

# PRAVASI INDIANS

Rs. 200/-

— The India Connection —

## DIASPORA VOICES

Saree-love helps an Indian stay connected to her homeland

## MISSION KERALA

An NRI-led marine ecological effort to clean the backwaters

## FASHION

Slow & Sustainable  
Northeast designers shine

Kaushiq Kodothodika





The Sixth Edition of

# PFC- VoW BOOK AWARDS 2022



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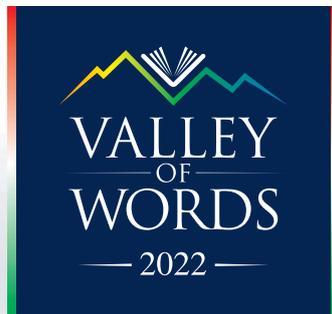
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**Bilingual category:** Writings for young adults /writings for children

*\*English is also an Indian Bhasha*



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## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



## Tales of Constructive Contributions

**W**e bring to you this month another bunch of exciting stories of Indians at home and abroad. The cover story puts the focus on the Kodothodikas — Kaushiq, Rubina and their children — who left Kozhikode in 1996 and made Singapore their home, and who have undertaken a water sports venture through Jellyfish Water Sports, drawing attention to marine ecology in Kozhikode. It is a case in point of how Indians, wherever they are in the world, reconnect with the mother country and work for its betterment.

We have two reports from Odisha. First, a handy list of the little-known historical and natural marvels of the eastern state, which will be eminently useful while planning your next holiday. The other one is an inspirational story of some well-meaning, wise souls who founded Mindtree and then felt the need to do more. One of them is Kalyan Banerjee, who pens the inspiring story of Klorofeel School, tracing the emergence of the idea of a school in a remote region to provide village children access to quality education, rooted in values. This is a story that will certainly be of interest to many of our readers who feel the urge to do something meaningful for the country.

In the News section, we bring Kumud Das' encouraging report on how India is becoming a hub for mobile phone manufacturing, with international players investing in the country. Apart from the competitive factor of wages and prices, India is emerging as a gargantuan consumer of digital data, which makes the country a hugely attractive investment and marketing destination.

In the Money Matters column, Vishal Duggal analyses the growing preference for branded players in Indian real estate and how this in itself is no answer to the woes of a property buyer in the absence of an effective grievance redressal statutory regime in the country.

Sujata Prasad's interview with Pandit Ravi Shankar's prominent disciple, Subhendra Rao, reveals a different aspect of the celebrated maestro — a gentle, humane, attentive and generous guru. Sonal Mansingh, the Odissi danseuse, pens her thoughts on how inner strength contributes to a person's physical and mental well-being. In Fashion, we bring you a glimpse of how some of the top designers from India's Northeast are paying tribute to their traditions and heritage.

We at *PRAVASI INDIANS* stand committed to connecting overseas Indians with one another as well as with India. Thereby, we look forward to building a vibrant network of the global Indian diaspora. We will continue to bring interesting and engaging stories every month and forge stronger links.

Happy reading *PRAVASI INDIANS*...

CEO and Publisher

We would love to hear from you, We also welcome Diaspora members to write for us and share their experiences

Connect on: [editors.pravasindian@gmail.com](mailto:editors.pravasindian@gmail.com)

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# THE FRIDAY SAREE

Living in Singapore made INDRANI MITRA ROBBINS rediscover her love for the saree and how it allowed her to stay connected to the colours and silhouettes of India. She shares her journey to becoming a passionate collector



It was an old Banarasi. The whole saree hadn't survived; only the borders and the *pallu*, frayed but shimmering, had been transplanted onto a new crepe base with a weave of matt gold. The signs of time showed in little rips and tears on the more than 60-year-old silk and *zaree*; however, that didn't dim its glory, not one bit.

I was looking at the saree last Thursday evening, my mind was made up, that was the one I'd wear the next day. I wear a saree every Friday evening. It was about three years ago that I decided to do this.

Even now, the decision surprises me almost as much as it makes me happy. When I came to Singapore 25 years ago, I had stopped wearing sarees. I have always loved fabric and textiles, handloom thrilled me, *khadi* was part of me, and of course, I had a whole lot of sarees. At 21, I used to go to work in printed cottons and silks, I wore sarees to weddings, and when I got married, I tried to get a saree from every state. I had been a confident saree wearer, deft at managing the flowing yards and

making it all come together nicely, pleats and *pallu* in perfect balance, no clumsy folds of fabric, no errant flyaway ends. I knew I looked good in sarees.

And yet, somewhere along the way, I lost touch with them. They stayed neatly folded in my cupboard, loved but pushed away. Why, I haven't the faintest idea. Yes, I'd gained a fair bit of weight, but isn't the saree the one garment that doesn't judge you by your size? Even that made no difference. I was done with sarees. I would wear them only if I had to. Weddings, some special occasions, that was it. No, I wasn't going to buy any more sarees. Ah, the best laid plans...

In 1997, we came to Singapore. I thought we'd be here for a year, maximum two, then stay in a couple of other cities in different countries, and eventually go back to India. As is customary, things didn't happen quite that way. And here we are still. Three years after coming to Singapore, the year I turned 40, on a visit to Kolkata, quite inexplicably, I who was never going to buy a saree, fell

for a beautiful Tussar with *Kaṅtha* work. My mother bought it for me for my birthday.

I think that was the beginning of my return to the saree. Staying away for so long from what I considered home, India, had had an impact, perhaps. Living in this pristine, green, extremely comfortable, and modern city was delightful, but maybe I missed colour... earth... the surge of life around me? Maybe I missed a familiar silhouette, and that hint of excess in an all too efficient world? Maybe I missed the rustle of swishing pleats and invitingly swaying *pallus*...

Soon, I began to buy sarees on my trips back home. But what about when I wasn't there? Singapore, alas, despite its large Indian population that has been here for a few generations, isn't the best place to shop for sarees. So, friends were accosted with frantic requests. "Could you please get me a Kanjeevaram on your next trip to Chennai?", "What! Jaipur...oh, buy me a Bandhani!", "When are you in Kolkata next? I hear an exhibition is on at Kanishka's."

Staying away for so long from what I considered home, India, had had an impact, perhaps. Maybe I missed colour... earth... the surge of life around me? Maybe I missed a familiar silhouette, and that hint of excess in an all too efficient world? Maybe I missed the rustle of swishing pleats and invitingly swaying *pallus*...

Friends visiting us here came with sarees from India. A gorgeous off-white Chikan from Lucknow with work all over comes to mind. A deep green Rajkot Patola from Mumbai. A jet black Gadwal with orange and green border from Hyderabad...

Even strangers were pulled in for the cause. Many acted as couriers, carrying sarees bought by cousins and friends in India. My aunt, who had a boutique, where I'd had that encounter with the Tussar Kañtha, was inundated with my requests. I had a feeling people were beginning to avoid me, friendships were strained, but what was I to do? There were no shops on Instagram back then, no WhatsApp to contact saree sellers directly, no online saree stores. E-commerce had only just begun.

I remain eternally grateful to those who helped assuage my hankering for sarees. Now, of course, getting sarees from India is a breeze – oh, did a light *pallu* waft somewhere? Many websites, plenty of customer service on WhatsApp, some really good online stores. It's fascinating to see

the enterprise of young designers and people with a love for this timeless unstitched garment.

In a couple of weeks, two sarees will arrive from Assam, one is dyed with onion, the other came of a WhatsApp chat with the designer. Made with hand-spun Eri silk, the yarn has been dyed with myrobalan, madder root and turmeric by the designer himself, then woven by the skilful hands of a Mising weaver on faraway Majuli island. The saree is cool and off-beat, and everything about it is slow and real. I grew up in Assam. I may never return there, but that doesn't mean Assam will be unreachable. When my daughter chose to wear a saree for her high school graduation, and donned her plain mustard Eri silk, matching it with a blue blouse and a pair of boots, I felt a strange kind of joy.

When a world goes away from you, do you find your own way to reach it somehow? My cupboards are stacked with sarees from all over India. Is it a way of keeping her close to me? I would most likely have gone back to wearing sarees had I never left my country, but would I be as much of a lover of sarees as I am today? I not only buy them, I think of them, I read about them, I write about sarees... I do believe they tell us stories, and most astonishing ones.

### **BUT WHY DO I WEAR A SAREE EVERY FRIDAY?**

Well, acquiring sarees is only half of it, you have to wear them. I started by wearing sarees to dinners and other formal occasions. Sometimes, I'd wrap on one even to work. A Japanese colleague who had never exchanged a word with me until then, suddenly looked at me and exclaimed, "That is very beautiful... the saree!" A few years ago, at a posh sit-down dinner in London, the American gentleman sitting next to me said he knew Indra Nooyi and she always wore a saree for such events. I have to say,

I felt pretty kicked that I'd brought the highly successful Indian corporate executive to mind. French friends have pointed out how fashion doesn't limit the saree or its wearer; for example, there are no strict colours of the season, you choose what you like. I'd never thought of that. It was my Singaporean Chinese boss, a most perceptive man, who said the saree was the world's most creative garment. Just a stretch of cloth, inviting you to dress yourself the way you please.

Many of my Indian friends started saying they were wearing sarees more often thanks to me, or, well, my obsession. That pleased me, but I realised I wasn't getting to wear one as often as I wanted to. Then there was my husband, who'd say, "Another saree? But you hardly wear them!" In a way it was true, the new sarees were piling up, and the old ones had a forlorn air, as if neglected. I wondered how to solve this problem. Then, one day, it just came to me.

My husband and daughter are Jewish and they observe Shabbat from Friday evening to Saturday evening. We usually stay at home on Fridays, and have Shabbat dinner together. My husband's brother joins us and there's happy imbibing and chats that meander lazily, going nowhere. Amid good food, easy banter, and the occasional guest, the last weekday goes by. Everyone is dressed most casually.

Why not wear a saree every Shabbat evening, I thought. Shabbat is meant to be special, after all. And so began the Friday saree tradition. Three years on, I am still looking forward to it. The saree I was gazing at last Thursday had the border and *pallu* from one of my mother's wonderful Banarasis. My aunt had helped put it together, at least 13 years ago. I had never worn the saree. Till I did, last Friday.

No, a Banarasi doesn't need a wedding to be enjoyed. Try a Friday. Or any other day of the week. ■



### **INDRANI MITRA ROBBINS**

A copywriter for more than twenty years, working in ad agencies in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Singapore, and Amman, Indrani now runs 'Writers Block', a writing company based in Singapore.

## Money Matters

# BETTING ON BRANDS

NRIs scout for branded real estate players in India but defaults, delays and dodgy practices continue to be the bane of the property market in the country of their origin

BY VISHAL DUGGAL

**W**ith lakhs of units locked in stalled real estate projects in India and developers' inability to deliver at all or on time, expatriate Indians are in the grip of a long, persistent shadow of doubt. Worse, poor enforcement of fair practices, coupled with lack of governance and inept and inefficient functioning of bureaucracy and the regulatory regime, has failed to inspire their confidence regarding transparency, quality and timely delivery of projects. In such a gloomy scenario, listed realty companies are the best bet for investment for NRI investors.

Significantly, as per property advisory group ANAROCK, the top listed developers sold as much as 21.23 mn sq ft of area in the first three quarters of financial year 2021. Overall, their sales share increased to 22%, up from 6% in FY2017. Even non-listed but leading, reputed developers ramped up their share from 11% in FY2017 to 18% in the first nine months of FY21. Among the listed players, Godrej Properties sold the maximum in terms of area (approximately 6.64 mn sq ft) in this period, followed by Bengaluru-based Prestige Estates with approximately 5.04 mn sq ft.

Continuing to reap dividends from the post-pandemic surge in demand for branded homes, the top stock exchange-

listed developers raked in ₹14,883 crore of revenue bookings in H1 FY22 - a sharp uptick from ₹9,483 crore in the same period of the previous fiscal.

Driven by home buyers' increasing preference for branded homes, the listed developers once again out-performed the market. Notably, these players have also reconfigured their supply pipeline to deliver projects in the affordable, mid-segment and premium segments. The ongoing low interest rate regime and home buyers' desire to avoid construction-related risks also played a role.

"Less than a decade ago, a largely speculator-driven housing market saw unnatural demand chasing the wrong kind of supply," says Anuj Puri, chairman, ANAROCK Group. "Today, these players are unleashing right-priced, right-sized supply clearly aimed at organic end-user demand. This is the result of intensive market research before pressing the 'commit' button and is one of the most notable features of the reinvented Indian housing market."

Evidently, property buyers now prefer to entrust their investment with organised, reputed and branded players. This is more so the case with NRIs who prefer to buy properties of major real estate brands that

have a reputation for transparency, credibility, compliance with laws, rational pricing and reliable after-sales service. The growing preference for branded properties is all too understandable but, on a larger level, why should relying on only branded players be the sole method of ensuring safety and profitability in realty investment? Isn't this further evidence of the collapse of governance and the regulatory set-up governing real estate in India?

Further, one cannot rule out that some issues may arise post-purchase of property from even branded real estate companies too. But there is no 'real' avenue of holistic, meaningful grievance redressal for a property purchaser despite the multiplicity of authorities that have jurisdiction in real estate cases in India: the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016. This is borne out by a close look at the efficacy of the grievance redressal statutory regime in the country.

## CONSUMER COURTS

Though consumer forums - District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forums, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions and the National Consumer Disputes



Redressal Commission (NCDRC) – have the power to execute their own orders they are plagued by the gargantuan backlog of pending cases which causes painful delay in pronouncement of judgments, resulting in an average of five to six years for adjudication of a dispute. Worse, defaulting builders can prolong the trauma of home buyers by moving higher fora or even the Supreme Court against the verdict of the highest consumer court, the NCDRC.

### RERA

The Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) was set up to usher in transparency and fair practices in the real estate sector but it has been a big let-down for complainants as, though it does pass orders in a relatively short time, it cannot ensure grant of actual relief to complainants, whether in the form of delivery of their property or refund of their lifetime savings. Builders, by and large, choose to overlook the decree of possession or issuance of a recovery certificate (RC) or resort to dragging buyers to higher judicial fora.

### NCLT

Property buyers can file a case of insolvency against a developer by approaching the

### TOP 9 LISTED PLAYERS: SALES BOOKING REVENUE (₹ CR)

| Developers          | H1 FY21       | H1 FY22        |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Brigade             | 788.9         | 1277.3         |
| Godrej              | 2600          | 3051           |
| Kolte-Patil         | 358.6         | 677.6          |
| Mahindra LifeSpaces | 154           | 448            |
| Oberoi              | 352.1         | 998.7          |
| Prestige            | 1584.3        | 2845.8         |
| Puravankara         | 893           | 911            |
| Sobha               | 1177          | 1713.1         |
| Macrotech           | 1575          | 2960           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>9482.9</b> | <b>14882.5</b> |

(Source: Firms' investor presentations & ANAROCK Research)

National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) when they find that the developer's financial position is fragile and he will not be able to complete the project and refund their invested money along with interest.

Once NCLT admits the insolvency application, it initiates the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) to resolve issues related to defaults. But this involves liquidating the assets of a project/developer which is a highly complex and lengthy route that leaves the consumer mentally and financially drained. Further, the NCLT option has been rendered beyond

the reach of single/few buyers by way of an amendment to the IBC that requires not less than 100 or 10% allottees of a particular project to make a joint application to NCLT for initiation of insolvency against a developer.

Thus, these are the harsh realities of various legal remedies available to both resident and non-resident Indians. Until the inherent lacunae and inadequacies in the enforcement of these options are adequately addressed and removed, the presence of branded players in the real estate sector will provide little succour to consumers. ■

# INDIA, THE GLOBAL MOBILE HUB

With the increase in penetration of smartphones as well as the time spent by millennials on mobile content, besides the disenchantment of top mobile brands with China, mobile manufacturing in India is poised to take a quantum leap

**BY KUMUD DAS**

The writer is a Mumbai-based senior business journalist.

India has emerged as the second largest manufacturer of mobile handsets in the world in terms of volume. According to Amitabh Kant, CEO at NITI Aayog, over 200 units are manufacturing cellular mobile phones, up from only two units in 2014.

