square shoebox half filled with water, and a piece of stretched leather, on which he piles on several layers of fabric so that it becomes a thick pad. On it, he applies a paste of mud, zinc and dye,” says Mahajan, whose Gurugram factory

Interestingly, even the local water has a significant impact on the final printing results. In Sangner, the water gives the colours darker tones whereas the ones used in Bagru have a reddish hue

has rows upon rows of long tables with silk fabric upon which artisans from Sanganer, work by dipping their carved teak wood blocks in the square box and placing it systematically and accurately on the fabric. “We print with the mud, and once it’s printed, we steam the fabric and then wash it to remove the dye and the mud. The colour is displaced – meaning, if it’s a black fabric and we print in red, the mud, zinc and dye penetrates it and displaces it to become red,” she explains.

Mahajan says her recipe to create the mud resist is a guarded secret. “We don’t disclose the raw materials we use,” she says. “Also, the temperature alters the colour. In summer at 40 degree C, a colour will be a different from when it is printed in winter at 6 degree C.” Locals say that as Sanganer had a constant supply of fresh water, the printers used large quantities of it for printing and washing. Whereas in Bagru, which faced water scarcity, printers chose the techniques of resist dye. All these natural elements make each piece of garment different from the other. Moreover, flaws that creep in while printing are celebrated with a disclaimer stating that it’s the nature of the fabric and it should be appreciated as thus.

A similar pride in inconsistencies of printing is reflected in collection of designer brand Asha Gautam, whose store in New Delhi is filled with one-of-a-kind sarees, *lehengas* and *anarkalis* with traditional block printing. A collaboration of the mother-son duo Asha Gupta and Gautam Gupta, the brand provides employment to over 25 block printers from Rajasthan. “We



Sanganer sensibilities

Some common motifs used in Sanganer block printing are dainty roses, lotuses, sunflowers, lilies, marigolds, rosettes and lotus buds. Bagru motifs are generally geometric and done on a blue or indigo background. This region is popular for two kinds of prints: dabru prints and seyali-bagru prints. The seyali-bagru printed fabrics are known for their characteristic black-and-ochre-yellow combinations. Dabru prints, on the other hand, are created using a special resist technique (hiding the print from dye).



Top to bottom : A saree highlighting a fusion of multiple design techniques like *kalamkari* from Andhra Pradesh and block printing from Sanganer on display at the New Delhi store of fashion label Asha Gautam; An artisan carefully carves intricate designs on a wooden hand block in Jaipur; Some examples of various patterns that are often used in carefully-orchestrated repetition during hand block printing in Bagru and Sanganer



FASHION



Clockwise from left: Local craftsmen carefully hand printing vibrant designs on fabrics near Jaipur; Block patterns are often inspired by locally-relevant themes. Seen here is a design inspired by the tigers of Rajasthan; A foreign tourist attending a hand-block printing workshop at a studio in Bagru; Resist-printing with mud mix is one of the many traditional practices that give the iconic prints their beautiful 'displaced' colours

also have a large team of embroiders working for us. These craftsmen not only produce the most unique designs for our collections but our design inputs also help them evolve," explains Gautam. The company also operates clusters in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Nashik (Maharashtra), Limdi (Gujarat) and Sanganer.

"What we have done in our last collection is merge Sanganeri block printing with other arts and experiment with the fabric. For example, in a saree, we have combined block print with *kalamkari* from Andhra Pradesh on silk georgette fabric," he says, adding, "A traditional craft looks beautiful on its own but sometimes we have to experiment and try variations to appeal to the new-age customer. For the second generation of artists to get

interested in block printing, we need to get them more business and more financial stability."

In Jaipur, where most of these block-printed textiles are sold, even royals have joined the bandwagon to preserve this heritage. Two designers from the erstwhile royal families of Baria near Ajmer and Danta in the state's Sikar district, who recently showcased their collections at the Royal Fables exhibition held in Vadodara, are using block printing to craft delicate *kota doria* (a traditional form of weaving, in which silk and cotton are interwoven to create very lightweight fabrics with square patterns) sarees; *anarkali* (a style of flowy kurta) garments in fine cotton and home linen for export. Jaykirti Singh of Baria, who retails out of stores in New Delhi as well as Jaipur,



Large, block printed fabrics set out to dry after the steaming process in Bagru village

Mumbai and Indore, has a library of 1,000 wooden blocks, and has been fashioning garments with block prints for the last 20 years at her in-house unit in Jaipur that employs 35 artisans. “I want to preserve this unique craft of my homeland. I’m also training young boys so that it holds their interest and the craft survives,” says Singh.

