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## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



## Winning the World with Gastronomic Delights

In our cover story this month, Rukma Saluja speaks to chefs Sujan Sarkar, Sriram Aylur and Manjunath Mural, who won laurels abroad for their delectable food, especially for evolving Indian cuisine as per the new tastes of the younger generation. The old notion that *Indian* food is spicy and oily is receding into the background, though it has not disappeared completely. Michelin-starred Aylur, who specialises in south Indian food, says, "People eat less chilli. They have not moved away from Indian food but are looking for a new, evolved cuisine." We know that Indian curry and kebabs have become household names among gastronomes in London, but there are other subtle things happening in Indian cooking abroad, and Saluja brings us vivid glimpses of it.

Malati K. Vijay writes about how interior designers have made antiques the centrepieces of home decor, and outlines the aesthetic philosophy behind the exercise to make it look right without being vulgar and ostentatious. And Kavita Devgan, the nutritionist, brings home the virtues and benefits of garlic, one of the ubiquitous elements of a traditional Indian kitchen. Says Devgan, "Generally, the stronger the taste, the higher the health benefits of garlic."

In the Business and Economy section, Kumud Das and B. Shekhar argue convincingly that the uncertainties plaguing the Indian economy are temporary, and that the prospects for long-term robust growth are bright. The work of the Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in key areas of health, education and rural livelihoods dispels some of the myths surrounding the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in India. The general perception that PSUs are loss-making ventures turns out to be misplaced. And, secondly, the CSR work carried out by them can be exemplary. PGCIL Managing Director (Personnel) V.K. Singh explains how PGCIL goes about accomplishing good deeds without much ado.

Nikhat Zareen, the gutsy girl from Nizamabad, who has become the 2022 IBA world boxing champion, adorns our Achiever section. Her own determination and parents' unflinching support played a key role in her success.

In the Diaspora section, we feature Delhi-born lawyer Devesh Gupta who set up Prudent Law in Greater Toronto in 2015 and how he has clocked exceptional growth, focusing on immigration. As the story brings out, the record influx of new immigrants and students has seen hundreds of young Indo-Canadians in legal, medical and other professions making it to the top.

Happy reading these and the many other engrossing stories in *PRAVASI INDIANS*!

CEO and Publisher

We would love to hear from you. We also invite diaspora members to write for us and share their experiences

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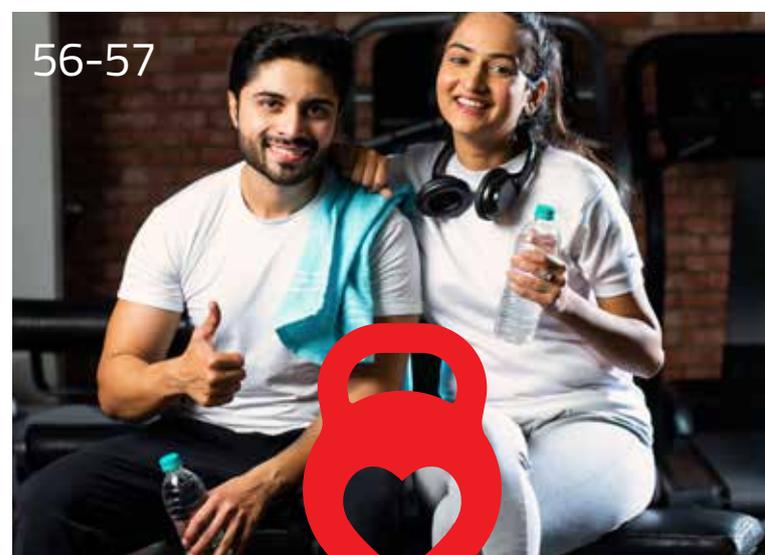


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# THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

HUMA ZAHEER shares her experience of discovering a new world, new people and new challenges away from home

**T**wenty-three years later, I still have vivid memories of the day I landed in Toronto. It was early evening at the end of March when I arrived at the Toronto Pearson Airport to join my husband. We had gotten married about seven months earlier, and had only spent around a month and a half together before he left for Toronto. He was at the airport with a beautiful bouquet to receive me, along with my in-laws. To say that my emotions were mixed would be an understatement! On the one hand was the pain of leaving behind my loved ones and the only life I had known, and on the other, the excitement of starting a new chapter of my life!

My initial reaction to living in a suburb of Toronto was the thought that this was a land of the dead as no one was seen outside on the streets (it was the end of March and the weather was still pretty cold); all I could see were cars. My first visit to downtown Toronto to see the sights reassured me that this was not the case—Toronto was bustling with people, everyone going

somewhere or the other. I enjoyed that visit.

I began to settle in; at the time, my husband and I lived with my in-laws—his parents, brother, brother's wife and their 11-month-old daughter. They were all very welcoming and warm, and my husband was also very understanding of my emotions, thoughts, and so on. He has been my rock throughout and I feel very blessed in our relationship.

I began looking for work—in journalism, as that was where my work experience had been in India. There were very few opportunities, and the fact that I would have to start from scratch in this field again discouraged me. After a few weeks of looking at and applying for jobs, my husband and I decided to visit the office of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). It was in the early days of the internet, so it was difficult to look for jobs online. This office informed me that they would soon be running a government-funded job search workshop for six weeks. I decided to enrol

for it, and it was one of the best things I have ever done! The workshop was excellent; the instructors taught me how to modify and tailor my resume for each position, interviewing skills, and so on. While I was there, I got to see job postings for teaching English as a second language at various locations; I had all the qualifications except a certification called TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language). I began to research this certification and decided to enrol in a college for it. I was accepted for the programme, a year-long one at Humber College.

I graduated with the highest overall average and was offered a job at the same college to teach writing courses and grammar. This was the start of my career in Canada. I have moved on since then from teaching to disability management and currently work for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) as a Return-to-Work Specialist.

Alongside my career, my personal life

This journey has taught me numerous lessons— from managing my day-to-day life to gaining a deeper understanding of people who are of different races, backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and so on.

largely a very inclusive place; however, there have been times when I have had to face blatant racism/discrimination. I took it in my stride, even feeling sorry for some ignorant people. However, most of the time, I have felt that I do belong here. There is not a day that goes by when I don't miss India—the jokes, the fun times with friends and family, the lack of formality when visiting people, but I still feel happy here. All the material things are available here but the love and warmth of our people in India are what I miss sometimes. An occasion, an old picture, the smell of food and spices—something or the other brings back fond memories of India. I also miss the days when life was not such a race ... I feel a very slight twinge of regret that my kids won't get to experience the warmth and informality of the relationships we had in India.

However, I do have to say that this journey has taught me numerous lessons— from managing my day-to-day life to gaining a deeper understanding of people who are of different races, backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and so on. I have been very lucky with many people I have come across here—neighbours, co-

workers, bosses—and have built many wonderful relationships here. My neighbours belong to various countries and backgrounds—Dutch, Peruvian, Italian, Canadian, Cameroonian, El Salvadorean, and I could go on. From each one, I have learnt something or the other—their customs, family values, cuisine, and the like. Our children have grown up together and have built strong bonds of friendship. They are immensely respectful of us, our culture and religion; our first gift at the start of Ramadan came from my Dutch neighbour—a beautiful box of dates and a bottle of Rooh Afza. This reminded me of my days in India, when the first guest at our home on Eid was my Hindu boss.

My children are now 20 and 16 years old and are starting to find their own ways forward. I am looking forward to seeing how their journey goes and where life takes them. As for me, at the end of the day, I am content with how my life has unfolded in Canada and I would not change a single thing! Every experience—good, bad, ugly, difficult—has helped me become a slightly better version of myself and I commit to making every effort to better myself. ■

was also evolving. My husband and I bought a condominium about a year and a half after my arrival here. Our son was born while we were living there. We sold that condo after about two years and bought a home where we lived for about three years. My daughter was born there. We sold that one too, rented for a couple of years and bought a brand new home. We have been in this home for the past 13 years.

It has been quite a journey, and I have enjoyed every moment of it. It was not without its challenges, though. Toronto is

---

## HUMA ZAHEER

I am Huma Zaheer. I was born Huma Moinuddin, and grew up in Hyderabad, India. I completed most of my education there, and worked for *The New Indian Express* for about five years before coming to Canada in 1999. I have resided here in the suburbs of Toronto ever since. I feel privileged to have been able to experience life in two countries!

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## Money Matters

# SAVING RERA FROM TRIVIALITY

As the Supreme Court scrutinises the implementation of RERA rules by states, it remains to be seen whether the Centre will succeed in ensuring that vested interests do not succeed in defeating the very purpose of the landmark realty legislation

BY VISHAL DUGGAL

It has been more than five years since the coming into force of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 from May 2017, followed by the gradual establishment of respective RERA authorities in states to bring in accountability and transparency in the country's real estate market. But the Act, that seeks to provide a robust regulatory framework to the real estate sector, has not been uniformly implemented with many states resorting to dilution of various RERA provisions. Significantly, the Supreme Court (SC) is currently examining the issue of pan-India undiluted implementation of RERA rules so that good governance in the realty sector could become a reality.

A bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant on February 14 directed the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to examine whether the rules drawn up by various states under RERA are in conformity with the central legislation. The bench appointed advocate-on-record Devashish Bharuka as *amicus curiae* in the case.

The lack of uniform implementation of RERA rules came up when a PIL was filed by advocate and BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay, seeking the SC's direction to all states to enforce a model builder-buyer agreement (BBA) and a model agent-buyer agreement.

"Promoters, builders and agents use

manifestly arbitrary one-sided agreements that do not place customers at an equal platform with them, which offends Articles 14, 15, 21 of the Constitution. There have been many cases of deliberate inordinate delays in handing over possession and customers lodge complaints but the police don't register FIRs, citing arbitrary clauses of the agreement," the PIL had said.

The SC asked the central government to re-examine the symmetry of general RERA rules, including that pertaining to the BBA, in laws framed by states. The issue has been taken up by the Central Advisory Council (CAC) functioning under the MoHUA. Hardeep Singh Puri, the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, while recently chairing a meeting of the CAC, said that states that were diluting the RERA rules would be answerable to the SC.

Homebuyers are represented in the CAC by Abhay Upadhyay, president, Forum for People's Collective Efforts (FPCE), a pan-India body fighting for the implementation of RERA in letter and spirit.

## INSTANCES OF DILUTION

States have diluted the rules on various counts such as the rate of interest payable to allottees when they seek to withdraw from the project, in case of misleading information by the builder; failure of the promoter to follow delivery timelines or

hand over possession of an apartment, plot or building to buyers. A case study done by Shripad S. Merchant, Dr D.B. Arolkar and Dr Rajesh Pednekar listed the various dilutions of RERA provisions by states:

**Ongoing projects:** In Haryana, ongoing projects are those where licence was granted on or before May 1, 2017 and where development work is yet to be completed. This means that projects which are still not complete but had got the licence before May 1, 2017, do not fall under the purview of RERA.

Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, projects that don't come under RERA are those where, on the date of notification of the rules, development work was completed and application filed for issuance of completion or occupancy certificate; slabs were laid; roads, open spaces, amenities and services were handed over to the local authority in layout projects; and sale or lease deeds of half (50 percent) of the units (apartments, houses or plots) were executed.

**Project extension:** The RERA provision that no extension can be given to a project beyond one year has been grossly diluted by states. In Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh and Telangana,



the extension depends on time allowed for completion under local laws, which defeats the spirit of RERA. In Kerala, extension for the project depends on the consent of the majority of the allottees.

Even as the central piece of legislation prevails, the states have meddled in the matter against consumer interest by granting extension for completion of the project as per the local laws.

**Project size:** RERA excludes projects not exceeding 500 sq. m of land and not having more than eight units. However, Kerala has excluded projects not exceeding 1,000 sq. m of land and 12 units from the purview of registration under RERA. The projects whose carpet area is less than 3,000 sq. m on a plot of less than 1,000 sq. m are exempted from the notified state law.