Apart from Samsung, several other global cellphone makers have already arrived in India. Foxconn is currently making the iPhone XR and iPhone 11 in its Chennai plant, whereas Wistron makes the 2020 edition of the iPhone SE at its Bengaluru plant. It has also made iPhone 7 and 6 before. Among Indian firms, the big names are Lava, Padget Electronics, Dixon Technologies, and Sojo Manufacturing Services.

With the disenchantment of global mobile manufacturing majors with China and their hectic search for new manufacturing bases, India is a natural choice for them due to congenial policies which have been adopted by the government at the centre.

With one of the lowest data tariffs in the world, internet users in India have more

than doubled to 76.5 crore over the past five years with a massive 6.5 times growth in 4G data traffic. PLI (profit-linked incentive) has also considerably helped global cellphone makers in setting up their manufacturing bases here.

India boasts of a very high consumer base for electronic products. A recently released Nokia annual Mobile Broadband Index (MBiI) report reveals that 4G services contributed 99 percent to the country's data consumption and are expected to continue as a broadband growth engine for the next few years even as 5G rolls out later this year.

"The CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of mobile data usage has gone to 53 percent during 2017-2021 and average data used by consumers per month basis is three times higher and gone to 17 GB per month per user. Mobile broadband users have grown 2.2 times in the last five years. All the perspectives of data usage have shown substantial growth in India," says Nokia's India head, Sanjay Malik.

The report has also revealed that India

recorded the highest-ever shipment of more than 16 crore smartphones, including three crore 5G devices in 2021. The report said that millennials are now spending around eight hours per day online. Not to mention that smartphones are among the platforms they use for being online.

Nokia's head of customer marketing and communications for India, Amit Marwah, disclosed that consumption of short video format, increase in penetration of smartphones in rural areas, and the time spent by millennials on mobile content are driving data consumption across the country.

Of course, 4G services contributed 99 percent of the total broadband that is consumed in India. The report shared third party estimates which forecast that by 2026, mobile 5G services are predicted to generate \$9 billion in revenues.

Now here comes a caveat in the form of the recent report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 which has become a kind of apple of discord between the



stakeholders and the government. Not to mention that the JPC report was submitted to Parliament last December.

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) has said that the Bill is out of sync with India taking the leadership position in the Techade. The association is of the view that the recommendations are likely to negatively impact a cross section of tech industry segments such as large tech companies, tech services companies as well as digital start-ups which form the backbone of India's tech leadership aspirations.

The JPC has recommended stringent data localisation requirements, which will lead to difficulties in compliance and will be harmful for global and domestic companies alike. Placing restrictions on cross-border flows may lead to higher business failure rates, create barriers for the growth of start-ups, increase costs of compliance for companies and slow down socio-economic benefits reaped from the digital economy. It will also inevitably have a negative impact on the ability of Indian

**With the disenchantment of global mobile manufacturing majors with China and their hectic search for new manufacturing bases, India is a natural choice for them due to congenial policies which have been adopted by the government at the centre.**

consumers to access a truly global internet.

The additional requirement, suggested by the JPC, tasking the Data Protection Authority (DPA) to consult the Government of India (GOI) on all cross-border sensitive personal data transfers not only contradicts established global practices and undermines the role of the DPA, but also subjects data flows to a cumbersome and inefficient process.

Additionally, the suggested retrospectively applicable requirement to bring back data taken abroad poses significant operational

and technical challenges, especially since relevant businesses would be subject to policies which were not enforced at the time of data collection.

One more lesson is here in the wake of the ongoing geopolitical tension, resulting in the shortage of chipsets worldwide. To have a robust domestic ecosystem for mobile handset manufacturing, chipsets must be made in India. The good news is that, buoyed by support from the Centre, this is set to become a reality in the near future. ■

## Review

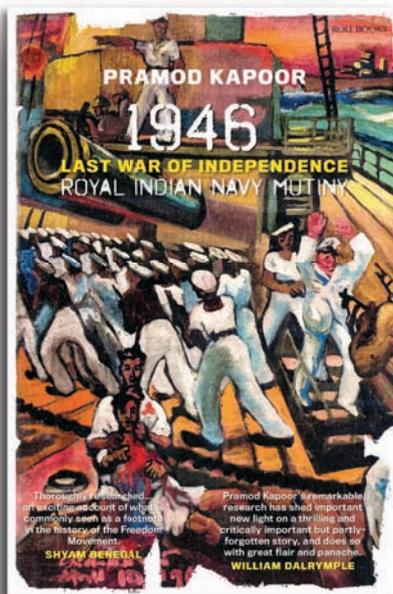
# A RIVETING TALE OF FORGOTTEN NAVAL HEROES

Author-publisher Pramod Kapoor pieces together the grand saga of the four tumultuous days that shook Bombay and India during the last days of the British Raj



BY  
DR SANJEEV CHOPRA

The author is a historian, public policy analyst, and Festival Director at the Valley of Words, Dehradun. Until recently, he was the Director of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie.



Book: 1946 Royal Indian Navy Mutiny; Last War of Independence

Author: Pramod Kapoor

Publisher: Roli Books

*Woh kaun sa jazba tha jis se, Farsauda-e-Nizamath jeest hila Jhulse hue veeran gulshan mein, ek aas umeed ka phool khila, Janata ka lahoon faujan se mila ... faujan ka lahoon, janata se mila.*

*(What passion it was that mingled to make a moth-eaten system quiver, What passion it was that caused a flower of hope to bloom in this dreary desiccated land, What passion it was that mingled the blood of people with the armies, the blood of the armies with the people. (Sahir Ludhianvi on the 1946 naval uprising)*

The uprising was thus the muse for the poet, as well as for a sub-plot in John Masters' *Bhowani Junction*, Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* as well as Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*, besides the very popular Bengali play, *Kallol*, which the then Congress government in West Bengal tried to ban. There were also first-hand accounts, B.C. Dutt's *Mutiny of the Innocents* besides Kusum Nair's *The Army of Occupation*, but putting all the sources together, including the reports of the Inquiry Commission, correspondence of the prominent leaders of the time and newspaper reports with their very different perspectives is Pramod Kapoor's magnum opus — *1946 Royal Indian Navy Mutiny; Last War of Independence*

The choice of the title is so very interesting. It was the last war of independence, and it was also a mutiny. Kapoor thus gives us a perspective from both sides, though the striking point is the 'last war', which immediately reminds one of the first war, and how it came to be so called. Till Veer Savarkar wrote *The First War of*



*Independence* in 1909, the events of 1857 continued to be referred to as a mutiny. Textbooks were revised after Independence. Karl Marx had described these events as a revolt in his despatches to the *New York Times* which published a series of articles on the subject. This also shows the importance of the historian's craft — it is he who makes the past come alive in the present. This then forms the basis of popular narrative, theatre, fiction, non-fiction and political discourse.

In 1946, this uprising shook not just Bombay but had reverberations in Calcutta and Karachi as well as on troops across India, with men in the Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF) and some *paltans* also expressing their support for the ratings in their protest against the sub-human conditions in which they were compelled to live. This is a riveting story narrated by author-publisher Pramod Kapoor who has done extensive research on the subject. It is so important to call it the Last War of Independence because in a way it marks closure from the first war; it also shows that even after a lapse of nine decades the British never understood the sentiments of the troops who fought for them. As in the case of the First War, the communication between the troops and the officers had broken, the officers continued to use racial slurs, pay was inadequate, promises were not kept, and the overwhelming feeling was that the troops could be suppressed by use of force. From the side of the freedom fighters it could be said that they rallied under the banner of Hind or Hindustan, irrespective of the Hindu-Muslim divide, and

made demands that were not just for themselves but for a cause larger than their own. However, there were significant differences too. While 1857 marked the ascent, 1946 marked the terminal decline of British power.

What were the reasons for the uprising? Having fought shoulder to shoulder with other troops from the Commonwealth, and having seen the heroism of the Indian National Army (INA), Indian sailors, soldiers and airmen fought for their dignity. They also realised that they were second to none when it came to courage, fortitude and bravery. But they also saw discrimination first-hand — not only were they paid less than their counterparts — they were literally castaways after the world war ended, and all promises made to them at the time of recruitment “went up in smoke”. From a strength of 27,000 ratings at the height of the war, the decision to reduce the numbers to 11,000 meant that over 16,000 were rendered redundant and they had to be demobilised on a weekly basis — 500 per week.

Added to this was the very poor quality of food and a non-existent grievance redressal mechanism which led to four days of absolute turmoil in Bombay with repercussions in Karachi and elsewhere. Finally, the army had to be called out — not just to restore order in the city of Bombay but also to take over the naval establishments as the naval authorities found the situation quite out of hand. In fact, as a matter of abundant precaution, the Maratha troops were also replaced by British soldiers because Gen. Claude Auchinleck,

The Central Committee did something unprecedented – it removed the Union Jack from the masts and replaced it with three flags: of the Congress, the Muslim League and the CPI, perhaps the only time these three flags representing three diverse ideologies flew from the same pole.

the commander-in-chief, could no longer trust the loyalty of the Indian soldiers. But the greater implication of all this was that within two days, the Cabinet Mission to India (the Cripps Mission) declared its intent to visit India to make arrangements for the transfer of power. The Last War of Independence had shaken their resolve.

Kapoor records these four tumultuous days — from Monday, February 18, to Thursday, February 21, by the hour. Although the hunger strike had commenced from the evening of February 17 when the ratings refused to eat the “watery dal with gravel and the inedible rotis”, it was the refusal to attend the parade on the morning of the 18th that marked the beginning of the uprising. The two Indian officers on watch on *INS Talwar*, the signal ship, were jeered and hooted away, and by 8.45 am, the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) men raised the battle cry, “Inquilab Zindabad!” By 12.30 pm, Commander King had been replaced but negotiations with the Flag Officer Commanding of Bombay failed, and the *Talwar* was under the control of the ratings. Because she was a signal ship, the message spread to all the 11 shore establishments and the fleet near Bombay (four flotillas, 11 miscellaneous ships and 45 general duty ships). By 6 pm, All India Radio reported it in the evening bulletin and the next morning, this was the headline across newspapers — from the pro-British *The Times of India* and *The Statesman* to the nationalist papers like *Free Press Journal*, *Bombay Chronicle*, *Hindustan Times* and *Blitz*. Obviously, the coverage of the mutiny/uprising/revolt reflected the perspective of those in control of these papers.

By the second day, the Central Naval Strike Committee had been formed under the leadership of M.S. Khan and Madan Singh. The Central Committee did something unprecedented — it removed the Union Jack from the masts and replaced it with three flags: of the Congress, the Muslim League and the CPI, perhaps the only time these three flags representing three diverse ideologies flew from the same pole. The Central Committee also appealed to the “established leaders of the political parties” to intervene on their behalf.

However, by this time the established political parties — especially the ones which saw themselves as successors in office to the Raj, the Congress and the Muslim League — were in no mood to support the “indiscipline” of the sailors. Jinnah rejected them outright, Nehru was initially sympathetic but had to give way to Sardar Patel, who issued a statement that the Congress was “making all possible efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the long-standing legitimate grievances of the ratings”. This is what persuaded Khan to make the announcement, “in the present unfortunate circumstances that have developed, the advice of the Congress to the RIN ratings is to lay down arms and go through the formalities of surrender”. The only person who stood by them, and even sparred publicly with Mahatma Gandhi on their behalf, was the bold and intrepid Aruna Asif Ali, who was edged out by the Congress leadership when it came to negotiations with the British.

After the surrender, a Commission of Inquiry was constituted under Justice Fazl Ali, Justice Krishnaswami Iyengar, Justice Maher Chand Mahajan, Vice Admiral Patterson and Major General T.W. Rees with Lt Col Visheshwar Nath Singh as the secretary. The report concluded that “the basic cause of Mutiny was widespread discontent, arising mainly from a number of grievances which had remained unredressed for some time, and were aggravated by the political situation”. The government also accepted “that officers must consider the welfare of their men before their own comfort or safety and that grievances should not be explained away but redressed, and secondly, too rapid an expansion without proper provision for training of officers is unwise, and that the aim of services in peace should be to prepare for expansion of war”.

Noble words, indeed. But the ratings were soon forgotten: they were neither reinstated, nor given the status of freedom fighters, and they had to wait till 1973 before some of them were given the pensions due to them for having served in the navy. They would have continued to be a footnote in history but, thanks to Pramod Kapoor, the legend of their valour and sacrifice will live on!

In fact, Kapoor has a regret: had he started the research even a decade earlier, he would have had the oral testimonies of the participants themselves or at least of those who had seen them in flesh and blood!

That they did not succeed is not as important as the valiant effort they made — and this is also the story of how the leading political figures of the times — the Mahatma, Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Asaf Ali and G.N. Adhikari of the CPI viewed the issue from their own prisms.

The narrative built in the immediate aftermath of independence was built on the theme of how the struggle for India’s freedom was unique in that it was able to drive out the world’s mightiest empire with the mass mobilisation of *satyagraha*. Even visually, the contrast between the images of the Mahatma and the Earl of Mountbatten was a study in contrasts in every sense of the term — from the philosophical to the sartorial. It perhaps also suited India to leverage this image globally as India did not want to join either of the two blocs. ■

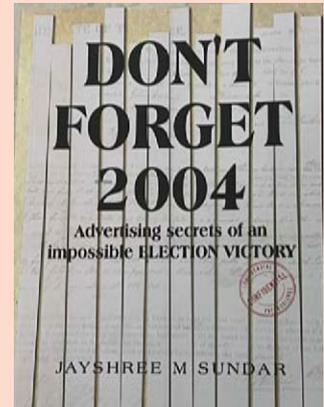
## On The Shelf

**DON'T FORGET 2004**

Advertising secrets of an impossible election victory  
BY JAYSHREE M. SUNDAR

Vitasta / Pages 284/ Rs 495

In December 2003, the Congress party took a drubbing in three state elections. The India Shining slogan of the Vajpayee government had taken everyone by storm. The general election was preponed by eight months. Defeat was inevitable. Yet, in May 2004, the story was one of absolute surprise. The Congress won, making history. This book is about the making of that history. In this memoir, Sundar reveals all — from getting the phone call from the Congress's office to the final victory. Real conversations with Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, Don't Forget 2004 is the inside story of the marketing and advertising campaign which dovetailed into the political strategy for the Congress party, bringing it back to power in May 2004. During her 17 years at Lintas, Jayshree Sundar was known for her work with clients like Cadbury, Suzuki, Gillette and Xerox. She is the author of Dolly's Table and The Tambram's Recipes.

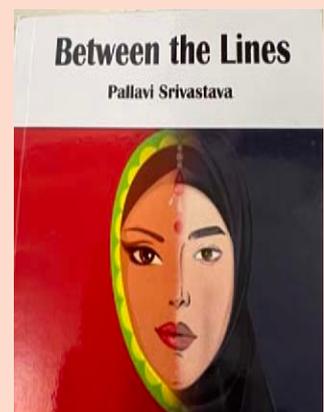
**BETWEEN THE LINES**

BY PALLAVI SRIVASTAVA

IIP/ Pages 167 / Rs 300

This is a story of communal strife and retribution, of interfaith marriage, suffering, the complexities of human relations and the simplicity of the emotional connect between people of distant lands. Between the Lines is a saga of man's search for the true meaning of life in this vengeful, sadistic and materialistic world. The story spans three generations, and speaks of the minds of people living in India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Australia. But the language is one of love, of trust in the goodness of the human soul and a belief in man's capacity to bounce back after braving adversities.

Pallavi Srivastava has published stories in Indian national and regional magazines. She is interested in spiritual topics and is a votary of the cult of peace and love; she believes in bringing about positive change through individual and collective efforts with like-minded people.

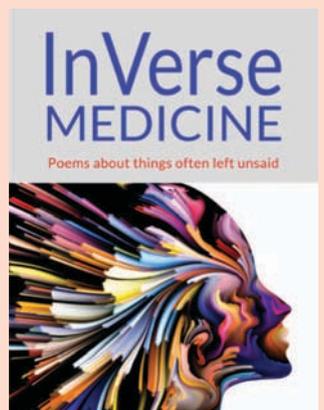
**INVERSE MEDICINE**

BY DR UPREET DHALIWAL

Pothi / Pages 97 / Rs 299

The poems in this volume are conversations we could easily overlook in our rush to provide care. Through poetry, a doctor explores what it really means to be sick, and what it means to be a provider or caregiver. These poems are for people who have ever been unwell, and for those who have never been sick; for people who love poetry, and for those who wonder and doubt; for people who think the healthcare system is fatally flawed, and for those who serve in the system with dedication and love.