Richa Rajya Lakshmi of Danta says that she tries to align her work with traditions. “As block printing was originally done on white fabric, my pieces too, are all white. I don’t dye the fabric – I add colour with blocks,” says Rajya Lakshmi, who supplies to stores in Ahmedabad. “I design my own blocks, mixing traditional patterns with those inspired by the images of Indian forts and palaces,” the designer says, whose most impressive work is

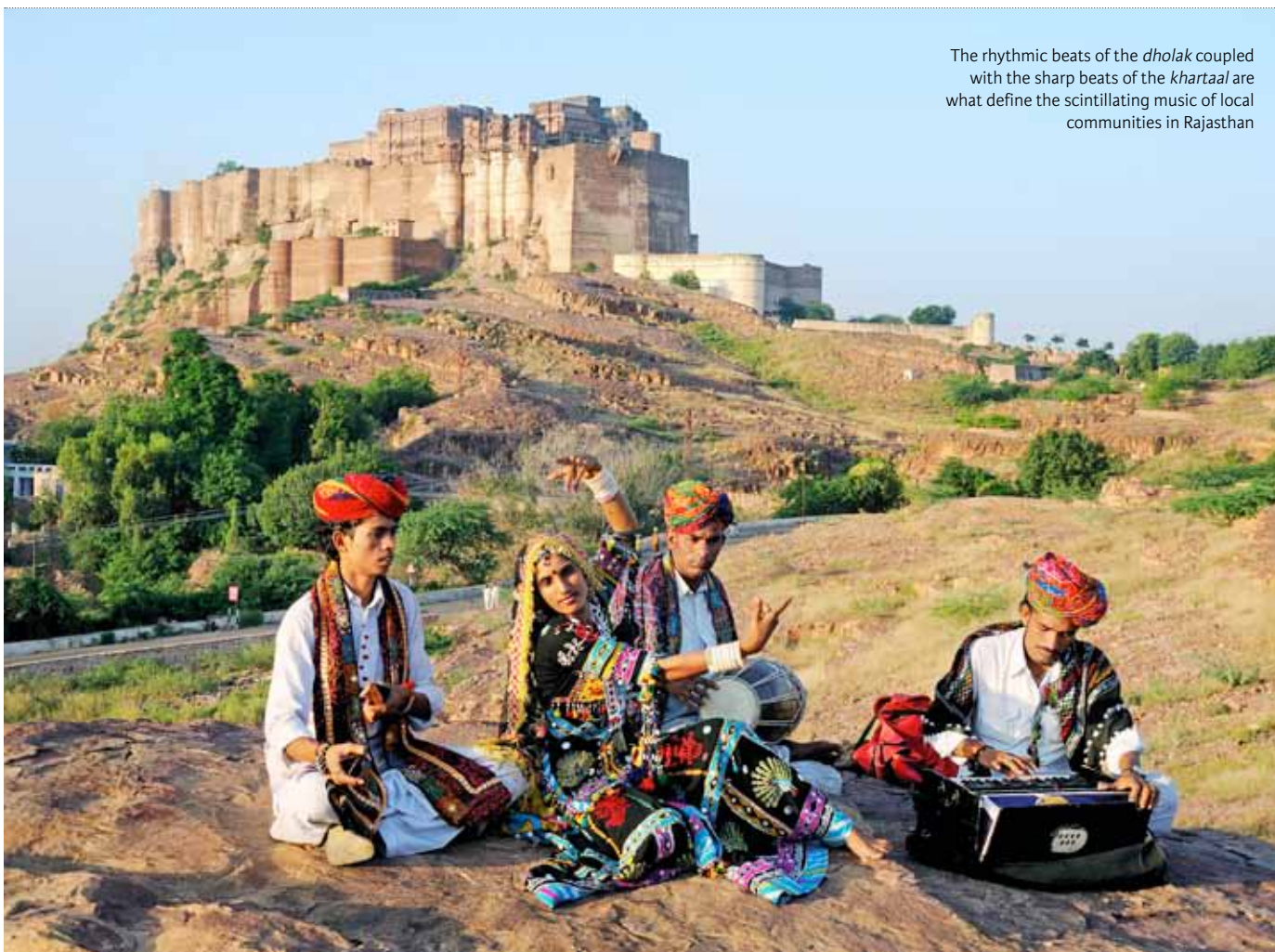
undoubtedly the block prints in her home furnishing collections.