**Penal provisions:** RERA empowers the states to compound the offences by fixing penalties to be paid by the promoters. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Telangana have fixed 10 percent fine instead of imprisonment. Rajasthan has fixed it at 5 percent. Gujarat and Haryana have fixed it at between 5 percent and 10 percent. In Gujarat, the state government

**RERA excludes projects not exceeding 500 sq. m of land and not having more than eight units. However, Kerala has excluded projects not exceeding 1,000 sq. m of land and 12 units from the purview of registration under RERA.**

can amend the quantum of penalty to be paid for compounding the offence.

It is clear that the different rates of penalty, instead of imprisonment, do not serve as a deterrent for defaulting developers across the country. Moreover, even 10 percent of the cost of the project may be a meagre penalty when the cases drag on for a number of years in the court while the real estate prices escalate.

**Escrow account:** RERA stipulates that 70 percent of the amount deposited in an escrow account for construction of the project can be withdrawn only after completion is certified by the engineer, architect and chartered accountant. This withdrawal should be in proportion to the completion of the project. But there is no provision in the RERA rules issued by state governments to punish the professionals if they fraudulently certify that the work has been completed. There is also no clarity on the quantum of proportionate completion of the project.

#### TAKEAWAYS

Overall, Parliament's initiative to regulate the real estate business has hit a roadblock due to the reluctance of state governments to establish fair practices in real estate. The dilution or modification of rules by them does not fulfil the purpose of the central Act.

Though the powers of the states under RERA are limited, they have diluted the provisions while notifying the rules that take the sting out of the Act. As the apex court examines the RERA rules of states, the central government has to come out with clear directives to achieve the objective behind the law. The real estate domain in the country cannot be made conducive for robust growth without enforcing the true spirit behind RERA. ■



# RESILIENCE AMID GLOBAL VOLATILITY

BY KUMUD DAS

**Domestic retail investors rise to the occasion as foreign investors pull out, but challenges remain in the form of inflation and rising oil prices**

**A**t the recently concluded spring meetings of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and G20 finance ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) in Washington, DC, India's Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, made it clear that growth momentum is dampened by prolonged inflation, supply chain disruption, volatility in energy markets and investor uncertainty. The meet assumes significance at a time when India has been able to tackle crises like Covid-19 very well and thus left a blazing trail for others to follow.

However, things are not going well in the neighbourhood as countries like Sri Lanka,

Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and even Pakistan are faced with deep economic crises, whereas India has been able to resume its journey towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy in the next few years.

Both Sri Lanka and Nepal are currently faced with a possible forex crisis. Once a 'basket case' but now a middle-level economy that has lent money to Sri Lanka recently, Bangladesh, according to an Observer Research Foundation (ORF) study, too has flagged concerns, though not at the same levels as the other two countries. Smaller nations like Bhutan and the Maldives have similar challenges that have yet to reach a crisis stage.

According to noted policy analyst N. Sathiya Murthy, "With national aspirations growing by leaps and bounds thanks to the social media exposure of the urban and rural population alike, Third World South Asian nations have gone on a debt-driven high spending spree, when jobless growth, added to the fundamentals, did not support a repayment scheme."

Sri Lanka has only itself to blame for the crisis by resorting to heavy borrowing from China for the controversial Hambantota port and Mattala airport projects among a host of other infrastructure projects.

In contrast, India has been doing very well in various sectors. For example,

Sitharaman met John Neuffer, president and CEO of the Semiconductor Industry Association, during the event and apprised him of the initiative taken by the country for development of a sustainable semiconductor and display ecosystem with an outlay of \$10 billion. Endorsing it, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva in her meeting with Sitharaman during the event, said, "India's well-targeted policy mix has helped the Indian economy remain resilient even with limited fiscal space." India's accommodative fiscal stance accompanied by major structural reforms and strong monetary policies have helped in its post-pandemic economic recovery. The IMF MD also appreciated India's help to its neighbour, Sri Lanka, in tackling its economic crisis.

The biggest-ever ₹21,000 crore Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) IPO, which opened on May 4 and closed on May 9, has also given a very clear message to the world that LIC could survive and hit the market without much foreign funds or support. They believed in Indian investors. Similarly, the Indian stock market has been weathering the heavy sales by the foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) and thus increasing its dependency on domestic institutional investors in the recent past, proof enough of the self-reliance of the country in all economic parameters.

The finance minister was right when she said that G20 is well placed to catalyse international policy coordination to deal with macroeconomic consequences and called for proactive collective efforts towards protecting economies. Apart from conducting a successful vaccination programme to control the spread of Covid-19, India has also been extending Covid relief support to other vulnerable countries.

Challenges to the country's economic growth exist, such as the current volatile capital market due to heavy selling by foreign institutional investors (FIIs) as they find the US market more lucrative with the Fed bracing to increase its rates. Not to mention that overseas investors have pulled out over ₹1 lakh crore from the Indian market so far. Still, the good thing is that India continues to remain the highest depository of foreign direct investment (FDI), and Indian retail investors have created the capacity to

**However, things are not going well in the neighbourhood as countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and even Pakistan are faced with deep economic crises, whereas India has been able to resume its journey towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy in the next few years.**

absorb the shock due to outflow of foreign funds from the country's stock markets.

The recent off-policy increase in the repo rate by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is also a step in the right direction as it will help arrest a second round of inflation in the country and thus support stable economic growth.

Notably, India's performance in the digital world and the government's efforts to build the digital infrastructure framework over the past decade have also found widespread appreciation.

In his April 8 statement, RBI Governor Dr Shaktikanta Das referred to the tectonic shifts caused by the conflict in Europe which has created fresh challenges for global growth and the conduct of monetary policy. As the war in Ukraine draws on and sanctions and retaliatory actions intensify, shortages, volatility in commodity and financial markets, supply dislocations and, most alarmingly, persistent and spreading

inflationary pressures are becoming more acute with every passing day. Debt distress is rising in the developing world amidst capital outflows and currency depreciations. Recent GDP releases suggest that the global economic recovery is losing pace.

Amidst these challenges, the Indian economy has shown resilience, drawing upon the innate strength of its underlying fundamentals, and supported by a prudent and favourable policy mix. By remaining accommodative, India's monetary policy continues to foster congenial financial conditions to support growth and mitigate the adverse effects of the geopolitical crisis. As a result, the Indian economy has managed to weather the shock so far.

Reassuringly, India has also been able to preserve macro-financial stability, despite the synchronised shocks of commodity prices, supply disruptions and higher inflation unleashed by the war. Confronted by elevated inflationary pressures that will shift the future trajectory of inflation upwards, it has announced its intention to engage in withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation remains aligned to the target.

As we navigate this difficult period, Das said it is necessary to be sensitive to the new realities and incorporate them into our thinking. In its World Economic Outlook of April, the IMF has noted: "The economic effects of the war are spreading far and wide—like seismic waves that emanate from the epicentre of an earthquake—mainly through commodity markets, trade, and financial linkages."

It is, however, important to recognise that, despite our strengths and our buffers, India is not an island in this globally connected world. There was a spike in the headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation in March as anticipated in the April policy statement. The inflation for April edged up to nearly eight percent. There is the collateral risk that if inflation remains elevated at these levels for too long, it can de-anchor inflation expectations which, in turn, can become self-fulfilling and detrimental to growth and financial stability. Hence, the government must remain in readiness to use all policy levers to preserve macroeconomic and financial stability while enhancing the economy's resilience. ■



# TRANSIENT TURBULENCE

**Disruptions, shortages and escalating prices due to geopolitical tensions and sanctions have truncated India's growth story. But growth momentum will be regained as structural reforms are underway...**

**BY B. SHEKHAR**

**T**he unforeseen geopolitical tensions in the East European region have hit the Indian economy as well. At a time when the economy was on a steady upsurge, the Russia-Ukraine war has upset the apple cart for India and growth targets are now slightly downsized.

When it looked like the difficult Covid-19 pandemic phase was over and the global economy was on the recovery path, the Ukraine war has triggered yet another bout of economic constriction the world over. And India is no exception to this sudden economic downturn.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its latest World Economic Outlook report has lowered India's GDP growth to 8.2 percent for FY23, from 9 percent for the

same period last year. The downgrade in the 2023 growth projection for India is partly reflective of the Ukraine war that has resulted in high energy and food prices slowing down the growth momentum. Notable downgrades in the forecast for Asia include Japan (0.9 percentage point) and India (0.8 percentage point), "reflecting in part weaker domestic demand—as higher oil prices are expected to weigh on private consumption and investment—and a drag from lower net exports," the report stated.

The Ukraine war has exacerbated two difficult policy trade-offs: between tackling inflation and safeguarding the recovery; and between supporting the vulnerable people and rebuilding fiscal buffers.

Even as the war reduces growth, it will

add to inflation. Fuel and food prices have increased rapidly, with vulnerable populations, particularly in low-income countries like India, ending up the most affected. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its May 4, 2022 Monetary Policy Statement indicated that the headline CPI inflation surged to 7.0 percent from 6.1 percent in February, largely reflecting the impact of geopolitical spillovers. Food inflation increased by 154 basis points to 7.5 percent and core inflation rose by 54 bps to 6.4 percent. The rapid rise in inflation is occurring in an environment in which inflationary pressures are broadening across the world.

It is acknowledged that elevated inflation will complicate the trade-offs central banks

India has recorded highest ever annual FDI inflow of **\$83.57 bn** in **FY2021-22**. In **2014-15**, FDI inflow in India stood at a mere **\$45.15 bn** as compared to the highest ever annual FDI inflow of **\$83.57 bn** reported during **FY2021-22**, overtaking last year's FDI by **\$1.60 bn** despite the Ukraine war and the Covid-19 pandemic. India's FDI inflows have increased 20-fold since **FY03-04**, when the inflows bloomed to **\$4.3 bn** only.

## SHOWING RESILIENCE

CY22 growth forecast for India lowered to **8.8%** from **9.1%** projected in March, 2023 forecast retained at **5.4%**

**8.2%** growth seen in FY23, **6.5%** in FY24

Economy surpassed pre-Covid GDP by **5%** in last quarter of 2021

Sales tax collection, retail activity, PMIs show momentum

## AREAS OF CONCERN

High oil prices, supply disruptions drag on growth

Recovery lags in contact-intensive services

face between containing price pressures and safeguarding growth. Interest rates are expected to rise as central banks tighten policy, exerting pressure on emerging markets and developing economies like India. This will directly affect the off-take of credit from the industry, thus further shutting off the decision-making process in boardrooms for expansion or establishing new projects. And the direct effect of this turn-off is that job creation is at stake and the demographic advantage that India has gets wasted due to under-utilisation of human resource capital.

It is again a recognised fact that the transmission of the war shock will vary across countries, depending on trade and financial linkages, exposure to commodity price increases, and the strength of the pre-existing inflation surge. Gauging the impact, appropriate monetary policy response is required.

Discussing this very point of geopolitical developments at the Spring Meetings in the US, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva raised concerns about its impact on the global economy and the challenges linked to the rising commodity prices due

to it. Explaining India's policy approach, Sitharaman mentioned that an accommodative fiscal stance was accompanied by major structural reforms, including support for industry, particularly MSME and other vulnerable sections.

Going by the statements made by the FM, the central government has announced a customs duty cut on petroleum products which is the key segment to soften inflationary pressure as this has a cascading effect on all commodities.

Similarly, the government also waived customs duty on the import of raw materials, including coking coal and ferronickel, used by the steel industry, a move which will lower the cost for the domestic industry and reduce prices. Also, to increase domestic availability, the duty on export of iron ore has been hiked to 50 percent and a few steel intermediaries to 15 percent. The duty changes have already been effected.

Sitharaman said that the RBI fully supported and complemented these efforts with an accommodative stance. The finance minister further stated that India has been helped by good agricultural output, supported by a good monsoon during the Covid pandemic. Agricultural exports, along



with other exports, have also sharply increased. India is entering into new economic activities which will help resolve some of the global supply chain issues.

A very important and extremely bold policy decision effected by India is on the oil front. Despite the threat of US sanctions, the Indian government announced its decision to go ahead and buy Russian crude. "If oil is available and at a discount, why shouldn't I buy it? I need it for my people," Sitharaman said last month.