Dr Upreet Dhaliwal trained to be an ophthalmologist, and then happily rediscovered the humanities, especially poetry, which added an invaluable dimension to her understanding of illness and health.

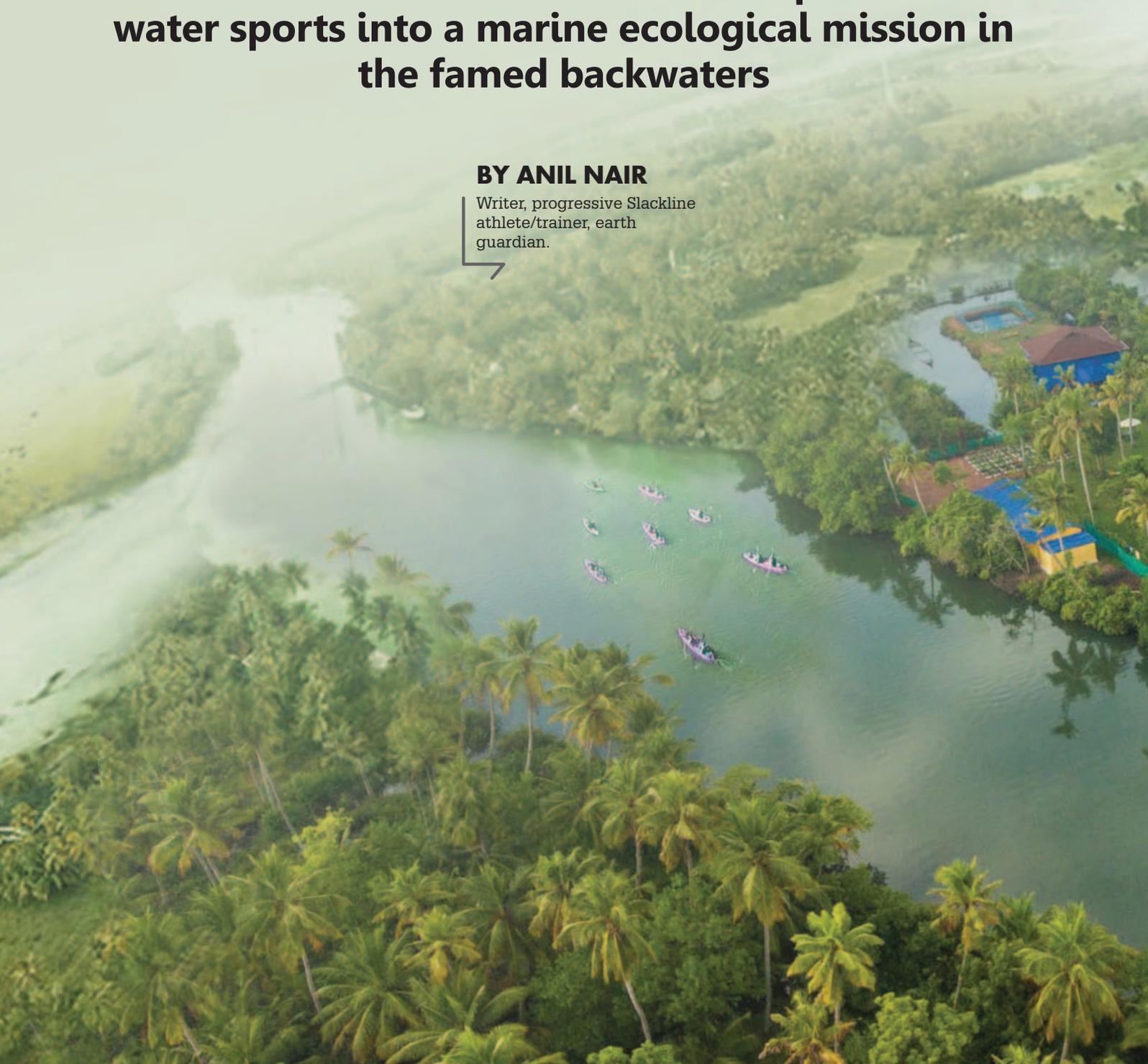


# SAVING MISS KERALA

**A Non Resident Indian converts his passion for water sports into a marine ecological mission in the famed backwaters**

**BY ANIL NAIR**

Writer, progressive Slackline athlete/trainer, earth guardian.







***We are aware that what we are dealing with here is one aspect of a much larger problem, one we cannot solve ourselves. It will take massive effort and dedication from multiple enterprises, which is why we are always looking to work together and collaborate with other ventures***

**W**hen he first sat in a kayak and paddled down a river, Kaushiq Kodothodika didn't have the faintest idea that this activity would lead him to creating the world's first 'Marine Cemetery' dedicated to reviving endangered fish species, including one called Miss Kerala, in 'God's own country'.

Kaushiq is from the fintech sales industry in Singapore and has in the past 10 years has used his passion for eco-friendly water sports such as kayaking, canoeing, stand up paddle boarding (SUP), rowing and sailing to set up **Jellyfish Water Sports** — a water sports and outdoor adventure centre in his hometown of Kozhikode in Kerala that focuses on promoting the river for recreational and sporting activities as well as drawing attention to the need to clean up the rivers. The Kodothodika family named the centre after they spotted a bloom of jellyfish in the area where they were paddling and the name appealed especially to their kids. A fun fact is that Kozhikode, a coastal city in God's own country, was a significant spice trade centre and is close to Kappad beach, where Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama landed in 1498.

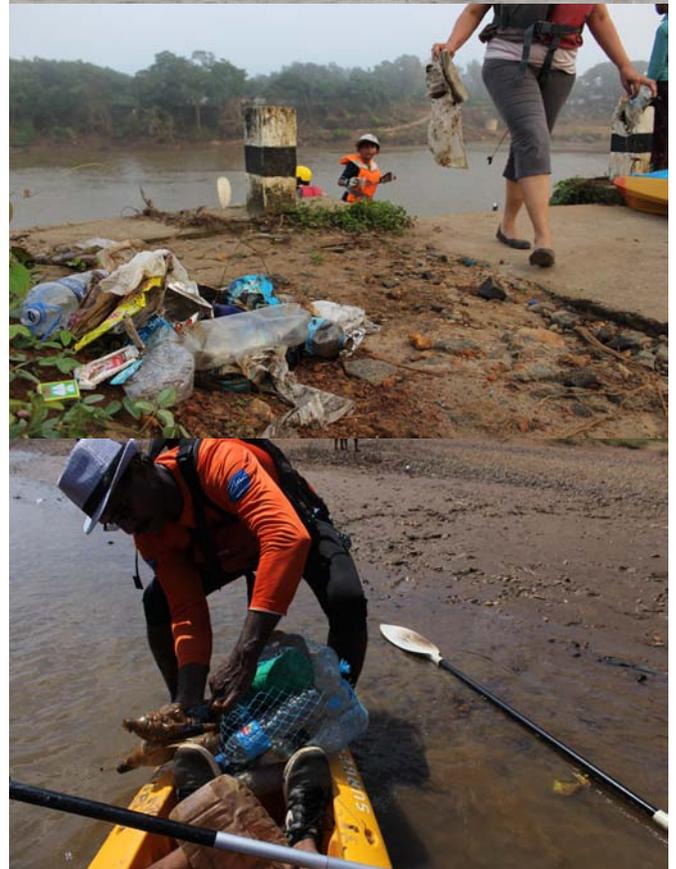
What began as a mission to promote recreational activity and clean up the river area near the Jellyfish camp alongside Kerala's fourth longest river, Chaliyar, led to the creation of the Marine Cemetery, an art installation dedicated to nine endangered marine and riverine species, in 2019 on Beypore beach in Kozhikode. The Jellyfish team partnered with climate activist Akash Renison, the Beypore Port Authority and the Kozhikode district administration for this project.

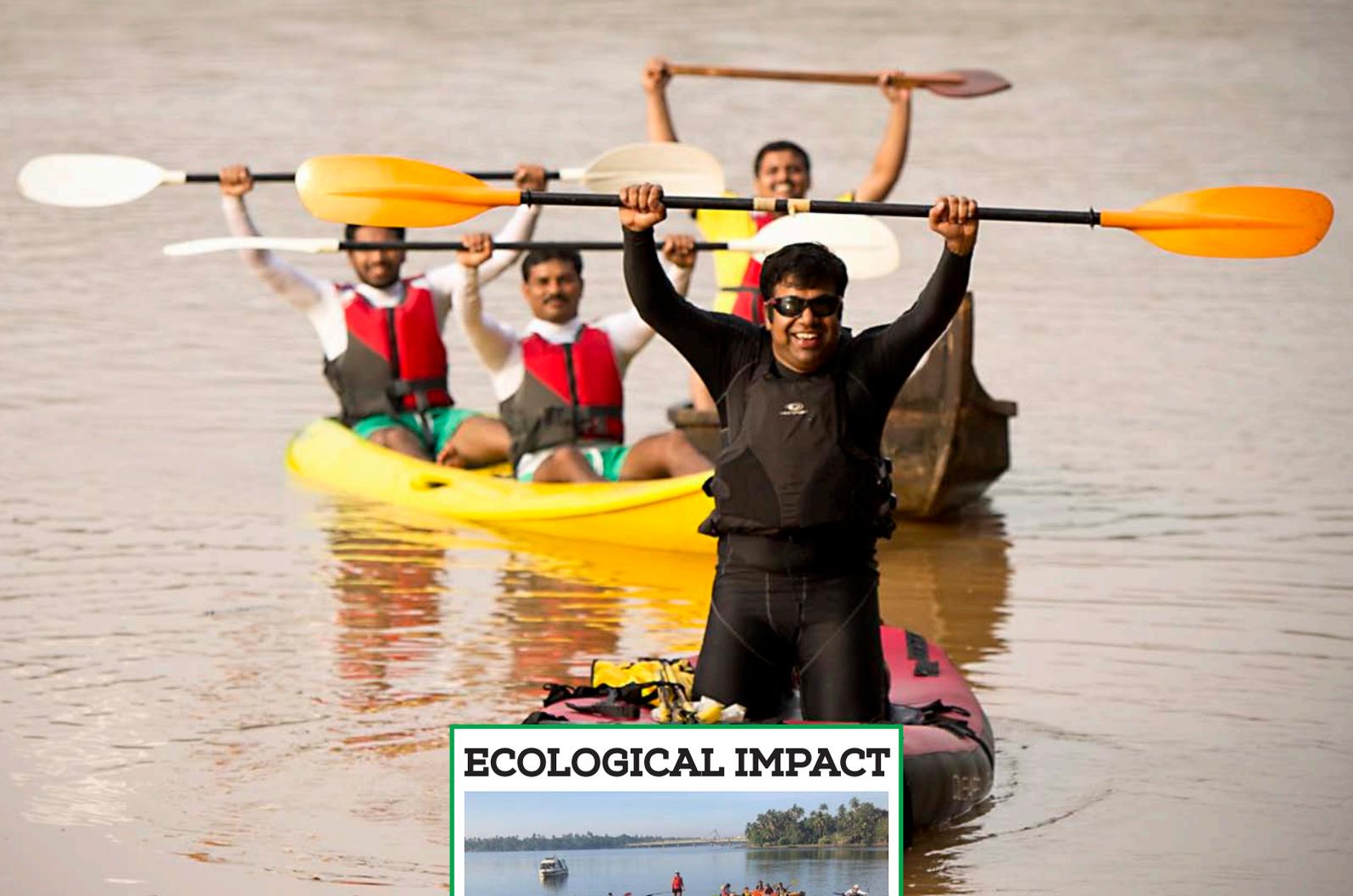
### THE JELLYFISH JOURNEY

It all started in 2010 when the founding family of Jellyfish Water Sports bought an inflatable kayak from Dubai during their annual vacation and loved the experience. But they were disheartened to see the amount of floating garbage in the Chaliyar river. When they spoke to fishermen and people who lived on the banks, they realised everyone felt equally bad.

"This was the inspiration for creating the Jellyfish project. With its philosophy of Paddle to Preserve, it's attracting everyone back to the waters for leisure, and recreational and serious water sports activities in Kerala so that there is awareness about the need to protect our waters," says Kaushiq over the phone from Singapore.

Offering an alternative to mundane city life, the sports centre has succeeded in attracting enthusiasts to learning a new skill and





## ECOLOGICAL IMPACT



### CHALIYAR RIVER PADDLE

#### WASTE COLLECTED

2016-2021: **4000+kg**

2016: **650kg**

2017: **850kg**

2018 & 2019: **1,000kg**

2021: **500kg**

### MUZIRIS PADDLE

#### WASTE COLLECTED

**1,000kg**

More than 100 paddlers were involved over a 68-km stretch. Over 200 people participated online and pledged to give up single-use plastic

enjoying the rivers with a two-pronged approach: of encouraging water sports and shaping a new breed of eco-warriors.

Their first clients were family and friends who were aware of Kaushiq's passion and thoroughness in safety measures. They paddled on the Chaliyar, stayed overnight on a nearby island, collected trash along the way and posted photos and videos.

As the club became popular and kayaking was accepted by the locals, team Jellyfish introduced the Chaliyar River Paddle event, which starts from the foothills of the Western Ghats in Nilambur and ends at Beypore where the Chaliyar meets the Arabian Sea. They held its seven edition last year.

### JELLYFISH SPREADS ITS ECOTENTACLES

Jellyfish has introduced varied sporting activities. These are kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddling (SUP), sailing, and rowing. "We also offer fishing, camping, wall climbing, and stays in our luxury houseboat – *The Queen of Chaliyar*," says Rubina, Kaushiq's wife and director at Jellyfish. "The intent is to create an immersive eco-friendly experience for our clients. It is easy for

us to feel disconnected from nature and the environment, Jellyfish offers a way to reconnect."

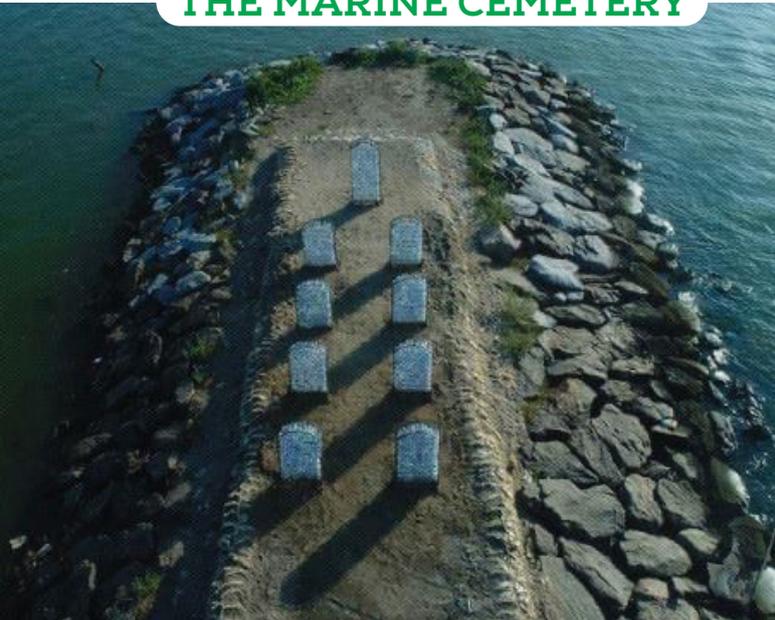
Doubling alongside her day job in Singapore, Rubina handles communications and social media for Jellyfish most of the time. They team up with independent, like-minded content creators who are adventurers and passionate about conservation during projects, events, and festivals they organise.

While the Chaliyar and Muziris River Paddle events have been some of their most successful river clean-ups, there are other initiatives, such as Catch of the Day where volunteers collect and sort non-biodegradable waste for recycling. "We've also tied up with schools and nature groups to promote the clean-ups. We're proud of the progress we've made so far," says Rubina.

Kaushiq knew that reviving a river ecosystem is possible only with the participation of local stakeholders like the fishermen. That was when he met one. "I am a fisherman and used to be a sand miner till this second profession of mine was termed illegal by the government," says Najeeb Rehman. "I noticed huge amounts of poultry waste and plastic being dumped into the river



## THE MARINE CEMETERY



and when Kaushiq approached me I joined him.” He joined as a lifeguard and got his son involved in the clean-up drives as well. Rehman agrees that there’s been a remarkable difference in the patch of river and in the lives of those who live around it.