The Rajasthani block prints are not just a mere form of textile ornamentation but a cultural heritage that needs to be promoted and preserved for posterity. Thankfully, as designers innovate, the demand for hand-printed products increase and consumers across the world become more sensitive towards artists’ skill, it seems that block printers of Sanganer and Bagru will keep thumping patterns on fabric for years to come.



Priya Rana is a leading fashion writer who has helmed major publications in India. Rana is currently a contributing editor with The Man magazine

MUSIC



The rhythmic beats of the *dholak* coupled with the sharp beats of the *khartaal* are what define the scintillating music of local communities in Rajasthan

Music

FOR THE NEW DECADE

From Bhangra's peppy beats to the calming sounds of Kerala's Sopana Sangeetham, music has played a significant role in India's folk heritage. Music director **Sneha Khanwalkar** explains her views on how this rich history shapes contemporary notes. Vinayak Surya Swami puts it in perspective

The chugging of a local train, the honking of traffic, sounds of people coughing or sneezing, or even answering their mobile phones...

Melody is being created around us all the time. I believe it was when recording was formally introduced to the creative process of directing music that we started to understand the melody of things. In a day and age, when millions trudge along their daily tasks with headphones supplementing the uncountable emotions that a person may feel, it is important to understand where it all started. But that's for the rest of the world. In India, music has always been inspired by what's around

us, be it natural sounds or those made by man. From our folk traditions to classical *ragas* and from musical instruments played by our rural musicians to musical lores that are a part of our heritage - Indian music has traditionally relied on the sounds of life.

Today, as music in India, like everything else, undergoes transformation, it's even more important to delve into our native melodies to maintain a balance between the past and the present. Throughout my growing-up years, I have woken up to the sound of the *tanpura* in the morning. Over the years, as I trained and learned more about music, I understood that every object around us has a sound of its own and all that is required is to find the right group of melodies. Interestingly, the country's phenomenal

acoustic richness is discovered only when someone decides to explore a genre, and decides to travel and look for inspiration in places long forgotten.

STARTING RIGHT

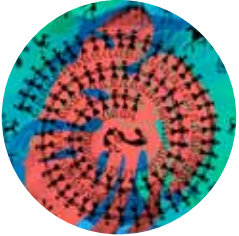
This notion of finding music in the atmosphere defined my efforts when I started making music; I wanted everything aural to be a part of it. Each sound represented a different part of the track, a different feeling and I think I wanted my process of creating music to be democratic, if nothing else! My song "*Kaala Re*" from the film *Gangs of Wasseypur 2*, which is set in the

There are several artistes working towards propagating finer nuances of Indian folk traditions so that they stay relevant



Buddhist monks performing ritual music with traditional drums and trumpets during the Gustor monastic festival at the Lamayuru monastery in Leh. Conforming to folk music traditions of the mountains, monks use large trumpets and wide-based drums to match their high-pitched chants, which reverberate across high mountains

A different understanding



EVENTS THAT PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MUSIC WITH FOLK TRADITIONS

- Magnetic Fields Festival, Alsisar, Rajasthan
- Ragasthan, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
- Ziro Festival of Music, Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh
- NH7 Weekender, Meghalaya
- Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa

coal mining industry, begins with the sound of a pickaxe hitting coal. I had captured the sound from a factory where metal chains were being jangled! Indian musical lineage has several similar examples of everyday sounds and thought-inspiring notes. Today, several young musicians in India are re-discovering this thought. The new torch-bearers of Indian music have not only decided to follow a completely new direction but have defined this direction as one governed by the idea of traditions from across the country.

PUSHING BOUNDARIES

Comparing closely, we will realise that what is being termed today as “alternative music” has oft been observed with some of the oldest folk

traditions of the country. For example, Indian drums add a steady guiding beat to a music and raw natural feel, something which most contemporary music labels have started to incorporate. Take for example, the Manganiyar community from Rajasthan, who, according to folklore, were often summoned to hasten the advent of rain in the desert state. It is said that their music, accompanied with the *dhol* (a two-faced drum) and *khartaal* (two wooden blocks with which artistes produce a loud clapping sound), imitated the sound of thunder and thus, appeased the rain God.