But for India, the decision to hold to its neutrality on Russia's war in Ukraine is no longer just about keeping its options open in a world with multiple centres of power. It has evolved into a lucrative case of economic opportunism: Russian oil is just too good a deal to pass up.

India's purchases of Russian crude have soared since the start of the war in Ukraine, rising from nothing in December and January to about 300,000 barrels a day in March and 700,000 a day in April. The crude now accounts for nearly 17 percent of Indian imports, up from less than 1 percent before the invasion. Last year, India imported about 33,000 barrels a day on average from Russia.

With Russian oil banned in the United States and Europe now proposing an embargo of its own, India can buy the crude at substantial discounts, powering its energy-thirsty economy at a lower cost. Indian refiners can also use the crude to make products like diesel and jet fuel and sell it at better-than-usual margins abroad.

As India leverages the war to help fuel its post-pandemic economic recovery, trade with Russia is likely to increase with the conflict dragging on. That could further

complicate American and European efforts to choke off Russia's economic lifeblood and strain US-Indian relations as the two nations seek to work together to counter China.

Many homegrown economists may disagree with the fact that the impact due to the Covid-19 pandemic on the country's macroeconomic fundamentals has been minimal as compared to the other emerging economies. Due to skilful handling and bold policy initiatives, the country has been able to quickly regain its growth momentum.

There is no denying the fact that no country has a GDP growth rate beyond 4 percent, including the First World economies which are struggling at sub 4 percent growth for the past three years.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director for India Takeo Konishi said: "India is on the path to a sustained economic recovery, thanks to the vigorous countrywide drive to deliver safe and wide-reaching COVID-19 vaccinations,

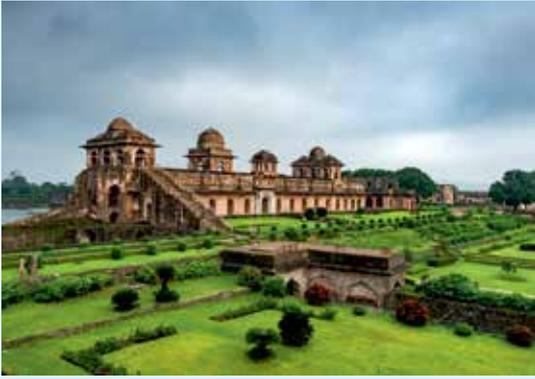
**A very important and an extremely bold policy decision effected by India is on the oil front. Despite the threat of US sanctions, the Indian government announced its decision to go ahead and buy Russian crude.**

which helped reduce the severity of the third pandemic wave with minimal disruptions to mobility and economic activity." He further said: "The Government of India's policy to improve logistics infrastructure, incentives to facilitate industrial production, and measures to improve farmers' income will support the country's accelerated recovery."

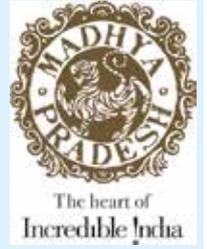
The government in the past year has announced large public infrastructure investments planned over the next two years. This will also encourage more private investment. Together with the PM's Gati Shakti initiative to improve India's logistics infrastructure, increased financial and technical support to states to expand capital investment will boost infrastructure spending and help spur economic growth. Private consumption will pick up as labour market conditions improve.

Another important and welcome aspect to note is that the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast another year of a normal monsoon, which, coupled with rising wheat prices, is expected to boost agricultural output and improve farmers' income. The government's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme will provide a thrust to the manufacturing sector in FY2022 and FY2023.

India may at this point of time be experiencing economic constrictions due to externalities, but it is a temporary phase and a passing cloud. There is no denying the fact that India is still in the reckoning as far as attracting attention from global investors goes. In a few quarters from now, India may acquire the *numero uno* position as the manufacturing and supply chain hub of the world. ■



# Rain, adventure and road trips: Madhya Pradesh is calling!



## Explore vibrant destinations of Madhya Pradesh during Monsoon

If you want to escape the hustle & bustle of the city life and spend time near glorious waterfalls and hills covered with abundant greenery, the 'heart of incredible India-Madhya Pradesh' has it all for you. Exploring the length and the breadth of Madhya Pradesh during the rainy weather of monsoon is undoubtedly a life time experience when one can witness the true beauty of nature. You will also be able to explore wildlife, spiritual, wellness, adventure and rural tourism in Madhya Pradesh.

**There is a wide range of destinations to choose from for a remarkable holiday in Madhya Pradesh during monsoon season**

### Pachmarhi - Queen of Satpura

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. Nestled in the hills and filled with scenic beauty all around, Pachmarhi not only has spiritual spots and gushing waterfalls, but also has a lot of adventure. This beautiful place can be visited throughout the year, but the best time to visit Pachmarhi is monsoon as the heavy rainfall turns the mountains, trees, grass all bright green and gorgeous. Despite the core area of the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are closed during the monsoon months, tourists can also enjoy the wildlife under the BufferMeinSafar campaign of Madhya Pradesh Tourism.

### Attractions

Satpura National Park, Apsara Kund, Pandavas and Jata Shankar Caves, Priyadarshini - Forsyth Point, Mahadeo Temple, Chauragarh Temple, Rajat Pratap, Jamuna Prapat (Bee Falls), Jalawataram, Ramaya Kund (Irene Pool), Handi Khoh and Pachmarhi Catholic Church etc.

### Activities in and around Pachmarhi

Jeep Safari, Horse Riding, ATV Ride, Land Parasailing,

Ziplining, Waterfall Trekking and Hiking, Cycling, Camping (including Tree and Gypsy) and exploring Tribal Culture and Arts.

### Mandu - City of Joy

Mandu, which is known as the city of joy is one of the most visited destinations in the state during monsoon season. A place with countless attractive monuments invites tourists to witness the abandoned palaces of the ancient city along with the puddles of water and lush slopes all around. Abound with historical tales, the city offers its enchanting beauty adorned with the greenery all around. You can also experience rural tourism by visiting Malipura village situated near Mandu to enjoy village mud houses, taste simple yet delicious meal and splendid natural and unpolluted surroundings to soak in the rural culture.

### Attractions

Kakrah Khoh waterfall, Jahaz Mahal floating on 2 water bodies-Kapur and Munj Talao (During monsoon, the water level reaches the edge of the monument thereby giving it a ship like appearance & hence the name Jahaz Mahal), Rani Roopmati Pavilion (a striking view of Narmada river), Hindola Mahal, Baz Bahadur's Palace, Jami Masjid, Champa Baoli and Hammam, Ashrafi Mahal, Jain Temple, Taveli Mahal and Nilkanth Mahadev Temple.

### Activities in and around Mandu

Yoga session, cycling tour, heritage walk, rural excursion and musical concerts by local artists during Mandu Festival, sound and light show and horse riding in the pristine village of Malipura.

### UNESCO World Heritage Site- Khajuraho

Located in the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh, the UNESCO site of 'Khajuraho Group of Monuments' is famous for its Nagara-Style architecture and graceful sculptures of nayikas and deities. The temples of Khajuraho are India's unique gift to the world, represent-

ing, as they do, a paeon to life, to love, to joy, perfect in execution and sublime in expression. If you are planning to explore Khajuraho then do not forget to visit Panna National Park, situated just 32 km away and a mere 30-minute drive from the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The jungles harbour many species of wildlife. The tiger can be glimpsed here, with other rare species such as the leopard, wolf and gharial.

### Attractions

Adivart Museum, Dhubela Museum, Kandariya Mahadeo temple, Chaunsath Yogini temple, Chitragupta Temple, Vishwanath Temple, Lakshmana Temple, Matangeswara Temple, Parsvanath Temple, Ghantai Temple, Adhinath Temple, Duladeo Temple, Chaturbhuj Temple, Panna National Park, Fort of Ajaygarh, Mahamati Prannathji Mandir, Pandav falls, National Museum, Panna Diamond Mines.



### Activities in and around Khajuraho

Camping, Village Tour, E-Bike Tour, Segway Tour, Water Sports, Sound and Light Show near western group of temple, wellness centers, Relinquish Yourself at Raneh Falls Canyon, Pandav Waterfall in Panna, Ruins Of Mastani Mahal, Beni Sagar Dam.

### Amarkantak - king of pilgrimages

Lies at the meeting point of the three central India hill ranges-Vindhya, Satpuras and Maikal, Amarkantak

popularly known as Teerthraj, or the 'king of pilgrimages'. The largest flowing and holy river of Madhya Pradesh, the Narmada River and also the Son (Sone) The river originates in Amarkantak, the town which has several ancient temples having a rich history and an amazing architectural display. The town is adorned with two attractive waterfalls - Dugdha Dhara and Kapil Dhara, one of the most popular tourist spots surrounded by dense forest.

### Attractions

The pilgrim town Amarkantak is situated at an altitude of 1000 m and has so many attractive destinations for tourists including Narmada Udgam, Trimukhi Temple, Keshav Narayan Temple, ancient temples of the Kalachuri, Mai ki Bagiya, Shri Yantra Temple, Amareshwar Mahadev Temple, Son Udgam Temple, Bhriгу Kamandal, Dugdha Dhara Fall, Kapil Dhara waterfall and others.



salute is given to Lord Rama by policemen during the 'aarti' at Raja Ram Temple. One can also witness the captivating architecture of carved temples, Orchha fort, striking palaces and other structures in the town. Besides, Orchha is the best place to experience rural tourism. In 2021, Union Ministry of Tourism had nominated Ladpurakhas village of Orchha for the 'Best Tourism Village' category in the United Nations World Tourism Organization Award. Tourists from across the world visit this village to soak into the rural culture in the heart of the country.

### Attractions

Ram Raja Temple, Orchha Fort, Chattris on the Betwa River, Laxminarayan Temple, Phool Bagh, Chaturbhuj Temple, Orchha Nature Reserve, Chandrashekhar Azad Memorial, Rani Mahal.

### Activities in and around Orchha

River Rafting in Betwa River, jungle safari at Orchha Wildlife Sanctuary, boating and kayaking in Betwa River, nature trail in Orchha Nature Reserve, light and sound show at Orchha fort, experience wellness tourism.

# QUEEN OF THE RING



Nikhat Zareen, the gutsy girl from Nizamabad, fought her way to the top of the world with her steely determination and unflinching support of her parents

**N. JAGANNATH DAS**

In 2014, Mohammad Jameel Ahmed visited Emani Chiranjeevi in Hyderabad accompanied by his daughter, Nikhat Zareen, who by then was making progress in boxing. The reputed boxing coach faced an unusual request from Jameel Ahmed: could he train his daughter at his academy? Until then, the academy had only boys.

Chiranjeevi, known for his scientific training, was at first inclined to refuse but then he became intrigued by a certain hunger in Nikhat's eyes. He nodded and Nikhat had made her first big breakthrough. But Chiranjeevi clearly warned the father-daughter duo it would be a tough task and entail an excruciating grind. The sessions began in earnest. The first thing that Jameel did was to shift from Nizamabad to Hyderabad. He lived in a rented house near the academy. Nikhat was then 18. But she showed a lot of character and discipline in the training. Chiranjeevi was concerned as to how she would withstand the hard blows from the boys. As the training intensified, he saw Nikhat ending up with cuts and bruises on her face.

"I was afraid and wondered whether I had made a mistake. To my surprise, Nikhat would wipe off the blood stains and get ready for battle again. I would ask whether I should stop the session, but she would just say 'No, sir'. She did not collapse or throw in the towel at any stage. That combativeness proved to be a big plus point. When she came to show her gold medal on her return from

Turkey, I was overwhelmed and had tears in my eyes," said Chiranjeevi.

The 25-year-old Nikhat silenced her critics at the World Boxing Championships in Istanbul. She outwitted Jitpong Jutamas of Thailand 5-0 in the 52 kg final. Nikhat, who was once ridiculed by M.C. Mary Kom, made a telling statement to become the fifth Indian woman to win a gold in the World Championships. She won five bouts in seven days and all were unanimous wins.