“We have also raised awareness about the new government fee for waste collection,” Rubina explains. “The municipality collects waste from slaughterhouses and chicken stalls for a fee. This is a more viable option for many in the area as they would either pay for waste collection regardless or, as they were doing, dump it in the river. Much of the pollutants in the river included slaughterhouse waste that was in tied-up plastic or gunny bags.”

### A CEMETERY LIKE NO OTHER

After nearly a decade of cleaning up these water bodies, Jellyfish had a eureka moment when it decided to up the ante about the state of our rivers—via art.

Their other event, a paddling expedition called Muziris Paddle, is held in partnership with the Muziris Heritage Project, under the

Kerala Tourism department. The story of Muziris starts from 3000 BC when Babylonians, Assyrians and Egyptians came to the Malabar coast in search of spices.

Today, the port city is also part of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, an international exhibition of contemporary art held in Kochi city in Kerala. It is the largest art exhibition in the country. During the event a few years ago, participants got an opportunity to visit the legendary Muziris heritage sites on the way.

Kaushiq set up the world’s first Marine Cemetery at the Beypore beach on December 4, 2019, World Wildlife Conservation Day. An art installation made up of 2,000 plastic bottles collected from the beach, it has nine markers, each dedicated to an endangered marine or riverine species, built with the plastic bottles encased in gravestone-shaped iron frames. Eight of these markers are four feet in height and dedicated to the seahorse, parrot fish, leatherback sea turtle, eagle rays, sawfish, dugong, zebra shark and hammerhead shark. The tallest marker, measuring six feet, is dedicated to Miss Kerala, an endangered native freshwater fish.



“Our Marine Cemetery got a lot of coverage nationally and internationally,” says Kaushiq. “We started getting calls from conservationists in the UK and a few other places, all offering help by spreading awareness.” For now, the art installation has been removed from the spot allotted by the local authority since the patch had to be reclaimed for other use. Jellyfish is committed to erecting the Marine Cemetery at an alternative site and is open to teaming with like-minded people who have similar passion and drive for the planet.

### FUNDING THE PROJECT

Kaushiq did not wait for external funds or bank on fundraising. He put in his own money to make sure there were no hitches. “We have spent close to ₹3 crore so far. This includes getting supplies, equipment, infrastructure, spreading awareness, collaborating with other businesses and enterprises, etc. For us, this is a passion project,” he says with emphasis.

With its philosophy of Paddle to Preserve, the project is attracting everyone back to the waters for leisure, for recreational and serious water sports activities in Kerala so that there is awareness about the need to protect our waters.

—Kaushiq Kodothodika

### SHALLOW WATER, DEEP IMPACT

Fifteen events and thousands of paddle strokes later, the Chaliyar and Muziris River Paddle events have had a positive impact on the environment and also the local residents. Kaushiq says: “First, it has resulted in a cleaner river and we’ve even started to see new species of fish in the water. Second, we’ve taught the fishermen about the impact of plastic pollution, conservation practices, safety procedures and the importance of PFDs (Personal Floatation

## BE AN ECO-CRUSADER CHALIYAR RIVER PADDLE

**Dates:** November 12-14

**What you get to do:** The three-day event will see participants starting from Nilambur, located in the foothills of the Western Ghats, and travelling along the Chaliyar river, exploring its length, camping, enjoying the local food and culture while doing their bit to preserve the river ecosystem. The event ends at Bepore in Kozhikode district where the river meets the Arabian Sea

**Paddling distance:** 68 km

**Age:** 8 years onwards

## MUZIRIS PADDLE

**Dates:** February 12-14

**What you get to do:** You will spend two days immersed in nature, culture and heritage, floating on the backwaters. Of course, you'll be resting at night to revive your energy, with folk music and cultural activities planned to pump you up

**Paddling distance:** 40 km

**Age:** 8 years onwards

**For more information check out**

<https://www.jellyfishwatersports.com>

**Follow them on Instagram:**

@jellyfish\_watersports

**Facebook:**

Jellyfish Watersports & Outdoor Adventure

Devices). They are able to work for Jellyfish events and the Bepore Waterfest as support staff, lifeguards, rescue boat operators, or even as participants."

## SAFETY FIRST AT JELLYFISH

Jellyfish has partnered with legends of kayaking like Australian woman paddler Sandy Robson, Nepalese kayaker and rescue instructor Chandra Ale, and Indian kayaker Anvesh Thapa for high-quality training sessions and conservation drives over the years.

Three years ago, Jellyfish organised a first responder training (Durantha Nirvana Sena) and Mission Raksha Program together with the Police, Fire & Rescue and Powra Samith, a first responders' network created by locals to train the fishermen's community and other locals to prepare for and handle disasters such as fires, floods and other incidents requiring rescue operations.

The impact of this training came in handy during the Kerala floods in 2019 when fishermen and officials used Jellyfish's equipment for search and rescue operations.

## BACKING AND GROOMING WATER SPORT ATHLETES

Jellyfish supports budding athletes, water sports events and has sponsored two of India's top whitewater kayaking festivals: the Ganga Kayak Festival in Rishikesh and the Malabar River Festival in Kodencherry, Kerala.

Kaushiq says with pride, "We have world-class coaches and equipment that provide young athletes the essentials they need to better themselves and develop their skills. Currently, we sponsor Naina Adhikari, India's leading female whitewater kayaker in all her competitions and expeditions."

## SCALING UP IN THE FUTURE

Jellyfish introduced rowing and dinghy sailing as new activities last year. In the pipeline are plans to set up the Jellyfish Yacht Club, expand their reciprocal club network, and tie up with like-minded clubs in the country and internationally. "We intend to expand our franchise and conduct events across Kerala. There has been keen and growing interest from other districts and their tourism departments. Over time, we want to eventually take Jellyfish across India, the Middle East, Far East and Europe," says Kaushiq.

"Many of our clients are loyal customers who regularly return to Jellyfish. Sixty percent of our River Paddle Clean-up participants are repeat customers who attend the event every year. Their enthusiasm and passion is motivating," says Kaushiq, who has led most of these expeditions.

## DESI AT HEART

"For us this is a home away from home. Calicut is a large part of our lives and whether near or far we want to do whatever we can to help it become a sustainable place," says the *pravasi* who left India in 1996 for global career prospects.

This NRI family's passion, love for the motherland and sustainable proactive measures to clean up the rivers of their home state may just lead to Miss Kerala swimming around in these waters once again in the near future! ■

# Beat the heat

## sitting in lap of nature

With the arrival of summer season, you may have been mapping out the tourist destinations to escape the scorching heat. To make your task easier, let us have a peek into two tourist destinations of Madhya Pradesh, where you can explore wildlife, heritage, nature and spirituality.

### Amarkantak – ‘The king of pilgrimages’

If you are mulling to get refreshed and calm in the lap of nature experiencing religious and spiritual tourism, this is the place for you. Situated at an altitude of 1000 metre, Amarkantak, popularly known as teerthraj or ‘the king of pilgrimages’ is located at the meeting point of the three central India hill ranges - Vindhyas, Satpuras and Malkal. The largest flowing and holy river of Madhya Pradesh, Narmada and Son (Sone) originate in Amarkantak, a town which has several ancient temples with a rich history.

### A place of devotion

Amarkantak or teerthraj is a place of worship as gods, gandharvas (celestial beings), asuras (demons), saints and common people are all said to have achieved great spiritual powers here. There are many places associated with the names of ancient sages such as Bhriku Rishi, Kapil Muni, Adi Guru Sankaracharya, Rishi Markand and Saint Kabir Das.



### Here begins the journey

As you walk through the alleys of Amarkantak, you reach a place dotted with many small and bigger temples. There is a pond called Narmada Kund at the Narmada Udgam (Origin point of Narmada River). Here you witness Narmada Mata Temple and Sonakshi Shaktipeeth Temple.

### Seek blessings of Lord Shiva

When you travel 1 km from Narmada Udgam towards south, you see Trimukhi Temple, a

temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, which was constructed between 1042 and 1122 AD. There is also an 18th century's Keshav Narayan Temple.

In the south side of Narmada Kund are the ancient temples of Kalachuri period and 1 km from Narmada Mata Temple in the east is Mai ki Bagia, where it is believed that goddess Narmada came to pluck fruits.

### The milky water stream

To escape the heat in the afternoon, you should head towards two attractive waterfalls - Dugdha Dhara and Kapil Dhara, one of the most popular tourist spots surrounded by dense forest. It is 6 kms from the source of Narmada River.

Dugdha Dhara waterfall, which looks like a milky white stream, attracts tourists with its beauty. Less than 1 km towards southwest from Dugdha Dhara is Kapil Dhara. Surrounded by lush green hills, this is one of the best places to spend most of your time listening to soothing music of waterfalls. Sonmuda sunrise point is another attractive spot to explore in the morning. It is known for the bird's eye view of the entire forest and mountains around it.

### Places to visit

Amarkantak has many attractive destinations for tourists, including Shri Yantra Temple, Amaresh-

war Mahadev Temple, Son Udgam Temple, Bhriku Kamandal, Durga Dhara Fall and Jwaleshwar Temples among others.

### Things to do

Boat ride, trekking, paragliding and the most important part is experiencing wellness tourism, yoga and other meditational and



The heart of Incredible India

Nestled in the hills and filled with scenic beauty all around, Pachmarhi not only has spiritual spots and gushing waterfalls, but also have a lot of adventure. The highest point in the Satpura range, Dhoopgarh hilltop is a beautiful spot to see spectacular sunsets and sunrises.

### Pandavas and Jata Shankar Cave

'Pandavas Caves' is the most eye-catching spot. As per the legend, Pandavas and their wife Draupadi built it and lived there

beautiful tiger reserves, the sanctuary was adjudged TOFT Wildlife Tourism Award for the most visitor-friendly wildlife destinations in 2010. Many of the tourist places in and around Pachmarhi include Dhoopgarh, Bee Falls and Duchess Falls.

### Tale behind 'Apsara Kund'

At a distance of 5 kms from Pandava Caves is Apsara Vihar, which is also known as Fairy Pool. Local guides have an interesting story about it. They say that during the British reign, the English ladies used to come here to swim and the locals, ever intrigued by their fair complexion, assumed them to be apsaras. Hence, people started calling it Apsara Kund. This place is ideal for a refreshing swim, especially on a hot day.

### Places to visit

A few other destinations to explore in Pachmarhi are Priyadarshini -



spiritual practices to get rid of stress and anxiety.

### Pachmarhi - 'Satpura ki Rani'

Situated at the mounting height, Madhya Pradesh's most verdant charm Pachmarhi, also known as 'Satpura ki Rani' (Queen of Satpuras), rules the range of Satpura Hills. This is the best time to visit Pachmarhi. You can also enjoy jeep safari to experience the beauty of this place.

during their exile. Another attraction, Jata Shankar Cave displays the hundred-headed divine snake, Seshnag. The rock of this sacred cave depicts snarled hair of Lord Shiva.

### Satpura National Park

Satpura National Park is the perfect place for all those who are tired of the unadventurous sanctuaries and wildlife parks and want to have a unique experience. One of India's most

Forsyth Point, Mahadeo Temple, Chauragarh Temple, Rajat Pratap, Jamuna Prapat (Bee Falls), Jalawatara, Ramaya Kund (Irene Pool) and Handi Khoh.

### Things to do

Jeep Safari, Horse Riding, ATV Ride, Land Parasailing, Ziplining, Waterfall Trekking & Hiking. So, there is no point of refraining from travelling in the heart of the country to explore such beautiful places. 🌿





BY  
DR SONAL MANSINGH

The writer is a noted Odissi danseuse, a Padma Vibhushan and Member of Parliament

**O**ur dear Mother Earth is burdened with many man-made problems. The 'best creation' of God, that is, man, has created havoc. His all-consuming greed, arrogance and ambition have no limit. Like the *asuras* (the anti-gods in the Indian Puranic legends), man has gobbled up every available resource, every possibility of sustenance to the extent that animals and birds, even the delicate bio-diversity is set to be on a diminishing slide. Man will eliminate all, sadly.

Or, will nature allow such a free run? Will recent predictions of low-lying countries and cities getting inundated by sea water come true? Surprisingly, such predictions follow those in India's calculation of the Four Aeonic Cycles which recur every few billion years. The last of the four is called Kali Yug, the Dark Age. Earth has gone through Sat Yug, Treta Yug, Dwapar Yug and now we are living somewhere in the middle of Kali Yug. In addition to increasing natural calamities, there are unforeseen things like hitherto unknown diseases, pandemics and deadly viral infections.

The lockdowns of the past two years, and the third year running, not only of the economy but of daily life as well, have brought untold misery to millions all over the world. Countries are still trying to cope not only with the negative offshoots of Covid-19 but also with serious mental depression and the sense of hopelessness



# MAN AT WAR WITH NATURE

As man loses touch with primeval energy, natural calamities, hitherto unknown diseases, pandemics and deadly viral infections strike the world

the pandemic has spawned among populations. It is an unequal war between angry nature in a mood to teach man a lesson and the yet arrogant and unapologetic human race struggling to find a way out without any course correction! But hope lives on!

It is known how vibrations work, even affecting and altering happenings. In our traditional understanding of this theory, there is an auspicious time for every important event like setting out on a journey, a pilgrimage, holding a marriage, and so on which should be done in consultation with the Panchaang, the Hindu lunar calendar. Sometimes, despite precautions, unpleasant things occur and people lose equilibrium, patience and faith.

I would like to recount one of my favourite fables. After a long period of drought, a village astrologer was asked to find a solution. He consulted the Panchaang and instructed the village elders to conduct a *havan*, worship of the fire god, along with propitiation of Indra, the rain god. On the appointed morning, after proper arrangements were made, the *havan* began. Even those from neighbouring villages had gathered to accrue some benefit from the *havan*. One young boy arrived, carrying an umbrella. Everyone laughed, since the sun was shining brightly. The youth, in all innocence, said, "I am sure Indra will be pleased with our worship and will send rain

It is an unequal war between an angry nature in a mood to teach man a lesson and the yet arrogant and unapologetic human race struggling to find a way out without any course correction!

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immediately. That is why I have brought an umbrella." His faith so pleased Indra that, in a matter of minutes, the sun was overcast with dark clouds and even before the *havan* could be completed, the rain came pouring down. Such is the power of faith.

But, as I look around me, I see over-dependence on machines, technology and a numbness of emotions as if the collective energy is in a limbo. Man feels lost despite landing on the moon, despite almost entering the periphery of the sun. Now we

have robotic household help, robots instructing man, robots taking charge of many activities of daily life, public life and even warfare. Can't imagine what a robot would do in the bedroom, given half a chance! On the one hand, we are developing renewable energy, solar energy, and hydro energy (because water flow is abundant and constant unless it is stymied by drought, harsh summer and too much irrigation). I often wonder about the glaring contrasts between our professional beliefs and real-life travesties.

The worship of rivers, mountains, rocks, trees...indeed, every manifestation of nature is considered sacred in India as in some other parts of the world. The Zen philosophy of Japan comes to mind in which every twig, leaf and pebble has its own place in the larger scheme and so has to be respected, used with respect, for instance, in their famous flower arrangements (Ikebana), Zen gardens, homes, the tea ceremony (Cha-no-yu), and in almost every aspect of daily life. Yet Japan is one of the most industrialised nations where, increasingly, human bonds are difficult to forge. Women are nervous about marriage and raising a family. In the race to increase per capita income and GDP growth in the name of progress, dire warnings from *prakriti* go unheeded. Is there still time to turn back? I hope so. ■

# IMPARTING MEANINGFUL LEARNING

BY KALYAN BANERJEE

An inspiring tale of a school in Odisha where children pursue their interests and enjoy their childhood through playful learning experiences in a fear-free environment. The school focuses on curiosity and motivation, besides connecting students with the community



**T**he Klorofeel School project was a painstakingly nurtured dream that began with a stutter and a hiccup at the outset. We received the formal approval to start the school on March 16, 2020, but were then hit by the 68-day lockdown, leaving “online” as the only option for us. We walked the razor’s edge, balancing our conviction about minimising screen time for children with the need to engage them. We also recognised that all parents did not have a laptop or a spare phone for the child.