Another such example is of *bhatiyali* from West Bengal. *Bhatiyali*, also known as the boatman’s song, is mostly sung solo with hardly any musical accompaniment.



Members of the Maria tribe from Bastar, Chhattisgarh, performing traditional dances. Almost all musical routines from the region involve drums with low, resonating notes and a smaller acoustic range



A musical tradition from the eastern parts of India, *bhatiyali*, is centered around the region's riverine traditions. The songs, sung by boatmen, have melodic high-to-low notes and no instrumental accompaniment. This ancient tradition has been inspired by the bubbling, gurgling sound of large rivers like the Ganges

Experts say the riverine nature of the region where this folk music has originated from has shaped its structure. Just like the flowing river, *bhatiyali* has a lilting tune – a rhythmic rise and fall in its notes, like the ebbing of water.

Folk music is also defined by the intermingling of nature and sound, and the response of humans to their environment. For example, music of the hills has higher notes that travel across mountains and valleys. In comparison, communities living in forested areas of the plains sing in a lower pitch and with subdued notes. This is what I try to capture in my music.

There are several artistes and cultural organisations that are working towards propagating these finer nuances of folk traditions and powering

experiments so that they stay relevant in contemporary times. Be it the Rajasthan Rural Arts Project by Jaipur Virasat Foundation, the Soorvani Sangathanas (organisation of folk music artisans) by Tata Trust for promoting the subsistence folk artist(e)s from Kutch, Gujarat, or events like Goa's Serendipity Arts Festival that initiates and showcases massive, multidisciplinary collaborations to promote traditional and modern artistes across India – organisations are forging rural-urban partnerships to keep our euphonical traditions alive and bring them to the forefront.

THE WAY FORWARD

The first step towards adapting the tunes of Indian folk music for modern-

There is a shift in the mainstream music industry towards decentered forms of music that allow room for constant experimentation

MUSIC



A girl learns to play the *harmonium* in Srinagar, Kashmir. Even today, in many Indian families learning classical music is considered an important part of a child's education while growing up

day sounds is to step out into the natural environs where these melodies were born and are practised even today.

In order to explore other mediums and create a collaboration of sounds previously unheard of, I decided to step out and experience the almost mystical and diverse musical offerings of our country. If I am trying to introduce folk music through mainstream cinema, I need to introduce the entire culture, lifestyle, thought process, food habits, politics, history and everything they stand for, through the music. Something that I did with the song “*Oh Womaniya*” for the film *Gangs Of Wasseypur*. To give the song a rustic and raw flavour I chose housewives from Bihar, where the movie is set. In a similar way for the song “*Jugni*” from the film *Oye Lucky Lucky Oye*, I opted for renowned folk musician Des Raj Lakhani from Punjab for an authentic accent of the region. In one of my recent sound experiments at Serendipity Arts Festival, 2019, I created a sound installation “Winds of Change”.

This was a spinning object made of metal, wood, cloth, sensors, audio chips and mikes. Viewers were encouraged to blow at the object, which spun as it gathered wind and transmitted sound and vibrations. As people got more involved with the installation, they blew harder or softer, depending on their mood, sending across signals!

Today, most alternative musicians are focussed on creating more egalitarian opportunities for listeners and artistes alike, and are looking for inspirations in the past. I am hopeful about the shift in the mainstream music industry towards decentered forms of music that allow room for constant experimentation. I believe that we need to delve deeper into traditions to build the future of Indian music.



Vinayak Surya Swami is a Delhi-based journalist. He holds a degree in mechanical engineering and has worked as an apprentice Shipbuilder with the Indian Navy. A part-time writer since his teenage years, he switched to journalism to pursue his prurience for writing and travel.