Chiranjeevi credits her father for Nikhat's success. "The family, particularly her parents (Jameel Ahmed and Parveen Sultana), was a constant support for Nikhat. They were unflinching despite intense pressures, and at the same time they ensured their daughter got the best coaching. She dreamt big, so did the parents. I could see the confidence in Jameel's face that his daughter would make a big name in boxing. This helped Nikhat to pursue her career in boxing. Such was the support that even when there were some adverse situations, the parents stood like a rock behind the daughter. Living in a rented house and moving away from Nizamabad was a huge step. Nikhat was lucky in many ways to get such support from the parents. Being a girl, and that too choosing to shine in boxing, was a big, calculated risk. But, as they say, fortune favours the brave. Nikhat justified that unflinching support and today she did her parents proud with the world title," said Chiranjeevi. Little wonder that Nikhat spoke

glowingly about her parents after her gold medal win. "I was thinking of my parents. Whenever I used to call after my wins, my mother would be returning after saying prayers for me. Today, the Almighty has made her dreams come true and I am very happy. Everyone knows how supportive my father is also," she said. Yet Chiranjeevi was least impressed with Nikhat's bouts at the World Championships. "I was a little disappointed and of course the standard in the competition was below par. Perhaps the news of boxing not being included in Olympics could be a dampening factor. But for Nikhat, it was important to make history."

Ever since this Telangana pugilist won her world title in Istanbul, the family homes in Nizamabad and Hyderabad have been flooded with well-wishers and mediapersons seeking interviews. "It was a hectic day on the night of the final and the next day with people coming to congratulate us. It is a nice feeling. It is a proud moment," said Jameel.

Nikhat is an athlete-turned-boxer. She would accompany her father, who had always been interested in sports, to Collector Ground in Nizamabad. "She had an athletic body and won medals in the 100 m, 200 m and 400 m events in the district meet as a young girl. She would do serious practice sessions but her eye was on the boxing ring, where a few pugilists used to practise under Samsamuddin (father of Hussamuddin, bronze medallist in the 2018 Commonwealth Games). While doing her



Nikhat got selected for the Sports Authority of India camp in Visakhapatnam where she trained under I.V. Venkateshwara Rao. "Within three months of taking up boxing, she started winning bouts. At 13, she beat an 18-year-old in the state championship," said Jameel.

practice sessions, she asked me casually whether she could take up boxing. I was taken aback—boxing, and for girls, and in a place like Nizamabad! But I agreed immediately and so did my wife. *Bolne wale bolte hain* (those who wag their tongues will do so), and so I requested Samsamuddin, who was my uncle, to take my daughter under his wing," recalls Jameel.

For Samsamuddin, it was a new challenge to train a lone girl in the gym. "Nikhat straightaway took to boxing like a duck takes to water. What I liked about her was the stubbornness and attitude. She was full of energy although she was frail. She took to boxing in all seriousness and even beat boys in friendly bouts," said Samsamuddin.

As a young girl, she first took part in the Karimnagar meet where she won gold. "It was there I felt Nikhat was absolutely serious about boxing. I became more determined that I would go out of the way to help my daughter," said Jameel. Nikhat began to make tremendous progress and got selected for the Sports Authority of India camp in Visakhapatnam where she trained under I.V. Venkateshwara Rao. "Within three months of taking up boxing, she started

winning bouts. At 13, she beat an 18-year-old in the state championship," said Jameel.

The Nizamabad pugilist hogged the national headlines when she qualified for the Junior World Championships in Turkey in 2011. She won gold. That was a big turning point, which made Jameel shift to Hyderabad to put her under Chiranjeevi's tutelage. "When she won the Junior World Championships gold, I thought I should now move to Hyderabad," recounted Jameel.

For Nikhat, the gold at the all-India inter-university championship while representing Osmania University was the result of grinding training at the academy. "Perhaps the training sessions with the boys made her stronger, fitter and more powerful. She has good technique and is light on her feet. She does a lot of fitness exercises," said Chiranjeevi. The Tokyo Olympics loomed. But her biggest obstacle was the legendary Mary Kom. Nikhat sought trials for selection but Mary Kom was upset. She even reportedly commented to a TV channel, "Who is Nikhat Zareen?" Nevertheless, the trials were eventually held in 2019 and the young Nikhat lost badly. Her 2020 Tokyo Olympics dream crashed. She was mocked on social

media after the loss. But she has turned the tables since. She showed the world she is champion material with her sterling performance in Istanbul. "I would dedicate this medal to all my countrymen who supported me throughout my career. Today I am trending on Twitter. It was always my dream to be a trend on Twitter, and to achieve something for my country at the world level is the biggest motivation," she said. An MBA student at MLRIT College in Hyderabad, she has her head on her shoulders. Two of her sisters are doctors and another is a badminton player. Jameel said they were hurt by Mary Kom's comments. "But we never had a grudge. She is a legend in boxing. That my daughter won the world title is a big moment for us. We struggled while promoting her career. We are thankful to Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, who gave us ₹50 lakh, and the support of his daughter, Kavitha madam (former MP from Nizamabad)," he said.

For Nikhat, it was mission accomplished. Of course, her biggest dream is to win an Olympic medal. "Inshallah, I will work hard like this and try to give my best to win a medal in the Paris Olympics," she says. ■

## Review

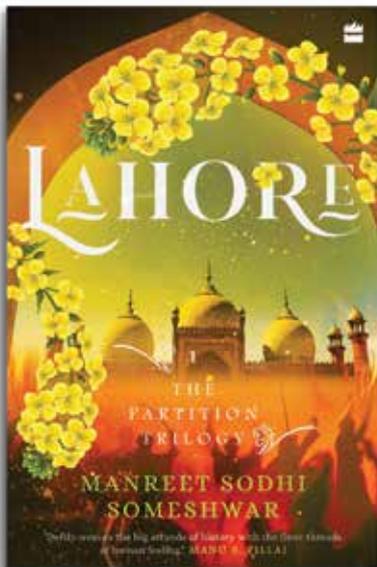
# LITTLE LIVES CAUGHT IN TIDAL WAVE OF HISTORY

**A new novel on Partition reveals the breakdown of the state and the unleashing of violence**



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.



LAHORE (Book 1, The Partition Trilogy) by Manreet Sodhi Someshwar  
HarperCollins | ₹ 499 | Pages 328

*If, as Milan Kundera says, the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting, the role of the writer is to keep the narrative alive with multiple renditions across generations.*

Why then were they forgetting the lesson at the heart of the *Mahabharata*, asks Someshwar in *Lahore*, the first novel of the Partition trilogy (which will also cover Hyderabad and Jammu & Kashmir). And she goes on to answer: "When the mighty Duryodhana, the last of the Kauravas, lay dying on the battlefield (of Kurukshetra), he turned to the eldest Pandava, his cousin, and bitterest enemy, Yudhishtira, and said, 'Go take your Empire! What will it bring you but sorrow and tears' " To inherit a land and a people devastated by war was no victory. The bloody battle between brothers over a kingdom had led to complete annihilation. The tribal in Orissa knew this, as well as the peasant in Bengal as well as the Kathakali dancer in Kerala and the grandmother in Punjab.

Metaphorically speaking, *Lahore* is a tale which connects the two great epics of India—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The city of Lahore, founded by Loh, the son of Lord Rama, became like the battlefield of Kurukshetra, the fratricidal war which left behind wailing widows, mothers, sisters and daughters. However, in the *Mahabharata*, there were just a few instances when the rules of engagement were broken: in the case of Partition, humanity itself was under assault from frenzied mobs which vied with each other to dance an orgy of violence and bestiality.

*Lahore*, or Luar, as it is called colloquially, begins and ends with 'run'. It starts with Mehmood urging his best friend and childhood



buddy, Beli Ram, to run away from the riotous procession in February 1947, and ends with Beli Ram yelling out to the young boy in the kafila to run from the swirling waters gushing onto the river bed on the India-Pakistan border where the refugees were camping for the night before crossing the Radcliffe Line in September of the same year.

The story of *Lahore* is actually the tale of two narratives. The grand narrative is set in Lutyens' Delhi—the Viceroy's residence (now Rashtrapati Bhawan), York Road (now Motilal Nehru Road) and Aurangzeb Road (now Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road) with an interlude in Simla, the summer capital of India. The *dramatis personae* include historical figures like the Mountbattens, Dickie, Edwina and their daughter, Pamela, Nehru and his daughter (Indu), Sardar and his daughter (Maniben), V.P. Menon, M.A. Jinnah, Maulana Azad and Master Tara Singh, all of whom were key players in the Partition saga. Running along the same timeline is the little narrative, the story of Beli Ram and Mehmood who eke out a living as porters at Lahore Junction, and the ambitious but impossible love stories—between Sepoy Malik, a Muslim soldier who fought in the Jang-e-Azam (World War II) and Tara Malik, the daughter of a Sikh shopkeeper in Anarkali Bazaar, as well as between Parminder (Pammi), daughter of railway clerk Kishan Singh, and Asad Niazi, the son of their neighbour and her classmate in Dyal Singh College. Their conversations with each other, the chatter in the bazaar, as well as the shadow boxing in the office of Kishan Singh are reflective of the mood of the city from February

Metaphorically speaking, *Lahore* is a tale which connects the two great epics of India—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The city of Lahore, founded by Loh, the son of Lord Rama, became like the battlefield of Kurukshetra, the fratricidal war which left behind wailing widows, mothers, sisters and daughters.

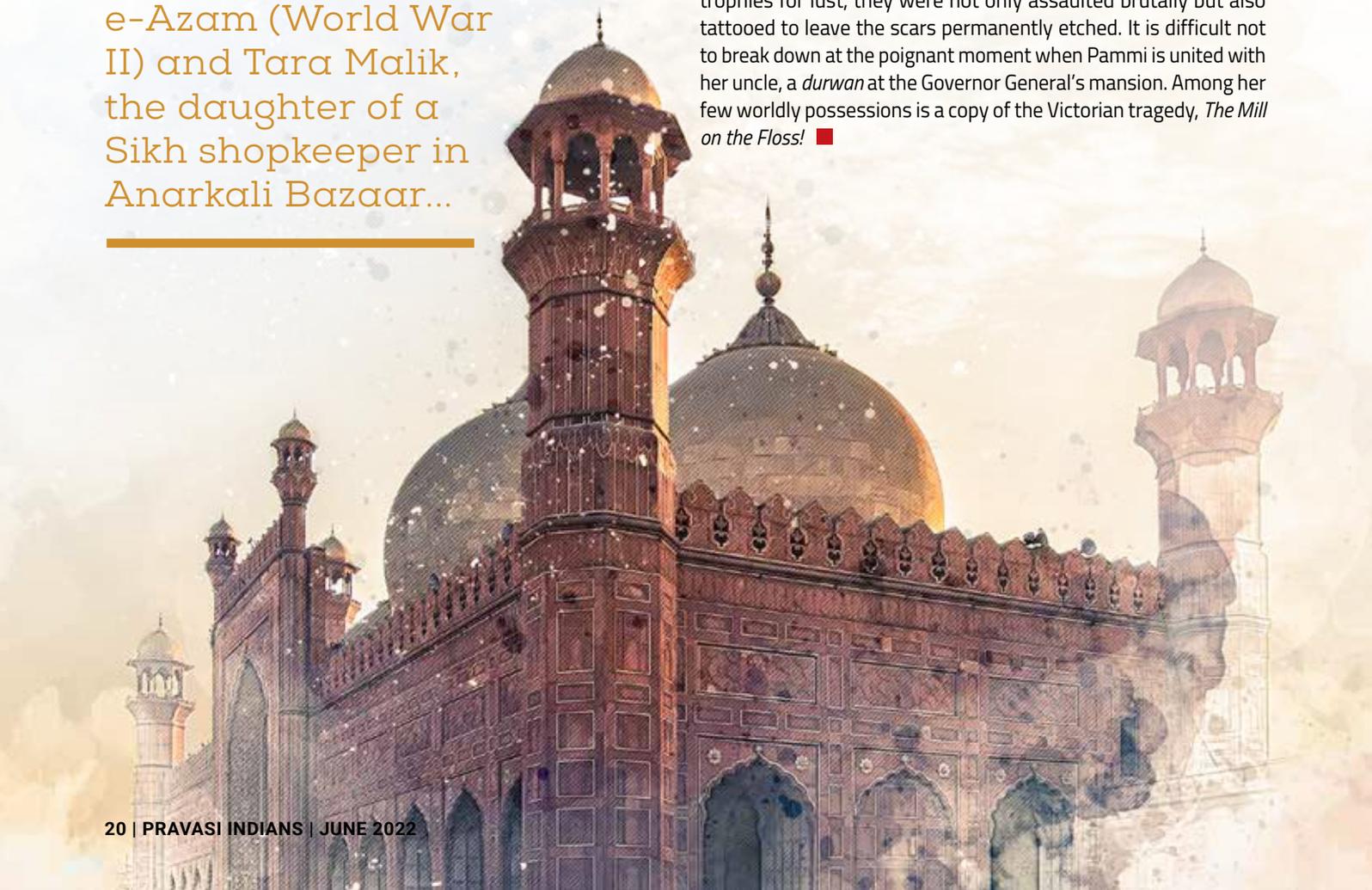
1947. The voices of reason and temperance were drowned as demobilised soldiers and lumpen elements took over the 'protection' of the city after the complete breakdown of the state apparatus with the police and fire brigade adding fuel to the fire.