The initial “classes” consisted of half an hour of video conversing with each student, three times a week. Grouping students into classes happened months later. This allowed us to know each child personally, and students became comfortable with their teachers. Slowly, we increased it to three hours a day as the year progressed.

Anand Rao Ladi had been my colleague in MindTree since February 2000, and he had shared his dream of starting a school in Brahmapur. Repeated conversations stay etched in memory even when we do not act. Anand had grown up in Brahmapur, Odisha where his primary school headmistress had advised him to go to Bhubaneswar and study in the Sainik School; so he studied there from Class VI onwards. He was very happy with the education he received at Sainik School, but was separated from family, parents, sisters, and younger brother, and he recalls how painful that was. Children should have access to quality education without having to leave home, he reasoned.

Anand was also inspired by Pilani, by how an unknown village grew into a world-renowned centre of educational excellence. Could Brahmapur be a similar education hub for the country?

As for me, exploring learning and motivation interested me deeply and I had experimented with these in my professional life at Wipro R&D and MindTree. After I chose to leave the industry and joined a university (2012-15), I was trying to figure out how to motivate students. I explored how to teach, how to inspire. Many of my methods (e.g. competitions, e-learning, peer learning, near peer learning, group incentives) failed. This forced me to delve deeper and try new approaches in a new context; my beliefs evolved and I gained new insights.

While I wrestled with how education should be, my new friend, Dr Haribandhu Panda, steadily grew as an influence on me through our multitude of conversations that centred around society, equity, social values and what we could do to influence the future of society. A mechanical engineer from Regional Engineering College (REC), Rourkela, Haribandhu had begun his career with the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) before getting a Ph.D. from the Asian Institute of Technology (Bangkok). Later, as one of the founding faculty at the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), he spent significant years working with Dr Verghese Kurien

At Klorofeel School, we believe parents are the first teachers of the child, and education at Klorofeel is in collaboration with parents, not outsourced.



(of Amul fame). He felt we must focus on schooling in less addressed parts of the country.

I felt teaching children was a difficult art, and I did not have the capability. Soon, destiny plotted a spontaneous, inspired conversation with Haribandhu and a committed social worker from Bissamcuttack (in southern Odisha, 50 km from Rayagada). The discussion centred around education in deprived areas, leading to initiating 10 Learning Centres with 300 children in 10 villages. Bissamcuttack, being among the less addressed regions in our country, became a natural choice. Our design for Bissamcuttack included parent participation, community support and the need to work with local teachers. Love for children and willingness to learn are more relevant than formal qualifications, we decided. We selected 13 teachers after a rigorous week-long workshop.

Still, in my mind, we were not ready to launch a school yet. Destiny intervened once more, leading me to reconnect with Anand and his dream of a school in Brahmapur. The two dreams merged



to conceive the Klorofeel School at Brahmapur. We needed to create a school where children pursued their interests and enjoyed their childhood with playful learning experiences in a fear-free environment, which would lead to choosing the career of their dreams.

Our school would focus on curiosity and motivation, a variety of channels for learning, connecting with the community and providing diverse exposure.

It was important that it should not be an island of excellence – it must engage with other schools, teachers, and the environment around. And if we were to influence society, not just students, we knew we must focus on teachers, parents and the community as well. The learning institution we created must have a mission beyond the school and its children.

At Klorofeel School, we believe parents are the first teachers of the child, and education at Klorofeel is in collaboration with parents, not outsourced. Even as our school started, we came out with a book, *Purposeful Parenting*, disseminating our views. Our students would also connect with the community around us, and the highs and lows of the society we were in. Together, we would grow. This would remain a driving principle as we progressed.

We traded screen time for plenty of activity for the child at home. We discovered that the kitchen is a wonderful laboratory of

learning. Apart from the cooking itself, it has a variety of vessels of different shapes and sizes, and diverse food items measured in different units – grammes, kilogrammes and litres, for example.

They learned how much water was used and where – and how to reduce usage. Students drew their family trees and needed to learn about the lives of their grandparents and other family members when they were children. Such activities increased the engagement within the family, and we were privileged to get an insider’s perspective. This aligned with our principle that parents and school must work together towards the child’s learning.

Puzzles sent out and solved through WhatsApp groups became popular. Quizzes were a regular feature, and children looked forward to them. We discovered our children were good at drawing and craft work, they now possess an impressive array of art they have created. When an artist from Visva Bharati joined us as our fine arts teacher, it enhanced their quality. Early on, an innovative drama teacher joined us to create learning experiences through theatre. He collaborated with other teachers to integrate theatre into regular teaching, and lessons were joyous and the learning “sticky”.

Children in cities like Bengaluru or Mumbai enjoy an advantage because of the wider exposure they receive. We are committed to creating rich exposure for our children. This year, through Zoom, our children have interacted with Wing Commander S.K. Patel,



listened to Prof. Kaushik Basu (former chief economist at the World Bank), enjoyed a guided virtual tour of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), and learned science with Brahmanand Swain (with his *karke dekho* mode of teaching) and Samar Bagchi, reputed for teaching with experiments. They have learnt civic responsibility from reputed public problem-solving organisation Reap Benefit, and learned thinking and design with their New York-based robotics coach, Dr Duri Sastry.

Quizzing to learn is now synonymous with Klorofeel School. Similarly, learning mathematics and English through puzzles has become a norm. We have a goal: students must read 20 books a year. There's a Toy Library for younger children, and a Lab at Home kit to do science experiments at home, something we ourselves could not do as children.

The "Near to Far" learning philosophy leads to a strong grounding in local heritage and culture. Last year's calendar featured 12 festivals of Odisha, a visual treat chosen from our students' drawings. After the pandemic, their experience would be richer as the environment opens up, with the many learning excursions we are unable to have now, apart from an expansive campus that lies unused.

Our campus spans 14.5 acres with two buildings, one for regular classes, and the larger one, Curiosity Centre, for labs, dance, music and all else. There's plenty of opportunity for classes outside the classroom; an open-air amphitheatre and an indoor auditorium. Post-pandemic, students will benefit from a Living Lab where they can grow their own plant in their own plot, a weather station, and a telescope for sky gazing.

It is our aspiration to not just build a school but impact education in the region. We dream of Brahmapur emerging as a learning hub for the nation – our concepts on parenting, connecting with community, experiential learning and fear-free environment are principles that must impact education beyond our region. The investment in infrastructure is triggered by this thought, with the ambition of showcasing learning principles critical to meaningful education. On a contiguous plot, residential and visitors' quarters are being built to attract aspiring teachers, fellows, and educationists.

Klorofeel School has been born in difficult times. Our hundred



We traded screen time for plenty of activity for the child at home. We discovered that the kitchen is a wonderful laboratory of learning.

students, their parents, and a score of teachers have shown faith – and we have been learning together, innovating to navigate unanticipated obstacles. The concept of meaningful learning and inspired children in a fear-free environment finding purpose even as we stay connected with society, must be shown to succeed, and grow.

**Klorofeel School is founded by Dr Haribandhu Panda, Anand Rao Ladi, Kalyan Banerjee and Dr Adarsh Rath. It began its first academic session in March 2020. ■**





Remembering

# PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR

Author and art columnist **SUJATA PRASAD** in conversation with acclaimed composer and performer **SHUBHENDRA RAO**, Pandit Ravi Shankar's foremost disciple.

This year, April 7 marks the sitar maestro's 102nd birth anniversary

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**Q: In a poignant obituary, written for The Guardian after the maestro's [Pandit Ravi Shankar] death in December 2012, Amit Choudhury remarked, "an epoch has passed, not only in north Indian Classical music but for a certain buoyancy and colour in the music of the long 20th century".**

**A:** Artists like him never die. They live through their music.

**Q: You had a very special relationship with Pandit Ravi Shankar. He was not just your guru but your father's guru as well.**

**A:** Yes, my father, N.R. Rama Rao, was one of his earliest disciples. A young science graduate, just out of his teens, he reached out to Panditji after attending a concert at the historic Bangalore Town Hall. To say that he was mesmerised would be an understatement. He was completely entranced by the complex rhythms of the unfolding *ragas*, the improvisations, the intricate crescendo of the closing notes. He made his way to the green room. Fortunately, my father was not a complete greenhorn. His mother had lived in Pune for a long time and could understand the intricacies of Hindustani music. My father imbibed that from her.

**Q: How old was Ravi Shankar at that time? Where was he based?**

**A:** We are talking about 1948. Panditji was 28 years old and was working at All India Radio in Delhi as the director of the network's instrumental ensemble. Encouraged by his mother, my father came

to Delhi and took up a small job in the Congress office. He spent most of his time in Panditji's tiny apartment at Hailey Road. He was present during his long practice sessions with Annapurna Devi and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, providing accompaniment on the tanpura. Their bonding as *guru* and *shishya* endures in endearing anecdotes about "Rambhakt Hanuman and Ravibhakt Rao"!

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***My first formal lesson came rather unexpectedly in 1973 in Mysore. Right after a concert, he taught me the *chalans* of Raga Bhairav and a small composition. From then on, once a year, sometimes twice a year, I would get his attention.***”



Shubendra Rao playing with his guru, Pandit Ravi Shankar



Shubhendra Rao's father, N.R.Rama Rao with Ravi Shankar.

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***My father, N.R. Rama Rao, was one of his earliest disciples. A young science graduate, just out of his teens, he reached out to Panditji after attending a concert at the historic Bangalore Town Hall.***”

**Q: Was he already a global celebrity?**

**A:** He was certainly an Indian celebrity, recognised in the discerning music circles of Kolhapur, Pune, Belgaum, Aurangabad, Nasik, Baroda, and elsewhere. He was also a celebrated composer. The Satyajit Ray trilogy would come later, but his scores for Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946) and Chetan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* (1946) were already making waves.

**Q: You have spoken about the festive atmosphere that would set in weeks before his arrival in your hometown, Bangalore.**

**A:** Yes, it was Holi, Ganesh Chaturthi, and Diwali all rolled into one. A week before his arrival, our small home would be spruced up. He was our god. In our *puja* room, there were only three deities who were worshipped — Dattatreya, Adi Shankaracharya, and *guru* Ravi Shankar. My father's *guru bhakti* was unmatched. My mother, an accomplished Carnatic vocalist, was as devoted to him as my father.

**Q: Do you remember your first interaction with him?**

**A:** Yes, vividly. My first memory of him is from 1968 when I was not even four years old but had begun running my fingers on my father's sitar. *Gurujii* came to our home to meet my grandmother, accompanied

by Ustad Alla Rakha, and his son, Shubhendra, after whom I was named. There was a buzz surrounding this visit. His US and Europe music tours, topped by his incredible performance at the Monterey International Pop Festival in California in 1967, had turned him into a global music icon. He was christened 'the godfather of world music' by George Harrison. I remember playing a small composition in Raga Yaman for him. Impressed with my talent, he taught me the right posture of holding the sitar, since I was keeping it on the floor like a Saraswati veena. My first formal lesson came rather unexpectedly in 1973 in Mysore. Right after a concert, he taught me the *chalans* of Raga Bhairav and a small composition. From then on, once a year, sometimes twice a year, I would get his attention. He was by now an unassailable superstar, his gift for melody was being likened to that of Mozart and Beethoven, and he was collaborating with maestros like Yehudi Menuhin, John Coltrane, Jean-Pierre Louis Rampal, and iconic composer Phillip Glass.

**Q: When did the regular classes start?**

**A:** I continued my *taalim* under him by visiting him in different places in India, whenever he had time for me. I remember being given lessons in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, and Chennai. I managed



Shubhendra Rao playing with a Western orchestra

to get his undivided attention in 1982 when he was stationed in Bombay for two weeks to work on the soundtrack of Richard Attenborough's film on Gandhi. Every morning, despite his tight schedule, he would mentor me for three hours. We would have lunch — his favourite homemade fish curry, rice, dal, vegetables, and a small Bengali sweet — before rushing to the studio.

**Q: Any special anecdotes that you would like to share?**

**A:** Oh, yes. It was 1983, just before a concert with Ustad Ali Akbar Khan at the Shanmukhananda Auditorium in Bombay. It was a red letter day in the city's concert calendar. The hall, with a seating capacity of more than 2,500, was packed, with dozens of people sitting or standing in the aisle. While driving to the venue, we noticed a huge anti-drug hoarding. Guruji pointed to it and made me promise not to ever succumb to the temptation to take drugs. "Make music your opiate for all times," he said. That was also the year when I first played with him in a sitar ensemble at a festival at the Siri Fort in Delhi, in memory of Uday Shankar.

**Q: You moved to Delhi in 1984 to study music in an unfettered way...**

**A:** Yes, his place at 95 Lodhi Estate became my *gurukul* for nine years. The other resident disciple when I moved in was my *gurubhai*, the renowned sarod player, Parthasarathy Choudhury. Guruji would spend 80-90 days in Delhi each year. The two of us ran the house and submitted ourselves to the rigour of hours of *riyaaz*. Guruji remained present even in his absence. In true *guru-shishya parampara*, we surrendered ourselves to him. For him, music was a spiritual quest, a way of life. It became our quest too. He nurtured our innate talent and gave us deep insight into what it entails to become a complete artiste, as only he could.

**Q: You have often said that the date that remains etched in your memory, that you cherish most, is the day you shared the stage with your guru in the Convention Hall of Ashok Hotel.**

**A:** Yes, it was so unexpected. He was supposed to play with Pandit

Uma Shankar Mishra, who, for some reason, had dropped out. Guruji asked me to tune the sitar at noon. I failed to comprehend what was in store. It was much later that it dawned upon me that I was the chosen one. I was ecstatic, in seventh heaven. After the concert, he said that it was a good start and that I had played well. After that, I frequently toured and performed with him, and assisted him in his orchestral compositions.

**Q: Any other special reminiscences?**

**A:** His extraordinary warmth and generosity. He loved Saskia [renowned Dutch cellist, composer, and educationist Saskia Rao-de Haas] and her music. He could not attend our wedding in Bangalore. He and his wife, Sukanya, whom we fondly call Chinnamma, surprised us by organising a party for us later. Another special memory is of his visit to the hospital a day after Ishaan, our son, was born. He held Ishaan in his arms and blessed him. And I vividly remember our last meeting in 2011. I had just finished a three-month US concert tour with Saskia and was leaving for Mexico. Guruji was not well. I was with him for two hours in a hospital near his home in California when he said, "Beta, I feel bad I could not give you the time you needed. I was busy with my own concerts at that point. I am really glad that you are doing well. I am confident that you will carry forward my legacy. My blessings are with you."