LESSONS FROM A Classic

At a time when we are celebrating 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi, it is fair to say that Gandhism has stood the test of time. Through the years, be it Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King, Jr. *Gandhiji* was always a template to understand and tackle their respective challenges. Today, we analyse how the Mahatma's values have remained relevant in a contemporary world

BY GAUTAM CHOUBEY



In the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi one finds ready roadmaps to meet several challenges. Gandhi saw politics as a vocation that sought to serve humanity through principles and practices that were rooted in truth. Today, violence appears to be the greatest of all the perils that threaten our existence. In every part of the globe, governments and international agencies are busy devising strategies to tackle violence, religious extremism, widespread anarchy and terrorism. And for truth to be the guiding leitmotif in every policy that societies and governments promulgate to uplift the downtrodden, empower the deprived and guarantee universal justice, violence should find no part in those schemes: neither as a mean, nor as a temporary strategy. For *Gandhiji*, truth and violence are fundamentally antithetical to one another. Therefore, taking resort to violence, even for a fleeting moment, may amount to embracing untruth. This, in turn, implies losing sight of the larger objective of serving humanity.

Gandhiji was as an idealist crusader who found no reason to isolate the methods from the goals; he believed that noble objectives can only be accomplished through noble

“MY LIFE IS MY MESSAGE”



1869

Mohandas (Karamchand) Gandhi or MKG was born to Putlibai and Karamchand Gandhi in Porbandar. He married Kasturbai in 1882, aged 13, while he was preparing to pursue law in England.

1888

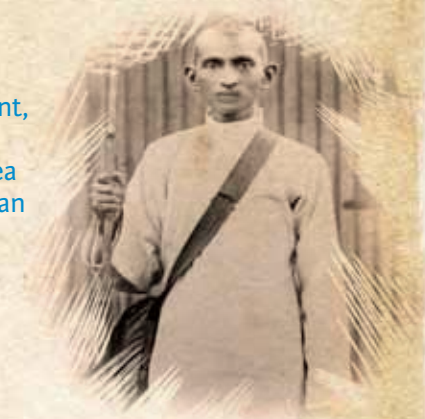
After enrolling at the Inner Temple, Inns of Court, to study law, he was first called to the Bar in 1891. During his time in England, MKG faced a tough time adapting to the ethos of western society but stuck to his beliefs of vegetarianism. He finally decided to move back to India in 1891.



1893

MKG faced a hard time when he tried to establish himself as a barrister in erstwhile Bombay. After moving to Rajkot to write petitions for a modest income, he promptly took up the offer to move to Natal, South Africa, to assist with a civil litigation.

When one looks at one man's journey through oppression, perseverance and rigorous imprisonment, it is hard to imagine how it led to millions being empowered. A simple man, who believed in the idea of justice and equality, this is his journey from Mohan to how we know him today, the Mahatma



1920-1947

Over a span of just two years, MKG had become a dominant figure present at the Indian political arena. He reorganised the Indian National Congress into an instrument of nationalism and started his regimen of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Although a self-imposed restraint and values of non-violence kept him from fanaticism, he underwent several fasts until the Quit India movement in 1942 with the slogan 'Do or Die'. Even after independence he was able to stop communal violence in Calcutta (1947) and Delhi (1948) before his assassination on January 30, 1948.



1914-1919

Gandhiji moved to India in 1914 but remained on the periphery of Indian politics, not aligning himself with any political agitation, not even when he took up the long-standing grievances of the peasantry from Bihar and Gujarat. MKG only launched his satyagraha struggle in 1919 with the passing of the Rowlatt Acts that empowered authorities to imprison without trial, anyone suspected of sedition. However, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and the enactment of Martial law stayed his hand.

1893-1914

During his time in South Africa, Gandhiji was quickly exposed to racial discrimination and it was here, when he was unceremoniously thrown out of a first-class railway compartment on account of his race, that is when MKG's struggle against social justice began to take shape. In the years that followed, Gandhiji blossomed as a proficient political campaigner and settled down in Natal to practice law. He then organised Indians into an ambulance corps. He was also imprisoned multiple times during his time in South Africa for resisting the oppressive regime in the country.

People of ancient India stand out for their all-embracing philosophy of *vasudhaiv kutumbkam* or the entire earth is a family

means. At the same time, we must realise that Gandhiji's commitment to truth and nonviolence was more than a philosophical commitment to a set of abstract ideas. He belonged to a family of administrators from the princely state of Rajkot and on account of that affiliation, from an early age, he was well-versed in the necessities of statecraft. Not even once during his illustrious political career did he underrate the centrality of state to the well being of its citizens. The practices and methods of Gandhian politics, specially those aimed at curbing the various forms of violence that we see in the world, create a regime of peace which is truly lasting and sustainable. Reflecting on the question of violent political confrontations of his own times, Gandhiji argued that getting rid of a man who obstructs him will only produce a sense of security that is both false and short-lived. On the other