Let us now move back to the grand narrative of the transfer of power, or 'freedom at midnight' as per the Raj and the nationalist chroniclers. Mountbatten and Radcliffe—greenhorns in the context of India—set out to vivisection an ancient land which was no longer the Jewel in the Crown but the curse of an albatross. Compared to Wavell who hated the Congress, the Mountbattens (Dickie and

Edwina) had a softer corner for the saintly Mahatma and the erudite Jawahar. However, when it came to realpolitik, Mountbatten knew that it was the Sardar who had his ear to the ground and controlled the party organisation. He wanted a strong centre, but was willing to accommodate the princes. Jawahar, on the other hand, wanted to terminate the princely rulers with extreme prejudice. Maulana Azad was happy with a loose federation of Hindu and Muslim provinces but Jinnah was determined to get his Pakistan and the Sikhs were in a particularly difficult situation for they were a minority even in their erstwhile sovereign state of Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Lahore was a classic case of state failure, aggravated by the refusal of Mountbatten to accommodate any deviation from his arbitrary date of division of Punjab and Bengal. Punjab Governor Jenkins, an old ICS hand, had expressed his premonitions of unprecedented violence quite clearly, especially on account of the presence of thousands of demobilised soldiers. However, rather than a phased and planned resettlement—in which trains and lorries could have been requisitioned—including those of the Indian Army with camp commissioners assisted by revenue and police officials on both sides, the impending withdrawal of the British saw the complete breakdown of a fairly robust administrative system. An empire which could fight a war on three continents failed its own subjects at a critical juncture.

The stories connect when Pamela, the daughter of the Viceroy, meets Parminder, the survivor of multiple assaults at the shelter for women set up in the Viceroy's camp at New Delhi. Treated as trophies for lust, they were not only assaulted brutally but also tattooed to leave the scars permanently etched. It is difficult not to break down at the poignant moment when Pammi is united with her uncle, a *durwan* at the Governor General's mansion. Among her few worldly possessions is a copy of the Victorian tragedy, *The Mill on the Floss!* ■

Running along the same timeline is the little narrative, the story of Beli Ram and Mehmood who eke out a living as porters at Lahore Junction, and the ambitious but impossible love stories—between Sepoy Malik, a Muslim soldier who fought in the Jang-e-Azam (World War II) and Tara Malik, the daughter of a Sikh shopkeeper in Anarkali Bazaar...



## ON THE SHELF By Rukma Saluja

### TOMB OF SAND

By Geetanjali Shree

Translated by Daisy Rockwell

Penguin Random House

₹ 699 | Pages 725

Critically acclaimed author Geetanjali Shree's novel, *Tomb of Sand*, is based on a tragic premise; the narrative, however, has a playful tone and exuberant wordplay. At the same time, it is an urgent and timely protest against the destructive impact on borders and boundaries, whether between religions, countries, or genders. Translated from the Hindi by Daisy Rockwell, it has been has won this year's Booker Prize and been the winner of the English PEN Award. This is the first time a work translated from Hindi has been nominated for the Booker. *Tomb of Sand* was first published in Hindi as *Ret Samadhi* in 2018 and Penguin India released its English translation in March 2022.

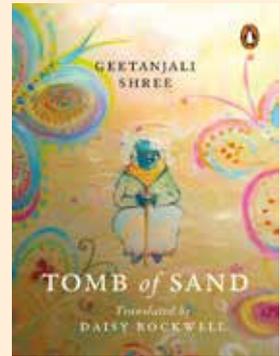


#### About the author

Author of three novels and several short story anthologies, Geetanjali Shree's work has been translated into English, French, German, Serbian and Korean. She has won and been shortlisted for a number of awards and fellowships, and lives in New Delhi.

#### About the translator

Daisy Rockwell is an artist, writer and translator living in northern New England, US. Apart from her essays on literature and art, she has written *Upendranath Ashk: A Critical Biography*, *The Little Book of Terror*, and a novel, *Taste*. Her highly acclaimed translations include, among others, Upendranath Ashk's *Falling Walls* and Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*, published under Penguin Classics.



### SUMITRA AND ANEES

(Tales and Recipes from a Khichdi Family)

By Seema Chishti

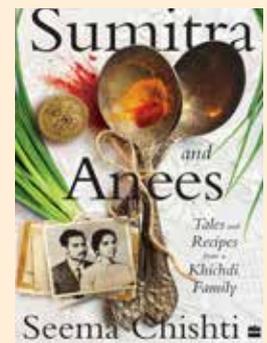
HarperCollins | ₹ 399 | Pages 200

In the India of today, social and communal fault lines have become starker than ever before. Inter-faith marriages, once seen as the hallmark of a pluralistic society, are now being increasingly used to further a divisive political narrative. Journalist Seema Chishti, herself the product of an inter-faith marriage from a time when the 'idea of India' was not just an idea but a lived reality, tells in this book the story of her parents: Sumitra, a Kshatriya Hindu from Mysore in Karnataka, and Anees, a Syed Muslim from Deoria in Uttar Pradesh. Woven into their story are recipes from Sumitra's kitchen, a site of confluence for the



diverse culinary traditions she mastered.

**Seema Chishti** has lived in Delhi as a journalist-writer for three decades. Her family ties to Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have meant a long engagement with these states over the years. She is interested in politics, society, questions of identity and technology, and in examining the changes in the information and digital space and the impact on our democracy and on the way we live. She is the co-author of *Note by Note: The India Story (1947-2017)* and has worked with the *BBC* in London and India, *The Indian Express* and *HTV*.



### THE LOST DIARY OF KASTUR, MY BA

By Tushar Gandhi

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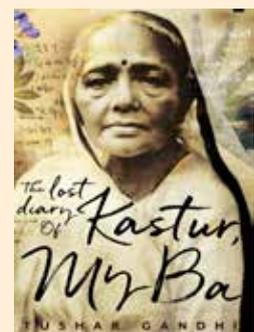
The only diary written by **Kasturba Gandhi** brings her voice to the foreground of history. In *The Lost Diary of Kastur, My Ba*, the reader hears Kasturba's voice for the first time. Through day-to-day activities, it provides a peek into what it was like to be married to the Mahatma. A century and a half after her birth, this book finally presents Kasturba as her own person, a woman of substance.

**Tushar Gandhi** is the great-grandson of Kasturba and



Mohandas Gandhi, grandson of their second son, Manilal, and daughter-in-law, Sushila, and son of Sunanda and Arun Gandhi. He is founder-president of the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation, president of the Lok Seva Trust and director of the Gandhi Research Foundation, Jalgaon.

His first book, *Let's Kill Gandhi!*, was published in 2007, with a revised edition in 2021.



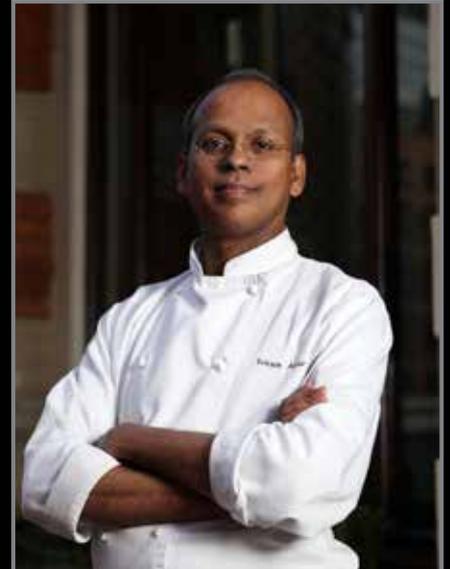




CHEF MANJUNATH MURAL



CHEF SUJAN SARKAR



CHEF SRIRAM AYLUR

Cover Story

# GLOBAL REACH OF DESI KHAANA

Indian food is now firmly on the culinary landscape. From being known as a cuisine of curries and spices, it has made giant strides with restaurants helmed by Indian chefs being awarded the much-coveted recognition from Michelin. We talk to some chefs about the evolution and nuances of Indian cuisine in their adopted countries

BY RUKMA SALUJA





Chicken Biryani - Adda

### What is the change in the Indian palate? How has it evolved?

**MM** Butter chicken remains a popular dish but there is a change. Young Indians and Singaporeans are happy to try different starters. They do, however, want to finish the meal with a traditional curry and Indian desserts. They like to try new things but when the taste moves too far from the original, they don't like it. Eg a regular chicken burger may not be too popular because it lacks punch, but one with Indian spices and marinade will fly off the counter.

**SA** People eat less chilli. They have not moved away from Indian food but are looking for a new evolved cuisine. This happens because of the relevance of time and the relevance of its own cooking. There has to be progressiveness in everything. Even art has gone through phases. Food, like art, should change because of the relevance of time and space but remain true to its cuisine. If I have to make a change it has to be true to its West Coast origins. New ingredients, new styles, new techniques, a new dish is good as long as it doesn't lose its ethos, and what it stands for. Ingredients may have been new in the past but become part of the cuisine. Say a black cod made with South Indian ingredients and spices and techniques. It tastes the same but actually it has black cod which is not available in South India. This is exposure and opportunity to experience and appreciate that change. This is cuisine becoming progressive and diners appreciating that subtle difference. Some of these become part of the repertoire.

**SS** That's not the case. Some days I might want the old and the familiar. You must remember there are those who came here 30-40 years ago. They are old school. The younger lot and the millennials are willing to experiment.

### Indian cuisine seems to be stuck with an impression of spices and more spices. To what extent have you managed to dispel and correct this perception?

**MM** The impression was that our food is oily, heavy and spicy and one would feel too full after an Indian meal. Now people eat out even twice a week, more than once in two or three months in the past, which was the case when I first came to Singapore in 2006. We use less fat and cream and butter and less spice. This has definitely worked in Singapore. Entrees are light, innovated recipes and are popular.

**SA** There's no question about it. Back in the day, in America, you got Indian food which was thought of as cheap. Today, good quality restaurants are opening. Chefs have understood that it's all up to them and that people don't want to feel stuffed and bloated after a meal. It should not be a punishment after eating!

**SS** Too much spice hides a recipe they don't know, or is undercooked. If you follow a recipe correctly, nothing is over spiced; it is subtle, balanced. Just because it has spice doesn't mean it is Indian food. People very often don't even know what real Indian food is. If you use spices indiscriminately, you are compromising with your dishes, your cuisine. We are slowly changing the perception.

### What changes have you had to bring to your style of cooking to keep up with this change?

**MM** Plant based food is picking up. People don't want to go straight to curries. Also, earlier, Indian desserts were too sweet and not popular. Now we do *gulab jamun* coated with nuts and less sugar. More starters, less sweet, more plant-based items, are ordered. People have moved away from kebabs for starters.