**Q: In a video that is now viral, he is seen performing at the Terrace Theatre in Long Beach, California, a few weeks before his death. He is seen arriving in a wheelchair, wearing a nasal cannula. He looks extremely frail, but that does not stop him from playing a raga, Pancharanga, a raga created by him. He is aided by his daughter, Anoushka. He seems to know that this will be his last live performance.**

**A:** Yes, it was an evening resonant with raw emotions. At the end of the performance, there were tears streaming from our eyes. It was an event few will forget. He has gone but his music will endure ... his incredible, unforgettable music. ■

## शशि कुमार झा

लेखक आर्थिक विषयों के जाने-माने विशेषज्ञ और स्वतंत्र पत्रकार हैं। अतीत में वह दैनिक हिंदुस्तान और अन्य राष्ट्रीय समाचार पत्रों से जुड़े रहे हैं।



# बुनियादी ढांचा क्षेत्र को लगे लगे चार चांद

प्रभावी एवं विवेकपूर्ण तरीके से सरकारी तंत्र की गैर-कोर परिसंपत्तियों के प्रबंधन तथा मुद्रीकरण की दिशा में राष्ट्रीय भूमि मुद्रीकरण निगम (एनएलएमसी) एक प्रभावी कदम है

केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने नेशनल लैंड मोनटाइज़ेशन कारपोरेशन (एनएलएमसी) अर्थात् राष्ट्रीय भूमि मुद्रीकरण निगम को मंजूरी दे दी है। एनएलएमसी की स्थापना भारत की पूर्ण स्वामित्व वाली कंपनी के रूप में की जाएगी। इसमें आरंभिक शेयर पूंजी 5,000 करोड़ रुपये की तथा पेड-अप शेयर पूंजी 150 करोड़ रुपये की होगी। इसका उद्देश्य अधिशेष यानी सरप्लस जमीन, सरकारी उपक्रम वाले भवन, जो बेचे जा रहे हैं या बंद होने की कगार पर हैं, तथा सरकारी एजेन्सियों का मुद्रीकरण (मोनटाइज़ेशन) करना है।

मुद्रीकरण का अर्थ है कि किसी परिसंपत्ति, ऋण आदि को नकदी या ऐसे रूप में लाना है जिसे आसानी से नकदी के रूप में तबदील किया जा सके। किसी परिसंपत्ति या व्यवसाय आदि से राजस्व अर्जित करने की प्रक्रिया या कदम को मुद्रीकरण कहा जाता है। आर्थिक शब्दावली में इसे इस प्रकार भी समझा जा सकता है कि सरकार डेट ट्रेजरी की खरीद के द्वारा देश के डेट (ऋण) को मोनेटाइज कर रही है। इससे धन की आपूर्ति बढ़ेगी तथा इसके परिणामस्वरूप, डेट धन में तबदील या मोनेटाइज हो जाएगा।

ऐसी उम्मीद है कि सरकार गैर प्रमुख संपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण के साथ अप्रयुक्त तथा कम उपयोग में लाई जाने वाली परिसंपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण के जरिये उल्लेखनीय मात्रा में राजस्व जुटा पाने में सक्षम होगी। वर्तमान में, सीपीएसई यानी केंद्रीय सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के उपक्रमों के पास भारी मात्रा में सरप्लस, बिना उपयोग वाली तथा कम उपयोग में लाई जाने वाली गैर प्रमुख परिसंपत्तियां बहुतायत में हैं। ऐसी सीपीएसई जिनका रणनीतिक विनिवेश होना है या जो बंद होने की हालत में, उनकी सरप्लस जमीन तथा गैर प्रमुख परिसंपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण से उनके मूल्य को प्रकट करने या जानने में सहूलियत होगी। एनएलएमसी ऐसी परिसंपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण की प्रक्रिया आरंभ करेगी तथा इस कार्य में तेजी लाने में सरकार की सहायता करेगी। यह बड़ी मात्रा में निजी क्षेत्र के निवेश को आकर्षित करने, नई आर्थिक गतिविधियों की शुरुआत करने, स्थानीय अर्थव्यवस्था को बढ़ावा देने तथा आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक बुनियादी ढांचों के लिए वित्तीय संसाधनों को उत्पन्न करने में इन कम उपयोग

वाली परिसंपत्तियों का उत्पादक उपयोग करने में सक्षम बनाएंगी।

गौरतलब है कि जहां पीएसबी तथा पीएसयू के निजीकरण की प्रक्रिया को कई स्तरों पर चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है, सरकार की बेकार पड़ी भूमि के मुद्रीकरण के लिए विशेष कौशलों तथा विशेषज्ञता की जरूरत होगी। यह दायित्व इस नई एजेन्सी का होगा। अभी तक, सीपीएसई ने 3,400 एकड़ भूमि तथा अन्य गैर प्रमुख परिसंपत्तियों को मुद्रीकरण के लिए संदर्भित किया है जिनमें एमटीएनएल, बीएसएनएल, बी एंड आर, बीपीसीएल, बीईएमएल, एचएमटी लिमिटेड, इंस्ट्रुमेंटेशन लिमिटेड आदि जैसी कंपनियां शामिल हैं।

एनएलएमसी का कार्य केंद्रीय सरकार तथा केंद्रीय सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र उपक्रम के स्वामित्व वाली जमीनों के लिए एक ऐसेट मैनेजर के रूप में काम करता है। इसे कई स्रोतों से मिले सुझावों के अनुरूप उनका निवेश करने, लीज पर देने या परिसंपत्तियों को किराये पर देने या उन्हें मोनेटाइज करने की स्वतंत्रता है। यह वाणिज्यिक या आवासीय उद्देश्यों के लिए परिसंपत्ति का निर्माण करने के लिए स्वतंत्र है। प्रकट रूप में, इसकी आवश्यकता इसलिए पड़ी क्योंकि सरकारी तंत्र में गैर-कोर परिसंपत्तियों के प्रबंधन तथा मुद्रीकरण की जिम्मेदारी लेने के लिए अपेक्षित कौशल सीमित है। इसी कमी को देखते हुए वित्त मंत्री श्रीमती निर्मला सीतारमन ने बजट भाषण में अंतरराष्ट्रीय सर्वश्रेष्ठ प्रचलनों के अनुरूप, प्रभावी एवं विवेकपूर्ण तरीके से भूमि तथा अन्य गैर कोर परिसंपत्तियों का मुद्रीकरण करने के लिए अपेक्षित क्षमता तथा विशेषज्ञता के साथ एक स्पेशल परपज़ वेहीकल (एसपीवी) की स्थापना करने की घोषणा की थी।

सरकार के परिसंपत्ति मुद्रीकरण अभियान से संबंधित किए गए एक सर्वे के अनुसार, वित्त वर्ष 2021-22 से 2024-25 की चार वर्ष की अवधि के दौरान केंद्रीय सरकार की कोर परिसंपत्तियों के माध्यम से कुल 6 लाख करोड़ रुपये के मूल्य के बराबर की मुद्रीकरण क्षमता है। इनमें सड़क, रेलवे, बिजली, तेल तथा गैस पाइपलाइन और दूरसंचार जैसे पांच शीर्ष सेक्टर शामिल हैं जिनकी इसके कुल मूल्य में लगभग

ऐसी उम्मीद है कि सरकार गैर प्रमुख संपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण के साथ अप्रयुक्त तथा कम उपयोग में लाई जाने वाली परिसंपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण के जरिये उल्लेखनीय मात्रा में राजस्व जुटा पाने में सक्षम होगी। वर्तमान में, सीपीएसई यानी केंद्रीय सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के उपक्रमों के पास भारी मात्रा में सरप्लस, बिना उपयोग वाली तथा कम उपयोग में लाई जाने वाली गैर प्रमुख परिसंपत्तियां बहुतायत में हैं

83 प्रतिशत की भागीदारी है। सर्वे में कहा गया कि सरकार द्वारा लागू नई सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र उपक्रम नीति तथा परिसंपत्ति मुद्रीकरण रणनीति निजीकरण तथा रणनीतिक विनिवेश की दिशा में उसकी प्रतिबद्धता की पुष्टि करती है।

गौरतलब है कि जहां कोर परिसंपत्तियों का संचालन नीति आयोग द्वारा किया जा रहा है, गैर कोर परिसंपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण के लिए पहल निवेश तथा निवेश और लोक परिसंपत्ति प्रबंधन विभाग (डीआईपीएम) द्वारा संचालित किया जा रहा है। गैर कोर परिसंपत्तियों के मुद्रीकरण का उद्देश्य अभी तक उपयोग में न लाए गए या उपयोग में कम लाए गए परिसंपत्तियों के मूल्य की संभावनाओं को व्यापक रूप से खोलना है तथा इस इक्विटी पर रिटर्न पैदा करना है जितना सरकार ने उन पर निवेश किया है। सरकार की कोशिश कोविड महामारी के बाद अर्थव्यवस्था को फिर से पटरी पर लाने के लिए आवश्यक राजस्व जुटाने के लिए सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की कंपनियों का निजीकरण करना तथा युवाओं के लिए बड़ी संख्या में रोजगारों का सृजन करना है। ■

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## Flavours

# SWEET DELIGHT

BY RUKMA SALUJA

## WITH ALL THINGS DESSERT

*Meetha/misthti/sihi thindi...is almost everyone's guilty pleasure. We give in to it despite the naysayers. And why not? Indulging a sweet tooth is nirvana to many and guilt be damned*

## DONUTATION

Mumbai / +91 98677 6090 / @donutation

Nidah, Amreen and Fatema found the donuts from mother Sukaina Merchants's home catering business were the most popular. The lockdown gave them time to experiment, and so, they added 15-odd flavours to mom's basic plain donuts recipe, offered to customise and a business was born: Donutation.

For the sisters and co-founders of Donutation the best thing about desserts is that they are like childhood, the best and bright moments of your life you wish could've lasted forever.

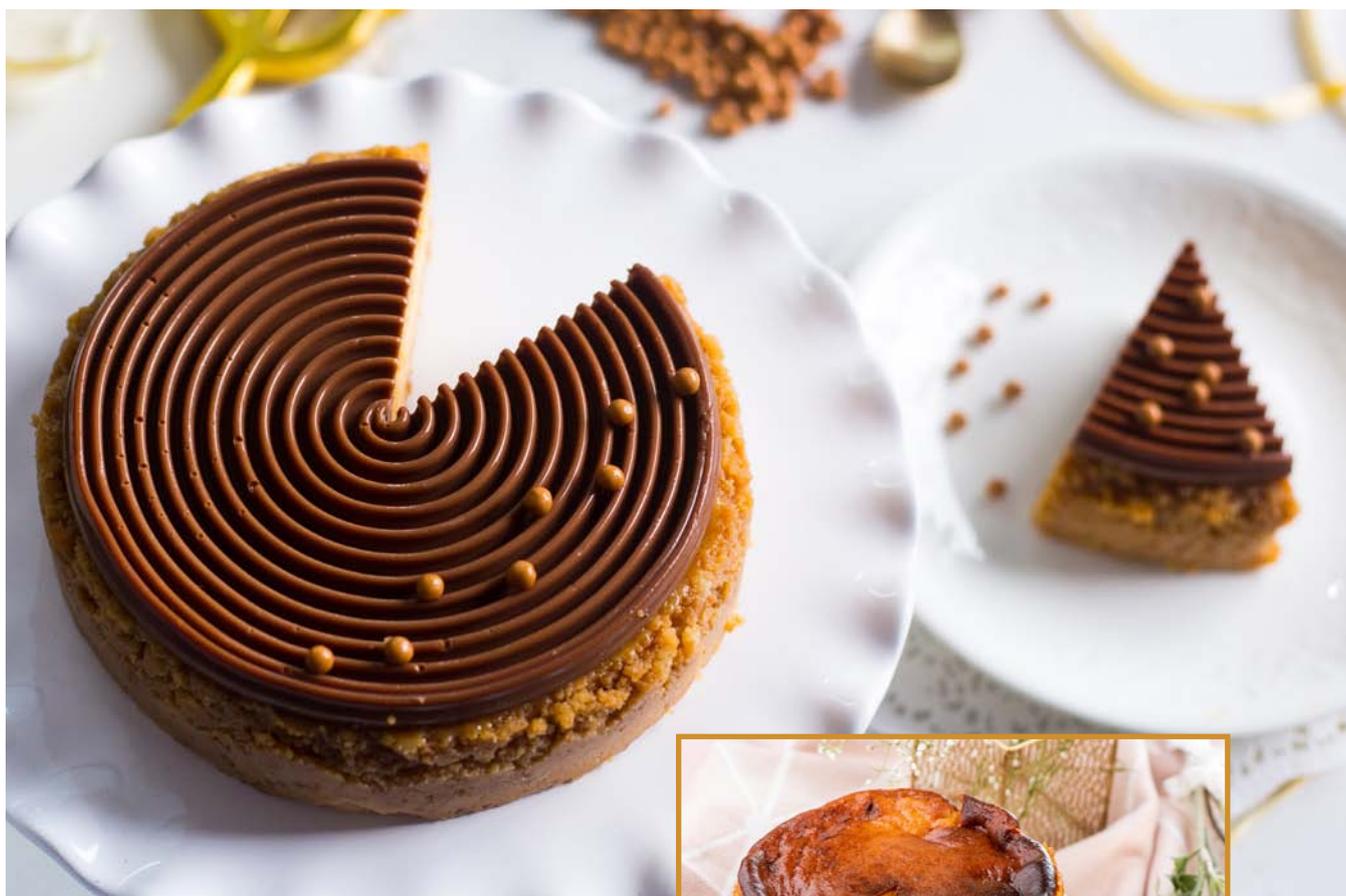
**You can't go wrong with...**

**Nutella filled donuts** *does a bestseller need a reason?*

**The secret for the perfect donut?**

Kneading until you get the fluffiest, softest, smoothest dough





## LOVE & CHEESECAKE

Defence Colony, Delhi / +91 9818635135 /  
@loveandcheesecake

At Love & Cheesecake that after 10 years in Mumbai has opened in Delhi, there's a flavour to meet any mood. With 56 flavours of cheesecake on the menu, you can't really doubt the claim, particularly not when in addition to decadent chocolate cakes, confectionery items of daily breads and cookies, you can get savoury snacks as well like sandwiches, quiches, puffs and more.

Ruchyeta Bhatia, co-founder of Love & Cheesecake, borrows a quote from Chef Edward Lee about her favourite food item: "Dessert is like a feel-good song and the best ones make you dance." That's how I feel about desserts, cheesecakes in particular, she says. There's one for every mood, and so much room for flavour and ingredient experimentation that just elevates the moment with each bite. Desserts and sweetmeats are truly the best pick-me-ups; they amplify every celebration and are also the perfect delectable ending to a soul-satisfying meal!

### ALL THINGS DESSERT AND CONFECTIONERY

- **An entry-level flavour for cheesecake?** Original NY Baked Cheesecake *mild and easy on the palate*
- **One for the advanced palate?** Goat's Cheese & Rosemary Cheesecake *there's nothing like this one out there*
- **A pick-me-up flavour?** Baklava Cheesecake *for an instant fix*
- **I'm treating myself flavour?** Baileys Cheesecake *decadence in every bite*
- **I'm in love flavour?** Burnt Basque *for the connection between heart and soul*
- **F&%k you flavour?** Tequila & Lime *you wanna have fun, right?*



## ESTELLA

Juhu, Mumbai / +91 79999 98212/ +91 79999 98232 /  
@Estella Mumbai

For Syesha Kapoor, with Estella, the best thing about desserts is that they are irresistible and perfect to indulge one's guilty pleasures.

### What flies off the shelf?

**Decadent Whipped Chocolate and Earl Grey Tea Torte served with Flamed Kissed Peach and Salted Caramel Quenelle** how can you go wrong with the delicious burst of flavours and textures as you look out at the beach



## OPA KIPOS

Worli, Mumbai / +917208881161/62/63 / @oppa.mumbai

Hitesh Keswani, Founder & Director, Silver Beach Entertainment and Hospitality / Opa Kipos, says the OPA Sundae is a treat for the entire table. You can see how much fun the guests have cracking open the baklava casing to get to the centre of the dish. And then the speed with which it is devoured.

People come back for? OPA Baklava Sundae *causes sweet sweet excitement*

Why it's great for a making up date (after a quarrel) *sharing dessert that causes a sweet fight to get to the best part of the dish*

## KYLIN EXPERIENCE

Aerocity, Delhi / +91 7042935111 / @kylinexperiencedelhi

Saurabh Khanijo, owner and MD, Kylin, loves his *meetha* and says no good meal is complete without sweet endings.

You can't possibly miss Almond Cake *can't go wrong with a classic, certainly not this Chinese one!*

Something different? Chocolate Roulade *an Asian take on dark chocolate will have you asking for more*

Addictive comfort? Chocolate Mahjong *some addictions can be forgiven and are even a comfort*



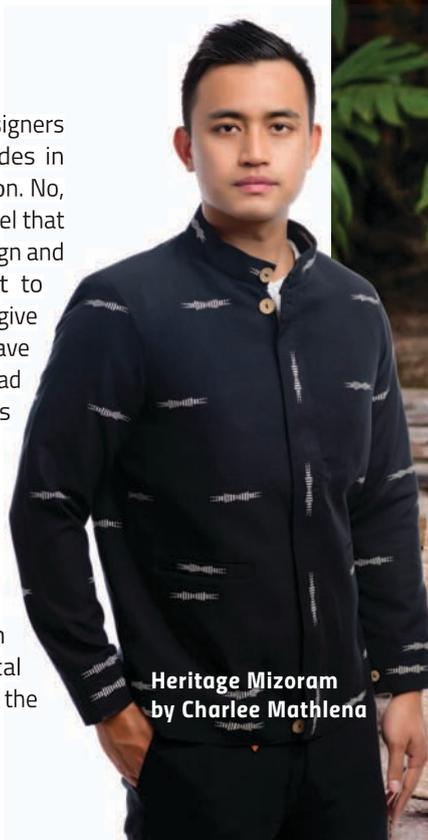
# SLOW **and** SUSTAINABLE

BY RUKMA SALUJA

Designers from the Northeast have slowly acquired a footprint in fashion among discerning clients who understand heritage

**S**ustainable fashion is not merely a buzzword for designers from the Northeast who have made giant strides in integrating local aesthetics into mainstream fashion. No, this is not a new idea. It's been around for a while. The fuel that drives these designers is the love for textiles, colour, design and fashion, it's the endless patience, and commitment to preserving culture and heritage and the burning desire to give back to society that inspires some of our designers who have done remarkable work despite the many handicaps they had to deal with. For many of them, sustainable means supporting the local weavers.