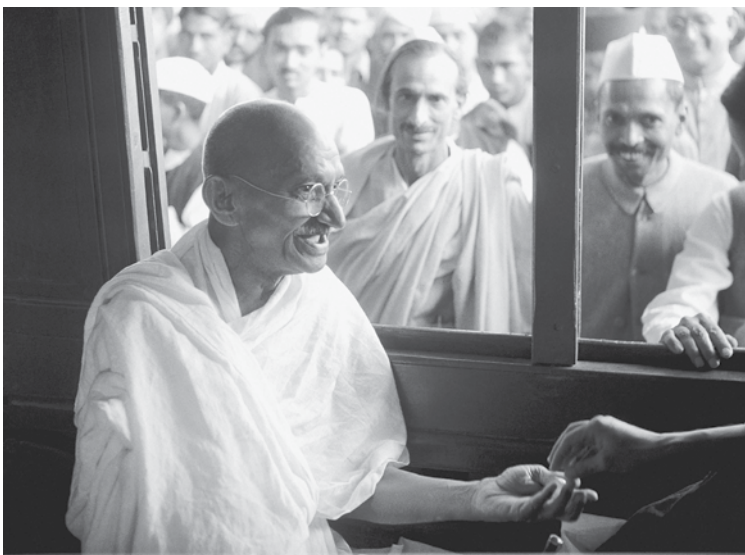
hand, engaging with one's detractors and studying grounds of disagreement will produce a lasting truce. Gandhiji's policy of debate and dialogue, when invoked in situations

of global terrorism and trade conflicts, will eventually produce international cooperation, and a sustainable and conflict-free world order.

SUSTAINABLE ECOLOGY AND INDIAN OUTLOOK

Undoubtedly, environmental crisis is one of the gravest of all problems that our generation faces. It is a commonplace wisdom that the present crisis is a result of reckless exploitation of nature. It originates in a mercantile philosophy

Bottom (clockwise from left): Statesman and activist Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi receives a donation in a train compartment (1940); Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi addressing the Leadership Matters summit, a commemorative event to mark Gandhiji's 150th birth anniversary; PM Modi (C) joined by South Korean President Moon Jae-in, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in remotely inaugurating the 50-kilowatt Gandhi Solar Park and the Gandhi Peace Garden at the UN Headquarters

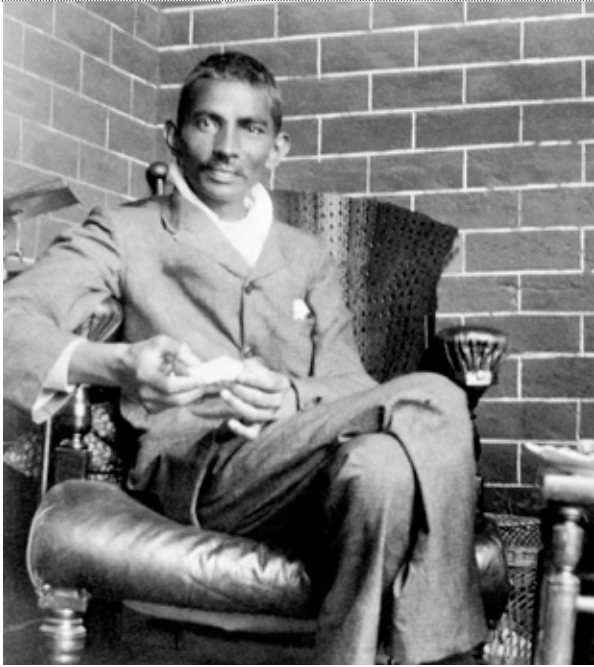


LEGEND



CORRESPONDANCE WITH MEMORIES

To commemorate the life of Mahatma Gandhi, a champion of truth and non-violence across the world, almost 300 postage stamps have been released by countries other than India. On January 26, 1961 USA became the first country other than India to release a postage stamp in honour of Gandhiji. In 1969, celebrating 100 years since the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, more than 40 countries released postage stamp as a mark of respect. In India, the first postage stamp on Gandhiji was released by Pt Jawahar Lal Nehru on the occasion of the Independence Day in 1948.



which misled people into believing that our success at deciphering a few of its laws was a sufficient enough proof of man's dominance over nature. According to E F Schumacher, modern economies and developmental models have treated nature as an expendable income and that "modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it".