**MANJUNATH MURAL** is from a family of doctors. Working at the Renaissance in Mumbai fuelled his desire to rise in the hospitality industry. He became Director of Cuisine at the Song of India in

Singapore that got the Michelin star for four years from 2016 - 2019. He started Adda in 2020 and received the Michelin Plate in eight months.

**SA** You have to make sure the food is cooked properly, isn't too oily or spicy. People are well travelled and exposed to world cuisine, they know what to expect. In the past people dined out only for celebration, today it is for a change, even if it is only *chaat*. In that sense, people are now used to Indian food.

**SS** Remember, you can only do new kind of food if you bring in new ingredients. For example, the tomato isn't from India, but can you do a butter chicken without it? *Daal* can be cooked in a hundred different ways and everyone is going to say their version is authentic. When the cook changes, the taste is going to be slightly different, for that we have to follow recipes. Everything is recipe driven, ingredient driven, seasonal, and fresh. That I would say is the change.

### Is the non Indian diner ready to experience traditional and authentic Indian food, without an element of fusion?

**MM** They go with recommendations, chef-oriented and signature dishes. There are many authentic places for traditional curries but they come to a place like Adda when they want to try new Indian.

**SA** Yes. Absolutely.

**SS** In England, yes. They have had a historical association with the country and know Indian food. That is not the case in America. They are too scared. Take my mom, for example, she's never going to eat, say, Japanese food. That's the way for many people; you know they are never going to try anything different. When they do come we offer them what they are familiar with. They know Tuna, so they might try a dish with it and discover a slight change from the familiar. We need to keep the traditional and also offer a variation.

### What is the meaning of bringing nuance to the use of spices?

**MM** Some spices are not popular with the Singaporeans. Cumin for instance is a dense spice, chilli levels, *garam masala*. They find these spices heavy, so we avoid them, or use them sparingly.

If you serve good quality food and have a concept, people are willing to try it and are willing to come back time and again.

~Chef Manjunath Mural

**SA** When you put too much, it overpowers the taste of the actual dish. Even though we do traditional Indian food at the Bombay Brasserie, we don't overdo the oil and spices. As I always say, if you look at everyday home cooked food made by your mom or grandma, do you find tons of *garam masala* or oil? Nobody does it. How did this happen in commercial food. It was to show the richness of the food, perhaps. Chefs have understood that this is not true.

**SS** How differently and how much we use, how long it is grilled or roasted. It's about balance. If you mix spices, you get something. Should you use the same spices in everything? These are the subtle differences.

### What is the secret of good spices?

**MM** A combination. I avoid some spices like cumin, nutmeg, caraway, *kalonji*, etc. In Singapore, they love coriander, ginger, garlic, black and white pepper. I use what they enjoy.

**SA** Buy the right quality. For example, the best peppercorns are from Malabar in Kerala. The best cinnamon is from Sri Lanka. You must know in which season to buy, the origin, how you store your spices. Know the look of cardamom, coriander seeds. Do you need to extract the flavour by tempering in oil or by roasting? Dry roasting removes the moisture for long storage and enhances a strong fresh flavour. Indian moms have done this forever. Once you understand the chemistry, then comes the cooking, the skills. Know the strong and mild spices and how to handle them. For example, too much cinnamon or star anise will subsume the other flavours.

## Redefining a cuisine is a big thing. What I do is bring a different perspective.

~ Sujan Sarkar

**SS** How differently and how many we use spices are used, how long you cook or roast should you use the same spices? If you mix spices, you get a certain result. It's about the balance.

### In what way have you redefined Indian cuisine?

**MM** I make sauce in a westernised way. I strain all gravies and make them smooth. I use ingredients that are not used in Indian cuisine but cook them with Indian spices and in the Indian way. The perception is that Indian *mithai* is too sweet. I use local ingredients, like berries and figs that are familiar to the locals.

**SA** At the Bombay Brasserie we do traditional Indian food, and progressive Indian at Quilon with roots in the Indian West Coast. Because we have a mix of diners from around the world, we keep spice levels medium to allow even those who are not used to high spice levels to enjoy our meals. We don't compromise with the flavours. I believe, you should not mess around with traditional food unnecessarily. For example, we make fish *moily* from Kerala with clams and serve it as soup. The sauce remains *moily*.

**SS** Redefining a cuisine is a big thing. What I do is bring a different perspective. Back in the day a guy did *jalebi* or *biryani* for 40 years. Now it is different. I am trying to reach a larger audience.

### Would you say Indian food is complex and complicated? Or is it one or the other?

**MM** You might think it is complicated. This is because there is no



**SUJAN SARKAR** made a mark for himself at Automat, Almada, Michelin-starred Galvin at Windows in London and TRESIND in Dubai. He is chef and co-founder of ROOH, Indian restaurant

brands that serve modern Indian food in a blend of east and west, at six locations in the United States and in New Delhi. He has an Indian gastro bar called BAAR BAAR in New York.

standardisation which is essential but not easy because of a lack of consistency in the ingredients. You could cook your meat by the sous vide technique and use that for several dishes. That would bring an element of consistency, and make smooth sauces. This is how you can make Indian food less complicated.

**SA** Very complex. The number of ingredients, spices, layers and steps – it's almost like a philharmonic orchestra. If done correctly, ours is among the most sophisticated cuisines, with so much nuance, which we take for granted because this is how we cook, we need to respect our own cuisine more.

**SS** Not complicated, it is complex because you need to understand the dish. Define your cuisine, get into it more, understand your ingredients and spices.

### Indian food still remains low down on the list of priorities when ordering takeaway or eating out. What still needs to be done to improve this?

**MM** I've found that we ourselves have sold our food at low prices. So the perception is that Indian food is cheap. You can't find good pasta or sushi below a certain price. They have kept the value at a certain minimum therefore the perception is that these are superior cuisines. Chefs of our generation are paying the price for this. When we try to raise prices, it is hard to break the perception that good quality Indian food can be priced higher. There has to be a concerted revolutionary approach to dispel this old perception and create a new one. Each chef is trying this at an individual level but there has to be a common mass approach. For example, I made Indian food for 3000 people in China once and it flew off the counter. Similarly, once at a Chef's conference in Greece, 80 chefs ate my food. So, both times I was able to showcase Indian food in a different way. This is what I mean. Together, we have to show the world that Indian cuisine is more than spices and curries.

**SA** This is not true in the UK. In the past, sometimes, you didn't get proper Indian food even with Indian names. The menu might have *jaalfrezi* or *vindaloo*, but it wasn't, really. So there was a misconception in the past. Chefs are now talking about being inspired by Indian food and spices. There's nothing like a touch of spice to enhance flavours and this is what (non Indian) chefs have understood very well.



Lobster - Rooh

**SS** It's never going to be number one. Can Italian be number one in India? But, slowly, eating habits are changing, it's improving.

### What is the difference between Indian and non Indian diners in terms of food preference and what they order?

**MM** Non Indian diners like variety. They'll order multiple starters and are largely meat eaters. Indians are more calculating and order a mix of veg and non veg items. They order more balanced meals.

**SA** There is no difference. Those who are new to it are willing to experiment and ask for recommendations. We help them to order in the right combinations. Our tasting menus allow them to taste a variety.

**SS** Non Indians ask questions, details of ingredients and flavours, where it is sourced, and if the fish is in season. They are willing to try both traditional and experimental but will stick to ingredients with which they are familiar. Indians will always try new and experimental dishes.

### Artful plating is a huge part of gourmet dining. Indian cuisine with its gravies and curries doesn't lend itself well to this. Chefs have innovated to keep up with it. Is it possible to serve Indian food as artfully as western food without making it fusion?

**MM** I have redefined sauces. Chicken roulade which looks like a heart but the sauce is Indian. We should not copy western presentation but do it our own way: with edible flowers and garnishes, refined sauces, change the look and shape of the meat. All this can change the way you present it.

**SA** Some dishes play well on a plate. A curry can only be served in a pot. We are not driven to make it the most beautiful plate but to serve a dish true to what it is. We may change a cut but won't compromise with a flavour or a texture just to make it look beautiful on a plate. There may be limitations to what you can do, but so be it.

**SS** It is possible but not with all dishes. Indian food is better when it is mixed well. French and other cuisines lend themselves better to plating. They don't mix too much and keep things separate. You can take some dishes really far, others you can't, without compromising the recipe.

### How would you define modern Indian food?

**MM** One is Michelin-style like Chef Gaggan's, which is less Indian and more Western, French inspired and with a little Indian touch. The other is when you don't play with the basics of Indian cooking, spices, sauces, preparation, use modern ingredients, but present it differently. That gives it a modern spin.

**SA** I don't understand this like I don't understand modern art. What is contemporary? These terms are used when they don't know how to put it in a particular box or when they have not seen it before or to show they are different from the pack. They want to be *hatke*.

**SS** Each cuisine is progressive. What we ate as children is different from we eat today. In that sense all Indian food is progressive. Broccoli and coloured peppers were not used frequently, now they are. That's progressive, and adapted to old recipes, makes it modern. Fusion is different. We only thought of taste and flavour in Indian food. Now we look at the appearance and presentation as well. That's modern. It's important to



Fishermans Catch - Quilon

understand each part of the recipe, its ingredients, cooking techniques, presentation. The story is important; it's all about memory, how you ate it and what it meant to you.

### Restaurants open and close; food trends come and go. And yet there are the old favourites that have stood the test of time. What's the key to longevity in the world of gastronomy?

**MM** The key is memory. When I go to Mumbai, I want to eat *biryani* from Delhi Darbar. I don't want that to change. I want to taste that same *biryani* that I had as a child. The second generation is eating both the old and the new. Both palates are necessary. It is respect, it is memory.

**SA** When someone eats at a restaurant there is a simple test. How was the meal? Oh it was a great experience. Will you go there again? No, now we've experienced this, perhaps after six months or so. When it is an experience you go for the thrill. It remains with you when can connect it to something. In food that is the taste and texture. You may have enjoyed the evening or the experience but if you wonder what you will go back for that is about the experience and not the food. That's like going to a park or a circus. This experience must also connect with a much loved dish. If you ask the five-star hotels, they will tell you the dishes that sell the most remain the classics.

**SS** We went to different places for *bun maska* or *biryani*. What was previously skill driven is now ingredient driven. It has to be quick, it has to be healthy, it has to look good. Look at the pictures on Instagram. Also, how you style the restaurant, service, hygiene—if you manage that day in day out, you can stay in the business. You have to evolve, you cannot stand still. Earlier it was possible.

### What are the new styles and benchmarks of modern international cuisine and the way forward?

**MM** Chefs are experimenting with plant-based meat and chicken. Sustainability is a hot topic after climate change. I have a sustainable sauce made with stems of cauliflower and chillies. When you are a chef away from your own country you want to keep experimenting and pushing the envelope to showcase the cuisine of your country. You keep track of what other chefs are doing and see what you can also do. That is how you evolve.

**SA** Ingredients and the source of the produce will become even more paramount. Eg how is a chicken raised, is the variety suitable for the dish I want to make? Cuisines learn from other cuisines. Vegetarianism is more prevalent. Once Indian food is put more on the map, the world will understand how well Indian food lends itself to both vegetarian and vegan. Food will get lighter and simpler, people will understand nuances better. People are more aware of what they eat because there is less movement. Eating out is not going away. People want to socialise.

**SS** Farm to fork. There are so many small farmer's market. New limited menus, super seasonal, ingredient based, alternative ingredients to meat, plant based meat, wood fired cooking, less cooked, more raw food in the menu, mainly sea food, if its super fresh. Vegan.

### What is the essence of fine dining?

**MM** I'm not sure fine dining is entirely about the food. It is the experience more than anything else—ambience, boneless meat, service, wine selection, a good selection of liquor, the number of servers. The most important is the butler service, crumbing after every course.



**SRIRAM AYLUR**, originally a native of Kerala started his journey at the Gateway Hotel in Bengaluru, and in just two years, became the executive chef. He opened Karavali in 1990, a South Indian restaurant that

specialises in authentic seafood from Kerala and Goa that became among the top five restaurants in India. In 1999 he opened Quilon in London which from 2008 onwards went on to get 14 Michelin stars.