"Sustainable fashion is also slow fashion," says menswear designer Jenjum Gadi (label: **Jenjum**), based in Delhi with his roots in Arunachal Pradesh. "It is for those who understand and appreciate heritage and culture." There's a society called Exotic Echo Society in Dimapur to protect old practices. They grow and spin cotton, even dye it. "When I was asked to work on local fabrics and visited the weavers for the first time, I realised the



Heritage Mizoram  
by Charlee Mathlena

Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House





Jenjum



Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House



Jenjum

Heritage Mizoram by Charlee Mathlena



It's all about going back to your roots, about appreciating your culture and tradition, and what you have, being true to who you are, being true to yourself.

– SYIEM

richness of what we had and was determined to preserve the old techniques and heritage.”

This is laudable, considering production from the loin looms is painstakingly slow, sometimes as little as two metres of fabric a day. This is obviously not compatible with large collections, mass production, and the quick capsules that fast fashion demands. “This hit me but also opened a door as I began to think seriously about what I could do. It was an eye opener to see how some people are trying to protect an ancient practice in this way even though they are not designers.” He pauses and reflects, “This should be our collective responsibility, if you think about it. We are the ones who know clothes, design them, wear them.”

Charlee Mathlena, who works from Aizawl, doesn't use mill-made fabric for his label, **Heritage Mizoram by Charlee Mathlena**. Together with the weavers and artisans he creates the fabrics he then uses for his designs. “It is slow,” he says. “One piece may take three weeks or a month and you have to wait for the fabric to come from the looms.” This obviously precludes following the common practice of making multiple collections in a year.

Stories on food and fashion tend to be on new talent and the latest openings and launches. We were able to speak to a few designers (we weren't able to speak with many others), the front runners who struggled for years to put fashion from their respective states on the map, paving the way for younger talent. In most cases, it was ‘Lakme Fashion Week’ that gave them a platform over the years to showcase NE fashion or sustainable fashion. Winning titles in those early days gave them the fillip to dedicate their lives to a cause. “My father and grandfather are very well known in Meghalaya for doing social work,” says Daniel Syiem, co-founder and partner, **Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House**. “I found that I could also give back to society and promote our culture and traditions through fashion.” He has adopted a number of villages in Meghalaya, helped set up looms and provides training, which has sometimes birthed new entrepreneurs.

Pollution levels in fashion are notoriously high as everyone knows. Slow fashion, according to Mathlena, sustains the artisans who make the fabric and contribute towards the industry, who do not pollute too much but are sustained by what they do. This in turn is sustained by certain people who like handwoven fabrics and handmade clothes. “Sustainable fashion is sustained by loyal clients who want your collection season after season, although we don't do collections for every season,” he says.

Syiem concurs. “I have a niche market. My clients understand what I do and value it. I work mostly with Ryndia, a local silk which is very expensive.” His silhouettes are inspired by the traditional jainsem and jenkasha worn by the women in Meghalaya. He turns these into contemporary glamorous drapes.

The garments must be textile-based. Look at our textiles rather than fashion and style. Always have an Indian element in it.

– GADI

Syiem uses only vegetable dyes. These don't allow for sharp colours but he's okay with that. "That's the USP of the brand. That's what makes Ryndia so unique. It has an unfinished rough texture but the fabric is soft and smooth on the skin. The colours, I agree, are not too bright; they are dull earthy tones, which I love. These properties of Ryndia differentiate it from other fabrics."

Mathlena, too, doesn't strictly follow colour forecasts from the fashion world in the West. He makes his own colour scheme keeping in mind trends in Europe, but doesn't always follow the au courant international colour palette. "I use a lot of black and white, which is always popular, and a lot of pastels and neutral tones. Softer colours work better nowadays."

The way they incorporate local sensibilities to mainstream fashion varies. For Mathlena, it's important to be genuine and true to his local roots and sensibility. He takes Mizo weaves to the national and international space. "One needs to understand tribal culture to be authentic," he says. "I take up local crafts and bring them to mainstream markets by joining slow fashion or sustainable fashion. This has a niche market." He uses traditional motifs keeping them classic or giving them a new spin. The fabrics are the same but the motifs are different. The designs are woven into the fabrics. Weavers in villages neighbouring Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, weave his designs. "When you put traditional motifs, they work the best. It's amazing that even people who do not understand Mizo culture will be attracted to traditional motifs and weaves."

Syiem too works with the weavers but tends to take inspiration from the clothes worn by the women in Meghalaya. His silhouettes are influenced by the jainsem and jenkasha, the traditional attire of the women in Meghalaya. These he transforms into elegant and contemporary designs.

Gadi finds it difficult to pinpoint this or that motif and its significance. While Arunachal has many tribes, he is from the Galo. "We celebrate Mopin, a harvest festival in spring during which we wear white, the colour of our tribe. It denotes purity and productivity, spring, new life. The patterns are not so important. It is the colours that are more important." Different colours indicate different tribes. In his recent line he's mixed Mughal and Rajasthani patterns with tribal motifs from Arunachal. "Maybe in time this mixing of our local and indigenous designs with those from other states will become my signature style," he says. "Perhaps that's the way to commercialise and popularise NE designs. These haven't been explored and used, so there's something new."

Waste fabric left over from cutting garments is used in accessories by all of them, or as detailing on cushion covers and runners. Gadi even makes standalone pieces from waste fabric. These are one-of-a-kind and tend to fly off the shelves. ■



Jenjum

Daniel Syiem's Ethnic Fashion House





Why do designer garments have to be greatly expensive? You have to respect the talent and show respect to a design. Why mark up the price? But that's my philosophy. When I leave this world I'd like to leave a legacy, which will remain.

- MATHLENA

Heritage Mizoram by Charlee Mathlena

# SECRET HAVEN

Its spectacular wonders, natural and otherwise, make Odisha an enviable, and yet relatively 'undiscovered' destination

BY SUMAN TARAFDAR

**R**arely are slogans so fitting. 'Odisha — India's best kept secret' is the epithet the state tourism uses, with some justification. Apart from Bengalis thronging Puri to visit the Jagannath temple, the state is not on anyone's tourism wish list.

Few realise that Odisha has its own 'Golden Triangle' with arguably the largest concentration of temples in an assortment of sizes. In coastal Odishan towns, you could be anywhere, and a Jagannath statue would be within throwing distance. Cautionary note: throw anything only at your peril; this deity reigns supreme in the state. Odisha has India's largest saltwater

lake. Some of the grandest rock-cut shrines. Dense, dense forests cover the state, housing some of the gentlest inhabitants. Massive rivers criss-cross the state, and are home to some of the nation's epochal dams. It's a large state, and the interiors are dotted with gentle hills (Eastern Ghats) and picturesque valleys. Crafts abound — from Sambalpuri and ikat sarees to pattachitra, ganjifa and much more. No, I haven't forgotten the cuisine, which, yes, is similar to the neighbouring, more dominant Bengali cuisine, though with some notable points of divergence — in ingredients, dishes and even nomenclature.

If you have limited time and can see only

one temple, let it be the **Konark temple**. Yes, it was one of the earliest Indian monuments to be on UNESCO's list, way back in 1984. Built during the rule of Narasimhadev I (1238-64) of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, even in its ruined, 'non-living' temple status, it is awe inspiring in its conception, design and sculptural detail. It's an entire complex, and despite the central edifice having collapsed, any visitor is awestruck. Akbar's courtier and biographer, Abul Fazl, who saw it in the 16th century, in its complete form, said that "even those who are difficult to please stand astonished at its sight". Rabindranath Tagore, on witnessing just its ruined shape, said, "here



Chilika lake

Odisha has India's largest saltwater lake. Some of the grandest rock-cut shrines. Dense, dense forests cover the state, housing some of the gentlest inhabitants. Massive rivers criss-cross the state, and are home to some of the nation's epochal dams.

the language of stone surpasses that of man".

Incidentally, the Konark and Jagannath temples, along with the Lingaraj temple in state capital Bhubaneswar form Odisha's **Golden Triangle**, and are mainly visited by religious tourists. Marginally older than Konark, it is another example of the Kalinga

style of architecture, marked by a prominent *vimana*, which houses the sanctum sanctorum, and a *jagamohana* or assembly hall where devotees gather to pray. Note, all these temples consist of many structures that lead up to the main and, unlike in the Dravida temples, the tallest structure.

For a more live temple related attraction,

visit Puri during the **Rath Yatra**, but a health warning — you have to be skilled at avoiding being run over at one of the most crowded parades anywhere. Jagannath, along with brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra, is carried in parades for three weeks — in summer, think June / July. Each of the three deities gets their (temporary)



*The Konark and Jagannath temples, along with the Lingaraj temple in state capital Bhubaneswar, form Odisha's Golden Triangle, and are mainly visited by religious tourists*



## GOOD TO KNOW



### WEATHER

Oct-March is the best time to visit, as the weather is pleasant



### ACCOMMODATION

Check out the Odisha Tourism options on their website [odishatourism.gov.in/content/tourism/en/plan/food-accommodation](http://odishatourism.gov.in/content/tourism/en/plan/food-accommodation)



### DISTANCE

One of the main benefits of Odisha is that the travel distances between worthwhile destinations isn't too long. The Golden Triangle of Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konark takes a maximum of 1.5 hours. Dhenkanal is also just 1.5 hours west of Bhubaneswar and Ratnagiri just two hours to the northeast



### PLAN AHEAD

Odisha Tourism is promoting the state in a big way. Visit their website for exciting options: museums, free heritage walks, beaches and parks as well as well-organised festivals and events that run throughout the year



Konark temple

brightly adorned chariot, which is then dragged by thousands of chosen devotees, accompanied by elephants, to their summer home. Just in case you were wondering, yes, the word 'juggernaut' traces its roots to this event. Puri, however, is busy with thronging devotees almost throughout the year, but especially in winter, when the aforementioned devotees can have some more secular fun at the sandy beaches.

For more historic pursuits, you can't better the **Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves**. These 33 ornately carved caves date back to the first century BCE and served as residential blocks for Jain monks during the reign of King Kharavela. The cave walls are embellished with carvings and sculptures as well as the odd inscription. For a panoramic view of the state capital, clamber up to the top of Khandagiri.

To see one of Jawaharlal Nehru's 'temples of modern India' look no further than **Hirakud dam**, the longest earthen dam in the world and one of the first major

multipurpose river valley projects started after India's independence. A popular tourism site for its abundance of flora and fauna, the dam's significance as an icon of modern India remains to this day.

With a diversity of terrain, Odisha's natural splendours are just as prominent. In recent years, **Olive Ridley turtles** have come to symbolise the need for ecological conservation, which is happening. In one of nature's most extraordinary annual spectacles, every February, hundreds of thousands of female turtles swim from the Pacific Ocean to crawl onto the sand at a beach in the Rushikulya delta to lay eggs. Task done, they once again make the epic journey back.

Odisha's natural bounty means there are a number of wildlife reserves. Two vie for most attention — the **Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary** — a mix of mangrove forests and wetlands, making for a unique ecosystem spread over the Brahmani-Baitarani delta. It is said to have about 200



Udayagiri caves



Puri beach



Odissi dancer at the Sun Temple

species of birds, along with rhesus monkeys, saltwater crocodiles, monitor lizards, and more. Winter sees many migratory birds making it their temporary abode. Expect herons, flamingoes, grebes, seagulls, storks, cormorants, darters, egrets, pelicans, adjutants, terns, skimmers, bitterns, ibises, finfoots... If you are the kind for whom wildlife equals big cats, head for **Similipal National Park**, which has the largest number of tigers in the state. Maybe make time for 55 species of mammals, 304 species of birds, 60 species of reptiles, 21 species of frogs, 38 species of fish and 164 species of butterflies that also call it home.

Another natural wonder is the **Chilika lake** — not quite a lake but the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest brackish water lagoon in the world. Designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1981, it is today a site with a unique ecosystem where humans with a range of mammals, birds and sea life coexist. Spread over 1,100 square km, it is the largest wintering ground for migratory waterfowl on the sub-continent.

Did I mention some of India's best **beaches** are here — relatively unspoilt stretches of golden sand without any of the

pests (human or otherwise) to be found in more popular beaches elsewhere. Puri's Golden Beach — yes, it's called that — is already a designated Blue Flag beach, and the state is planning on more beaches getting the same accreditation. Chandipur, Ramachandi, Talasari, Gopalpur, Swargadwar, Dagara, Aryapalli, Astaranga, Beleswar... On reflection, would it be better to keep the beaches of Odisha a secret, open only to those in the know, at least until the luxe lot discover them?

Yes, discover Odisha before the hordes do. Keeping this secret for long will be impossible. ■

Every  
Spice  
has a  
Story



# POTENT IMMUNITY BOOSTER

## ginger



BY KAVITA DEVGAN



@kavitadevgan

Kavita Devgan is a Delhi-based nutritionist, weight management consultant, health columnist and author of four bestsellers, *Don't Diet!*, *50 Habits of Thin People*, *Ultimate Grandmother Hacks*, *Fix It With Foods*, *The Don't Diet Plan*.

**G**inger is your gut's fast friend and is gastro-protective. It helps block acid and suppresses infection-causing bacteria *Helicobacter pylori*. Some research even shows that ginger is actually far more effective than drugs for preventing the formation of ulcers. Wow! Ayurveda, in fact, has always known about this spice and recommended it wholeheartedly. Traditionally, it has been used to soothe gastric disturbances like colic, stomach upsets, gas, diarrhoea, nausea and more.

There's more! If you are worried about your genetic propensity for arthritis, then you must adopt ginger liberally. It contains potent anti-inflammatory compounds called gingerols, which work magic. Clinical studies have reported those suffering from arthritis muscular discomfort experience relief from pain and/or swelling after consuming ginger regularly. Easy pill, this one.

Some reports suggest that ginger provides protection against cancers, particularly colorectal cancer.

It is known to promote healthy sweating even during the cold months, so works as a brilliant detox agent.

Research about its effect on blood sugar is in nascent stages, but reports say that ginger may have powerful anti-diabetic properties. Once proven, that truly would be the icing on the cake.

It is well known that oxidative stress and chronic inflammation can accelerate the ageing process and hasten Alzheimer's disease and age-related cognitive decline. Ginger can help cut both stress and inflammation to size.

Known to be a wonderful immune system booster, it helps keep away colds and flu and even treat them. It's a good combat agent for upper respiratory tract infections and works on coughs, sore throats and bronchitis like a dream.

Ginger is known to provide pain relief from migraine by blocking prostaglandins (which stimulate muscle contractions), controlling inflammation in the blood vessels, and impacting some hormones. ■

**The compounds gingerol, shogaol and zingerone lend it pungency.**

- **Gingerol is the active component in fresh ginger**
- **Zingerone, the least pungent compound, is formed when gingerol is cooked**
- **Shogaol, twice as pungent, is formed when gingerol is dried**



## GINGER TEA

Steep one or two 1/2-inch slices of fresh ginger in a cup of hot water. Add a pinch of pepper and some honey



## GINGER DRESSING

Combine ginger, soy sauce, olive oil and garlic to make a wonderful salad dressing

## FRESH PICKLE

Look for tender ginger. Freshly harvested  
Julienne it into thin sticks

Add some chopped fresh green chillies for a nice kick

Put in glass bottle. Squeeze lime juice generously. Add salt

It turns a beautiful pink colour and is ready to eat with hot dal-chawal or crispy paranthas off the *tawa*



## ALLAM PACHADI ANDHRA STYLE GINGER CHUTNEY

Take 6-7 pieces of ginger, chop & fry till golden & cool  
Blend to smooth paste (no water to be added)

Make a paste of tamarind pulp, jaggery, chilli powder, turmeric, fenugreek powder, and salt to taste

In a pan fry mustard seeds, chopped garlic, curry leaves, dry red chillies. You can add a spoonful of mixed lentils like urad, channa & yellow moong to the pan too and fry

To this add the ginger paste and the tamarind paste

Store in a dry glass jar

This ginger chutney is brilliant as a dip with snacks too

# ATMOSPHERIC NATURE-INSPIRED interiors are the trend

Bringing nature into our living spaces is the best antidote for the ills of our urban lives. Wellness-minded interior design helps us discover ourselves



BY  
MALATI K. VIJAY

The writer is a Bengaluru-based freelance journalist and content consultant. Formerly with the *Times of India*, *Economic Times* and *Livingetc India*, she writes primarily on design, art and lifestyle. She also enjoys giving a healthy twist to various cuisines.