Gandhi never subscribed to the idea of men waging war against nature. He held a quasi-religious attitude, which was premised on the theory of both empirical and transcendental continuity between human societies and environment. This quasi-religious worldview is informed by environmental ethics found in texts from ancient India. It is rooted in texts like the *Athrvaveda* which proclaim that earth is our mother and we are her sons.

In Vedic philosophy, our interaction with nature is guided by considerations of balance and man's inextricable bond with his environment. The tales of *Panchatantra* repeatedly remind us that "if one hopes to reach heaven by cutting trees and by hurting animals, what is the way to hell?" In ancient Indian literature, we find an attitude



of empathy for each element in man's environment – man, animals, plants, rivers, mountains, soil and such. This attitude led to a culture wherein cutting a tree got compared to betraying a friend. This belief system, in which nature is projected as an intimate member of an extended family, precipitated an ethic of consumption which was not exploitative, but recuperative and regenerative. In January 1910, when residents of Paris were stunned by what is described as 'the flood of the century,' Gandhi wrote a piece for *Indian Opinion* (a newspaper he established) decrying reckless tinkering with nature and its laws. He argued that event though the people of Paris harboured the illusion that they had built the city to last for ever, nature has "given a warning that even whole of Paris may be destroyed." For Gandhi, the word *prakriti* implied the original character of an idea or a thing. When men tinker with *prakriti*, they corrupt both environment and themselves.

If we return to Gandhi's idea of *prakriti*, and through him to the ancient Indian environmental ethics, we are sure to find strategies and moral courage to tackle the environmental crisis.

Top (L to R): Gandhi during his days in South Africa; Gandhi reading as he sits cross-legged on floor next to a spinning wheel in India



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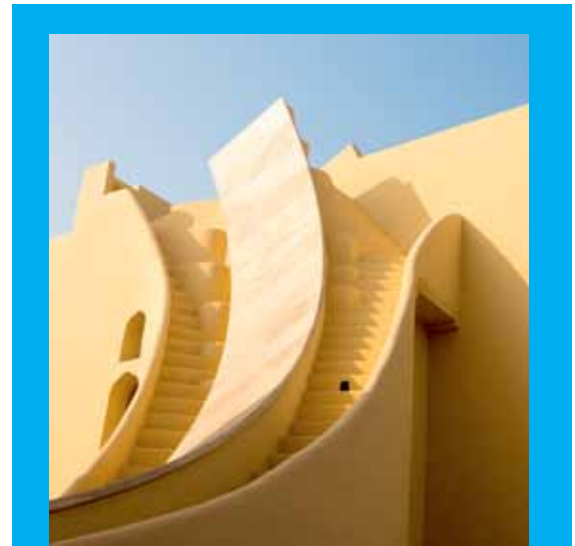
INDIAN IMPRESSIONS

Know India a little more with these interesting facts



350 LOCOMOTIVES IN 299 DAYS!

- The Indian Railways is one of most extensive and busiest rail networks in the world. True. But did you know that it also sets records? Recently, Indian Railways' Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) achieved a stellar feat of manufacturing 402 locomotives in the year 2018-19 breaking its own record of manufacturing 350 locomotives in 2017-18! This has earned CLW, located in Asansol, West Bengal, an entry into the Limca Book of Records.



TELLING TIME- KING SIZE

The vibrant city of Jaipur, Rajasthan's capital, is not just a UNESCO World Heritage Site in itself, but is also home to Samrat Yantra, said to be the biggest sundial in the world. It was built by Sawai Jai Singh II in 1728 ACE and stands 73 feet tall. Though indistinguishable in design from other sundials of the time, it was far and away the most accurate. Its two-second interval markings are said to be more precise than even revered French mathematician Phillippe de la Hire's astronomical tables.

TURTLE TRAILS

Declared Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List, the Olive Ridley turtles are one of a kind. Global warming and its effect on the environment often destroy critical nesting beaches and damage nests of these species. But the Velas beach in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, is one safe haven for Olive Ridley turtles in India. Every year, hundreds of female Olive Ridelys come here to lay eggs. The babies begin to hatch after about two months (generally in March).

The babies make their way back to the ocean immediately after birth only to return (only the females) to the same beach years later to lay eggs.





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04 Step

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