**SA** It's all about the experience, enjoy the food, the ambience, the cultural ethos of a cuisine. At Quilon, our food has a story: the West Coast of India. When you tell a story you go and research that story and find a connect. But when you research modern or contemporary, what would you get? That's the importance of the story.

**SS** It is fine food with a limited menu and extra care with service. Earlier there were multiple people looking after you, someone was pouring your water and wine. Now there's less staff. You may not be particular if the water is being poured from your left or your right, or about the angle of your fork. You may expect different things. You eat out more and want different but good food, not necessarily a fine dining experience. Going forward, it will be less, not go away, but will be more about good food and less about the other aspects of fine dining.

### How different is Indian fine dining from western fine dining?

**MM** Western fine dining is usually chef oriented with a limited menu. There will be just about 20 dishes where the chefs often focus on signature dishes. Indians will have a huge menu. From the service perspective, there is no difference. We work hard on the plating. Usually wide bowls are used, and there are lots of garnishes in Indian fine dining.

**SA** The approach is different. We have multiple layers. But there's a tendency to borrow and try to make it interesting. French and Italian are true to their cuisine.

### Can fine dining and sustainable co-exist? (Eg. some ingredients have to be flown across oceans, which adds to the carbon footprint)

**MM** Singapore imports everything. So the best we can do here is avoid wastage. In the proper sense of sustainable, you use what the local farmers grow, and you dispose of it as manure. A good example is Bali in Indonesia. The government does not allow imports so the chefs are forced to use local sea food and meat and the menu changes according to the season and what is available locally.

We don't compromise with the flavours. You should not mess around with traditional food unnecessarily.

~Sriram Aylur

**SA** Part of this is about being stuck up. People are becoming conscious. Local is the mantra. There are chefs who refuse to use imported produce. They insist on local and fresh and are hugely successful. You may not opt for Wagyu beef but you will source the best locally. And if a producer knows he will earn from producing the best, that he will get a return on his investment, he will do his best produce the best.

**SS** That is happening. Restaurants are placed close to farms. It's all about local, sustainable, limited, quality, manpower.

### Vegan, sustainable, detox...there's a new vocabulary out there. We've had lockdowns, and takeaways became the norm. If you were to gaze into your crystal ball, what would you see ahead?

**MM** My observation is that vegan is followed by only certain types of people, largely those who want to show themselves as different from the rest. This is the sum total of demand at the restaurant (so far). My suspicion, and I can't say this with any certainty, is that it will remain in this percentage. In any case, it is not a new concept for Indians. But for the sake of building a narrative around it is a must – that we offer vegan options.

**SA** Life will go back to normal. Takeaways will remain but things will go back to normal.

**SS** More plant based food and away from red meat. New things will keep coming. ■

# CAREGIVING FROM A DISTANCE

The other side of the diaspora experience is loneliness and neglect, particularly for the elderly. Attention and sensitivity can go a long way in ensuring love and care for those who have raised you to adulthood and provided the stepping stone to your success

BY SEJAL DESAI

**M**y maternal grandmother, who I call Ba, turned 110 in December. She is nine years younger than Kane Tanaka, the oldest person in the world. After two years, I recently had the opportunity to spend time in Mumbai with my parents who are 79 and 83 and have been caring for my Ba through Covid. Observing their collective resilience through very challenging times nudged me to reflect on my Ba's life and the role of caregivers.

A decade ago, when Ba was about to turn 100, people would ask me, "What's her secret?" and "Is there longevity in your family?" I knew she had won the genetic lottery but beyond that I did not know what to attribute it to. In search of an answer, I Googled, "What makes people live to 100?" The Blue Zones Project popped up.

The Blue Zones Project, a study conducted in conjunction with *National Geographic*, identified rare longevity hotspots around the world and looked for common characteristics among its centenarians. Through their research, they developed The Power 9 (secrets of

longevity) framework for living a healthy and meaningful life.

When I first read The Power 9 list, I had an 'ah-ha' moment. I could connect so many of them back to my grandmother's story and in turn other Blue Zone centenarians. The list is practical, and we can apply it to modern life. We may not all live to 100, but maybe we can extend our lives by 5-10 healthy, meaningful years. That is what kept me going down the research path and I began to adopt some of these Power 9 habits myself.

## GOOD TO KNOW FOR DISTANCE CAREGIVERS

My husband and I have not yet had to step into the role of active caregivers. We have other family members living with our elders in India, so we have been primarily emotional caregivers or caregivers at a distance. Throughout my life, I have had the opportunity to observe numerous caregivers: my mother, aunts, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and others. I have also watched my friends and family in the US

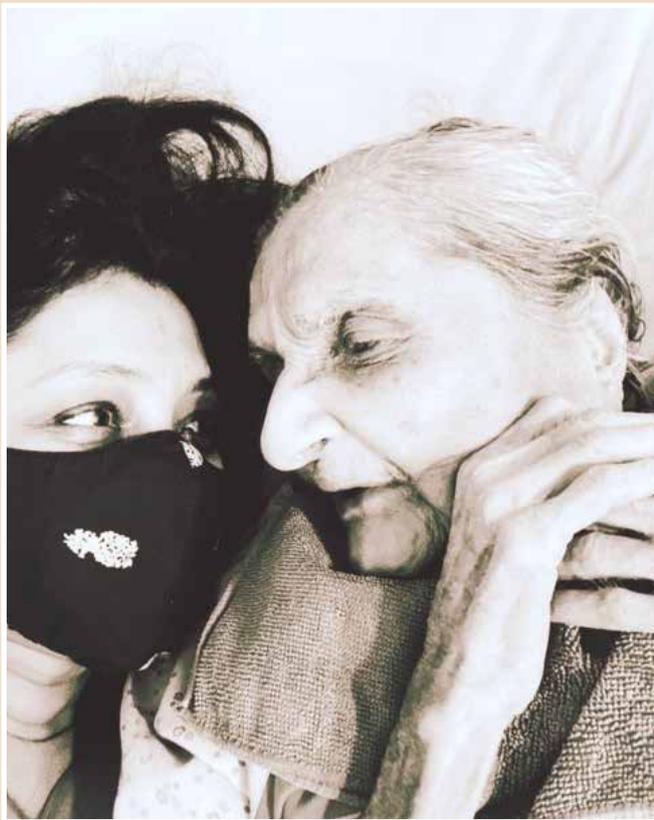
grapple with distance care—needing to provide for medical and emotional support. These experiences along with my work as a board member of a Dallas-based non-profit, The Senior Source, has helped me develop these six simple yet meaningful strategies for elder care at a distance.

**1. DON'T DO IT ALONE** Caregivers, especially those at a distance, need to engage family, friends, and trusted service providers. Having a support system allows others to pitch in by either providing respite care, taking direct responsibility for the senior, or by doing small services to support the caregiver. When my mother was ill with Covid-19 in the early days of the pandemic and I was 10,000 miles away, her strong support network of family and neighbours all pitched in to get us through a very difficult time.

**2. VISIT REGULARLY** A planned visit gives your older parent or grandparent something to look forward to. Setting a specific date and increasing frequency of



Caregivers, especially those at a distance, need to engage family, friends, and trusted service providers. Having a support system allows others to pitch in by either providing respite care, taking direct responsibility for the senior, or by doing small services to support the caregiver.



Sejal is a passionate advocate and supporter of various US and India based nonprofits focusing on education, hunger relief and women's issues. Her 30+ year career includes work in sectors like venture capital, M&A, accounting, entrepreneurship, nonprofit and corporate social responsibility. She is the Executive Director for Akanksha Education Fund. She also serves on the Board of The Senior Source. She is a Chartered Accountant from India and holds a Masters in Business Administration from University of Texas at Dallas and Masters in Liberal Studies from Southern Methodist University. Sejal lives in Dallas with her husband, Hemang and two children, Mohan and Maya.

**The State of World Population report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) states India's population in 2019 was 1.36 billion, with 6 percent (which is 81.6 million) being of age 65 years and above.**

**The Indian joint family system is almost extinct; innumerable seniors are living alone, or with caregivers in old-age homes. This number will only grow, with more and more of them requiring old-age homes, caregivers, emotional support and continuous handholding.**

visits is always better than a vague future expectation. Our other interactions, such as texts or phone calls, offer micro-doses of happiness. But when you visit, it is like a booster shot that fills the elderly with energy and excitement.

### 3. IDENTIFY LOCAL TECH SUPPORT

Because of Covid, we all started using technology more, including our seniors. Video chats can serve as a substitute for face-to-face interactions. While this is a great way to stay connected with elders at a distance, make sure you can identify dependable tech support locally. When I recently visited India, I would sit down with my parents almost every evening and help them with their iPad, laptop or app log-ins. Even though my dad writes all my instructions down on paper, it is still confusing, and more often than not, he will lose the paper. Having local tech support provided by younger neighbours or local family is really helpful.

**4. PLAN ACTIVITIES** Even at a distance, you can help your seniors plan activities, like getaways and social time. I recently encouraged them to plan a short afternoon trip to the beach and an

outdoor lunch for my parents' anniversary. They rarely get out these days, so I gave them ideas, offered to make reservations, and curate activities. Caregiving, especially during Covid, was extremely challenging. Even though my parents love caring for my grandmother, they need to stay engaged with each other and life outside of caregiving. Also, during Covid, many seniors were entirely home-bound and now they need to regain the confidence to venture out on their own. Planning simple activities or organised trips can give them something special to anticipate and rebuild their confidence.

**5. CREATE MOMENTS OF JOY** During my recent visit, I was tempted to curl into my Ba's at-home hospital bed (it's a single) but was worried about crushing her frail body. But as my departure approached, I was overcome with emotion and just did it! Laying my head on her pillow, cuddling up with her like I would many years ago was pure bliss. She can only hear from her right ear now and so she could hear me much better; we spoke for a couple of hours. I hugged her and felt the comfort of my childhood years. I also got a chance to record some of our conversations to



Sejal and her family with Ba who turned 110

Video chats can serve as a substitute for face-to-face interactions. While this is a great way to stay connected with elders at a distance, make sure you can identify dependable tech support locally.

share with family. It was pure bliss for both of us. When my husband calls or visits his parents, he brings up a previous vacation or shows pictures from an old photo album to rekindle memories. It helps them have a meaningful shared experience.

**6. FINDING PURPOSE** Because of my family, I have a deep passion and interest in older adults, and I am happy to support others on this journey. I serve on the board of The Senior Source, a Dallas-based nonprofit that serves elders in the North Texas community. It was my mom who discovered The Senior Source when she came to the US over a decade ago to help take care of my kids. With a strong desire to volunteer in the community, she joined the Retired Senior Volunteer

Program (RSVP). RSVP placed her as a volunteer at the local public school and library. Find a local nonprofit in their community to help them get engaged and provide them an opportunity to find continued meaning and purpose in life and meet like-minded people.

My 80-year-old parents are caregivers for my 110-year-old grandmother. My dad recently joked, "Ba may likely outlive us!" But it's not really a joke. That could happen because caregivers rarely take care of themselves. I wish I could be there to support them and my Ba but I can only do so from a distance. My parents are my inspiration. As a caregiver, my mom embraces her responsibilities in a profound way. She has derived purpose and meaning in that engagement and I think it has kept her young because she is physically and

**India's elderly population will rise 41% over the next decade to touch 194 mn in 2031. Kerala has the current highest elderly population (16.5%) followed by Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Assam have the least, according to a National Statistical Office report.**

emotionally vested in the process. I hope to embody their spirit of caregiving when I find myself in that role. ■

# A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY IMMIGRATION SUCCESS STORY

Devesh Gupta set up Prudent Law in Greater Toronto in 2015 and has clocked exceptional growth, focusing on immigration from India, particularly from Punjab

## BY GURMUKH SINGH

The writer is a senior Canada-based journalist.

**A**s the population of the Indo-Canadian community here increases rapidly with the influx of a record number of new immigrants and students, many Indian-origin people are making huge strides in various professions.

Hundreds of young Indo-Canadians in legal, medical, and other professions are making it to the top.

Delhi-born young lawyer Devesh Gupta's law firm, Prudent Law, in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is not just one among them. It has created a league of its own with quality customer service and record business volume.