Maybe the term 'nature-inspired design' is a misnomer. Writers, artists, architects and designers have always used nature as a muse. The natural world is an infinite, evergreen mood board from where we can pick the perfect combinations of colours, textures, patterns, shapes and sensory cues. It never ceases to stir our imagination, and it never fails to extend its healing hand towards anybody who turns to it for succour.

This explains why nature-inspired design never really goes out of fashion.

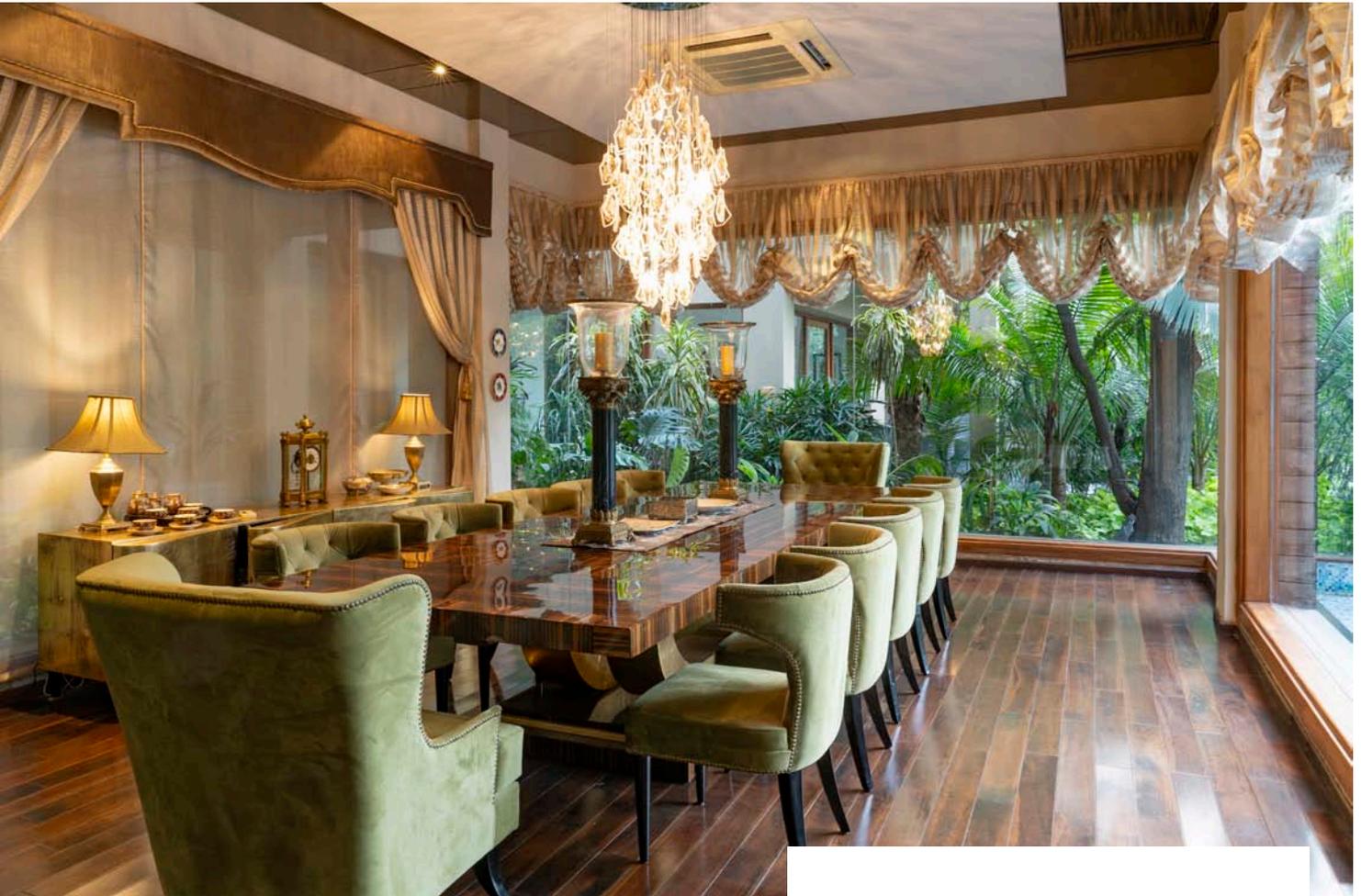
When the going is good, man has a penchant for drifting away into his self-made, artificial world. At the height of technological advancement and modern innovations in the past decades, we have got caught amid concrete jungles, thereby distancing ourselves from our original habitat, only to be disenchanted and to yearn for it. This only goes to show that our connection with nature is a primeval one and is unbreakable.

"Human beings are inherently biophilic. Nature represents a state of egolessness, and in embracing it, we feel calm and relaxed. Architecture and design have the potential to bridge the gap between human beings and nature. By changing the way our

buildings and spaces are designed, we can reclaim our lost bond with nature," says New Delhi-based architect Aparna Kaushik, known for nestling the sprawling luxury farmhouses she builds amid lush greenery.

Being in the lap of nature has been proven to be the best antidote for the ills of our urban lives. Witness the exodus of city dwellers to natural retreats for a spell of fresh air and calming greenery during weekends. This, of course, came to an abrupt halt with the onset of the pandemic, encouraging people to surround themselves with organic design elements. Not only is nature-inspired design good for de-stressing and boosting mood, it also underlines our need to live in harmony with nature — an exigency, as we inch towards a climate emergency. Such environments offer a sustained interaction with the natural world, creating a sense of well-being.

During the pandemic, when we were missing the outdoors, the cottage core aesthetic with its promise of an organic and relaxed design style brought solace to many across the world. With people exchanging notes on social media on decorating their homes with plants and organic materials, nature-inspired design has now turned into a movement.



## Let the sunlight in

Nothing can match the revitalising energy sunlight brings. Not only does it brighten interiors, and create an airy and expansive feeling, it also stimulates the 'happy hormone', serotonin, in the human body. "Design that is in consonance with nature ensures that it brings in enough sunlight and ventilation into the building. This helps cut down the use of electricity, making the space more sustainable," says Kaushik. By installing mirrors strategically, and replacing walls with glass partitions, you can direct more sunlight into your interiors.



## Play with organic elements

Spaces done up using natural materials tend to have an inherently soothing effect on the mind. Wood, stones, natural textiles, plants and foliage... they are instant reminders of our bond with our habitat. "Organic elements help create character-filled sanctuaries that are a far cry from the hubbub of city life, and immediately reconnect you with nature," says interior designer Saba Kapoor of Nivasa. Her own home in Gurugram is composed of natural wood and earthy materials for the flooring, furniture, and also for the intricate details, evoking a raw yet refined mood. "We feel strongly about indigenous materials and local workmanship, so the overarching theme was sustainability. Sunlight pours in from all sides, and the large windows offer sweeping views of the verdant expanse outside," she says.



Images courtesy of Nivasa

Images courtesy of Sarita Handa



## Bring in nature's imprints

Home décor is not complete until it connects you back to your natural habitat. Colours, textures, motifs and shapes borrowed from nature help you achieve this. Curved furniture, botanicals, tropical patterns evoke the same feeling as being amid nature. You can even use the colour green in your space to help calm the mind and create a feeling of equilibrium. "Vibrant colours, floral and leaf motifs bring the joy of nature into our homes. Combine these with natural materials, hand-crafted elements and lush house plants, and you have a very refreshing environment," says Suparna Handa, managing director, Sarita Handa. Their store in Delhi is a good example of nature-inspired design.





Images courtesy of A Square Designs

## Enjoy an indoor-outdoor lifestyle

One more way to bring nature closer home is to enjoy the outdoor spaces attached to homes. Spruce up your terrace, patio, balcony and garden space with greenery and comfortable seating. You can even enclose a terrace space with glass to create a climate-controlled spot that can be used irrespective of the season, like this terrace space in a Kolkata apartment designed by Ajay Arya of A Square Designs. "The glass house connects the home with its green exteriors. The place is perfect for lazy afternoon tea, or for a relaxed party time with friends and family under the starry sky," he says.

## Decorate with plants

We don't need to underline the many benefits of decorating with plants. They infuse the spaces with a sumptuous feeling, a positive energy, and purify the air too. "House plants accentuate the feeling of the outdoors becoming a part of the indoors," says Kapoor. Whether you want to decorate with the minimalistic kokedamas or ornamental miniature plants, bold

sculptural ones or just mix it all up in jungle-esque flair, the pop of green never fails to impress. If space is a constraint, you can stack them up on the wall or hang them from the ceiling. By picking up low-maintenance indoor plants, you can have a flourishing green patch within your home. Don't hesitate to take them into every part of the home. A herb garden in the kitchen,



Images courtesy of 42mm Architecture



a living wall made of moss in the bathroom, are transformational. "Greenery in a space helps you infuse a subconscious sense of serenity. From a live moss wall to potted plants to stacked planters to an artwork depicting lush greenery, we have used them all in our bathroom designs," say Priyanka Khanna and Rudraksh Charan of 42mm Architecture. ■

Young  
&  
Restless

# SEX, LIES & VIDEOTAPE

The quintessential new hot topic in town, waiting to be discussed in every relationship, the only question being asked everywhere I've been. Couples, both straight and gay, even those who've been married for a while: "Can we videotape it?"

**S**omewhere between swiping on apps and walking down the aisle, young men and women decided to film each other in bed, and before anyone could figure out when and how this started, it had become a norm. I don't know a single couple who, at the very least, hasn't considered taping themselves, if not already having done so. It's the new pandemic — sex tapes are back in style and it won't be long before everyone's changing positions to get their profiles right.

"It's erotic to know you're being recorded while making love. You'd be surprised how much more exciting the act gets, especially if you've been married or together for a while!" Sameer Dewan (name changed) is one of Bengaluru's most celebrated start-up mavens and can always be trusted with

two things — Sensex tips and straight talk. "Once you know you're on camera, everyone's eager to do their best!"

There's also the appeal of revisiting the scene when you're alone. Pleasuring yourself watching others is so last season — it's 2022 and we're now the stars of our own favourite videos. "We first filmed ourselves when my partner was visiting his hometown for a few weeks and I wanted to capture our last encounter before he left. I can't tell you how useful it was while we were in different cities!" As one-half of a popular influencer couple in Delhi, Karun (name changed) definitely knows a thing or two about making relationships work in times of frequent travel.

So how does this work? Do you have the set-up in place before it's lights, camera and

action? What's the fun in looking at lighting while getting laid? Apparently, things are being kept organic, for now.

"No one is making porn that's going to be watched by others. It needs to be real for it to be exciting." Charu Sehejpal (name changed) is a popular stylist in Mumbai and among her many A-listers clients is a Bollywood actor who shot to fame with a recent web series. She also happens to be dating that actor and together, they've amassed a rather extensive library of home videos. "I feel it's the glue that keeps us together — we're both interested in filmmaking of a certain kind!"

It's the millennial obsession with mobile phones, I'd say. The young men and women of today just can't stay apart from their phones. No matter where they go, they're





It's the millennial obsession with mobile phones. The young men and women of today just can't stay apart from their phones. No matter where they go, they're always on the go — from the bathroom to the boardroom. Sexting while shopping, eating out and eating in.

always on the go — from the bathroom to the boardroom. Sexting while shopping, eating out and eating in. So, it wasn't long before coitus came with a side of the camera.

"I don't understand the hoopla around it. We've already embraced threesomes! In this case, there's no third person. And every couple is free to do as they please, isn't it?" It's a valid point that Suhasini Sekar (name changed), a leading food journalist from Delhi, raised when we spoke about this new trend in town. She is my go-to person every time something happens because one can always count on her to give an objective point of view. And this too involves eating, albeit of a different kind!

However, the most interesting take on all this came from a rather different age

group. One of the most revered dames of Delhi's glittering social circle; she's seen it all and definitely done it all. And while I can't tell you who she is, I can certainly share what she feels: "The only reason anyone should be taping themselves in bed is to take notes later. Any other reason is simply not good enough!" Aye, aye, Ma'am!

But in the age of revenge porn — as per the National Crime Records Bureau, between 2012 and 2014, such cases rose by a shocking 104 percent — one can't help but wonder if all these sex tapes are consensual?

Obviously, no one is going to come out and admit to taping their sexcapades without their partner's consent, so we'll just have to hope the young are being careful, while they're busy being

experimental. A few white lies aside, there's nothing fun in being on camera when you don't even know it! ■

## Who Am I?

Think of me as someone who knows the minds, hearts and bedrooms of the young Indian today. I have a social life across cities that allows me access to coveted parties, people and positions (pun absolutely intended!). Through this column, I aim to keep you abreast of how the young people of India go about their personal lives. I promise to keep it honest and to-the-point. No judgements, no prudishness.

# The way forward is **FLEXIBILITY AND REINVENTION**

Optimistic about revival of the hospitality sector, noted hotelier **VIJAY WANCHOO** has some practical suggestions to lure the traveller



As the hospitality landscape re-emerges from the lull caused by the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, hotels are bouncing back with new learnings, trends and expectations. I feel that the hotel industry has adapted to the current limitations on the operational front. As the world scripts new stories in these transitional and challenging times, industry standards are seeing churn with higher and different benchmarks, especially in the luxury and ultra-luxury segments.

We saw how the business segments — leisure, corporate, conference, etc went for a toss during the pandemic. The revenue losses were huge and hotels suffered greatly. However, hotels like The Imperial were quick to grasp the importance of being flexible while reinventing for new streams of revenue. To bring back the guests while embracing a new survival path, we must adapt, align, and strategize.

The way forward is to grab every single business opportunity and stay flexible. As one of the ultra-luxury properties in Lutyens' Delhi, for instance, we opened our venues, like the pool and other areas for elite and residential weddings. We are even allowing movie shoots at the hotel, which wasn't the case earlier, while maintaining all Covid protocols under the I Care program at The Imperial. Sustainability has become imperative for survival and is the need of the hour, even more than before. Energy, in essence, is always going to be a limited resource even if rendered free, and as

an environmentally conscious organisation, we pay attention to how we can use it optimally. Saving energy and thereby reducing cost, and providing environmentally responsible amenities are crucial for every hotel. Better air quality systems, efficient hand hygiene standards, less water wastage and reduced use of plastic are now operational must-haves. Creative solutions in technology and ground-level green initiatives to optimise operations are part of the renewal strategy. As guests seek enhanced experiences, impeccable and personalised services are essential. These can be achieved by customising staycations with wellness value-add and revisiting business modules by serving local, pitching to the domestic traveller, curating local experiences with bespoke stay and dining packages.

The time is ripe to initiate bleisure — business and leisure — trips, workations, staycations, drivecations. Phygital, a recently coined term that combines both physical and digital meetings, is the new avenue for revenue.

User-generated content, credible testimonials and reviews are crucial to tap the online segment. Strengthening and capturing online and domestic business in tandem with companies and tour operators is the way forward.

Food & Beverage will remain one of the biggest earners for hotels. Getting the regulars back with attractive offers combined with unrivalled safety standards, is the core of recovery.

As an important sector driving the Indian economy, hotels should continue to give back to their teams in terms of monetary benefits. In order to sustain operations during periods of low occupancy, multi-skilling should be introduced in all departments, helping save manpower costs while not compromising on service standards.

These two years have been an immense learning and I strongly believe that with our continuous efforts, the industry will emerge stronger with new processes, new guidelines and new experiences, keeping our famed Indian hospitality and warmth intact. ■



The writer, a dyed-in-the-wool hotelier, is the Sr. Executive VP and GM, The Imperial, New Delhi. He has worked with The Lalit Hotels, and with Bharat Group of Hotels, was awarded the H&FS award for F&B Manager of the Year in 1994. He is also the winner of the Inspiring Hotel Leader Award at the Versatile Excellence Travel Awards in 2019.



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