"In fact, our business has grown two to three times during the past two years amid the Covid pandemic," says Gupta, sitting in his corporate office in downtown Mississauga in Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

"The real estate sector really boomed during the pandemic. Since real estate is our core business, we posted huge growth during this period," he adds.

Apart from real estate, he says Prudent Law has registered major growth in other areas—litigation, commercial law, corporate law, mortgage and immigration—in the past two years.

"Yes, we are growing big in all areas, but immigration is our new focus. As immigration picks up after Covid, we are

looking for big growth in this area. We have added a dedicated immigration lawyer—Ajay Atwal—to our team. He is also fluent in Punjabi, which is a focus area for us as Punjabis make up a huge chunk of new immigrants to Canada," explains Gupta.

Eyeing major immigration business, he says his law firm may establish its own presence in India in the future.

"Right now, we have immigration consultants in India as our partners and we are looking for more partners there because immigration from India is going up every year. Going forward, it is very much in our scheme of things."

Not surprisingly, his firm has just been rated as one among the top 10 emerging immigration firms in Canada by *Manage HR* magazine for 2022.

"In our litigation business also, we have been posting huge growth and handling lots of complicated cases."

However, real estate remains the core business of Prudent Law.

"In the real estate business, our client network is growing. Today, we represent all major banks in this business. There are also some Indian banks," he adds.

Apart from banks, his other major corporate clients in real estate include hotels and hospitality, food majors, steel companies and the garment industry.

To stay ahead of the curve, he says his law firm is quickly adopting cutting-edge technologies for business efficiency.

"We are in the process of developing our own software to improve customer service, speed up work efficiency and cut costs for our customers. Quality customer service is everything."

And for its quality customer service, Prudent Law has been given the Greater Toronto Area's Consumer Choice Award for consecutive years and the Top Choice Award too for two years in a row.

Highlighting the word 'prudent' in his law firm's name, Gupta says, "We chose this name to convey what we are in this profession. We always give prudent advice to our clients and they appreciate it. We try to be upfront and honest about pricing as well and that helps our clients make right decisions about themselves."

During the six years of his law firm's existence, he says he and his team have religiously followed two things.

"One, if you do good work, it comes back to you. If you keep doing the right thing, good things will happen to you. Two, our profession involves a lot of trust. If you respect your customer's trust, it gives you financial rewards, business growth and sound sleep. At Prudent Law, we always put the customer ahead of everything."

**‘Yes, we are growing majorly in all areas, but immigration is our new focus. As immigration picks up after Covid, we are looking for big growth in this area.’**

That’s why, he adds, his law firm has rarely spent any money on marketing.

“All our business comes through referrals and word of mouth from satisfied customers.”

Looking back at the six years of his legal journey, he says, “I am presented with more than my fair share of opportunities to make a difference in people’s lives. I take these opportunities wherever possible, and I have found that the satisfaction and happiness that I receive from these is much greater than that from profit and earnings.”

Looking to the future, he says, “Our focus is on expanding our practice areas and reach. We have done very well so far.”

Indeed, the young Indo-Canadian lawyer, who came to Canada as a 13-year-old with his family from Delhi in April 2001, has achieved way beyond expectations in the new country.

“I had just finished my eighth grade from DPS Mathura Road when one fine morning my father announced that we were going to Canada as our immigration papers had come. He cited a sense of lack of security for his decision to take his family—my two elder sisters, mom and me—to Canada. He was doing very well in his construction business. We go back five generations in Shahpur Jat village of Delhi. My family lived in Greater Kailash-I for about 30 years



before we left for Toronto,” he says.

The new immigrant family bought a clothing factory in the city of Mississauga and named it APG Manufacturing (‘A’ for his mother, Anita, ‘P’ for his father, Pravin, and ‘G’ for garments) to make uniforms for hospitals and police as young Devesh attended school and later finished his BBA degree from Toronto’s Schulich School of Business. After his BBA degree, he went for his law degree. “My grandfather was a lawyer, and he was my role model for becoming a lawyer.”

Upon graduation, he says he combined his family background in law and business to start a law firm to practise both skills.

“Since my dad was into real estate construction, I grew up inheriting that

business sense. Then I studied law because I wanted to be a lawyer as I was inspired by my lawyer grandfather. So I ended up combining my knowledge in both fields—real estate and law—by launching Prudent Law in 2015,” he says.

Coming from a close-knit family, he gives credit for his success to his family and Indian values. And he is all praise for his wife, Shivani, whom he married in 2014 and with whom he has two children—a daughter and a son.

“Shivani is my rock. She is a balance to me and is often able to give me a viewpoint that I could not even have imagined. I find myself seeking her advice on all major decisions, not out of obligation but out of genuine respect for her analysis.” ■

# IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

From providing for comfortable stay for doctors and nurses during the pandemic; supporting education of children orphaned by communal violence; building infrastructure in government schools; providing cancer treatment facilities and improving rural livelihoods, POWERGRID's range of work constitutes a shining example of how a PSU can contribute to the economic and social development of the nation

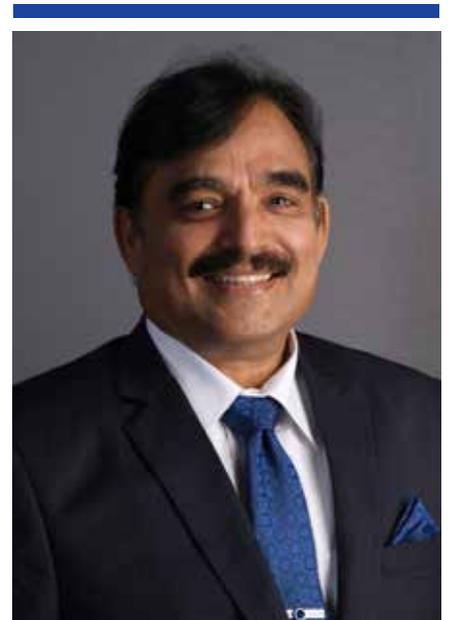
**BY PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO JR**

**P**ublic Sector Undertakings (PSUs) have often got bad press over the years. Before the era of reforms began in 1971, they were blamed for bureaucratic snags, and for everything that went with the name of socialism. And after the 1991 reforms, the demand was that PSUs must be privatised because they are loss-making units. And there has always been the argument that the private sector is better than the public sector in terms of efficiency, and in recruiting people on merit. There is much truth in these charges, but when they become settled prejudices in the minds of people then the public sector is viewed with suspicion and hostility. But many PSUs have functioned efficiently, have nourished talent in terms of personnel, and have made huge profits. It is for this reason that successive governments had to reassign many of the good PSUs as gems of performance, especially in the infrastructure sectors like oil, gas and power.

The Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (POWERGRID) is one of the shining examples of how a PSU performs well, contributes to the success of the nation and, more importantly, fulfils its Corporate

Social Responsibility (CSR) obligations with creativity, imagination and compassion. This has come to the fore especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, but even before that the corporation has been devoting its CSR funds to education and health, the social infrastructure segments which are most neglected. It has also set a good example of reaching out to regions and people who need help rather than building facilities in urban centres where they are of little use.

**Vinod Kumar Singh, Director (Personnel)**, moved from a multinational in the private sector to the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited and has grown with the corporation over the decades. In an interview with *Pravasi Indians*, Singh revealed many interesting aspects of the progress made and the CSR work undertaken by the corporation. He said that the corporation undertakes CSR works mainly on its own and also implements the projects through state govt. and other govt. agencies. It has been a learning process as in the case of building toilets as part of the Swachh Bharat campaign. The school toilets were initially



Vinod Kumar Singh, Director (Personnel)

constructed and handed over to State Education Department. Now running water facility is being provided in addition to their repair/rectification.

The Power Grid Corporation of India has spent modest but impressive amounts, two percent of its profits, on its CSR activities. It has spent ₹196 crore in 2018-19, ₹346 crore in 2019-20, ₹240 crore in 2020-21, ₹257 crore in 2021-22, and now has a target of ₹304 crore for FY2022-23.



One of the 52 farm ponds constructed by POWERGRID, under rural development projects, in Jaipatna block of Kalahandi district in Odisha



Newly constructed modular operation theatres in the Women and Child Hospital, TMC Mumbai



Women in Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh learning to make sanitary napkins, PPE kits, surgical masks, etc

### EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

#### The Covid-19 pandemic must have been a great challenge in your CSR work. What has been the corporation's contribution?

During the Covid-19 pandemic, recognising the pressing urgency of the situation, we set up the Oxygen Generation Plant at Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Gurugram, Haryana, in August 2021, and another at Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, which was commissioned in June 2021. Through its dedicated effort of contributing towards better healthcare facilities, POWERGRID has provided cold chain equipment (181 ice lined refrigerators and 130 deep freezers) costing around ₹2.66 crore to Punjab, Sikkim, Mizoram and the Union Territory of Ladakh.

We have also provided two insulated vans for facilitating the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the remote areas of Ladakh. One of our flagship projects is our Vishram Sadans, to provide accommodation to families of patients in major hospitals across the country. Many

**'POWERGRID has focused on one other particular area, which is cancer treatment. We have contributed towards creating an infrastructure specialised facility for patients. We have taken this initiative in collaboration with the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Mumbai.'**

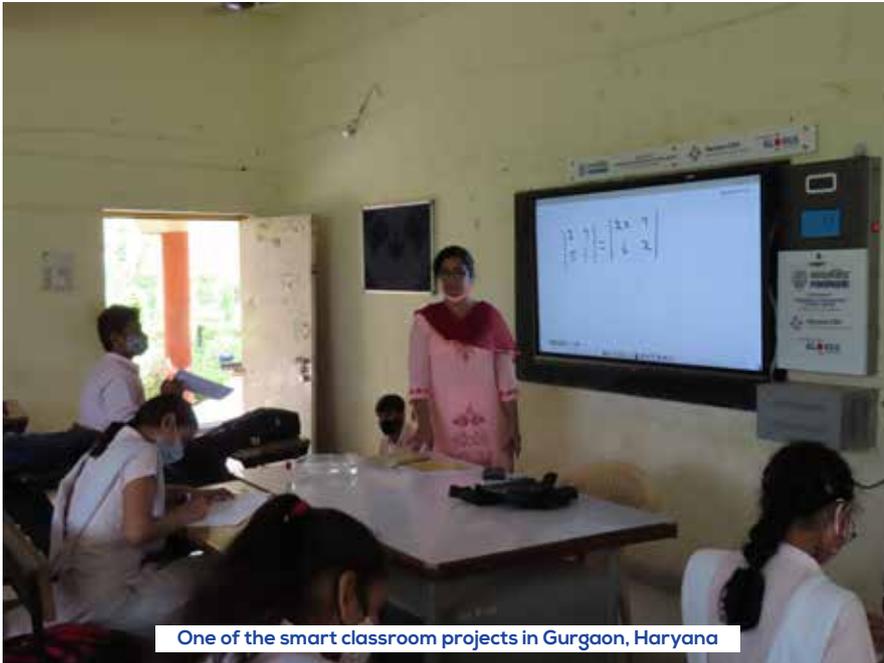
of them have been completed and others are in various stages of completion. A majority of the people utilising the services come from economically weaker sections of society. During the pandemic, Vishram Sadans provided comfortable stay for doctors and nurses who were working round the clock in government hospitals.

#### We consider this a feather in our CSR cap. Do you take up long-term commitment for the upkeep of the projects you undertake?

We do take into consideration the assets that will be created and their maintenance before we take up any project or plan any project which involves asset creation that may require maintenance. The concerned authorities are briefed about such projects in advance and prior commitment is taken regarding the maintenance, which also ensures the sense of belonging. However, periodically, we also make regular visits to assets we have created to ensure that they are in use for the said purpose, and to see if they require any further assistance from our end.

#### POWERGRID has been honoured with the National CSR Award by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. What was the award-winning project?

POWERGRID and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) came together to work on a project, Improving Rural Livelihoods



One of the smart classroom projects in Gurgaon, Haryana

**'In rural India we have projects focused around infrastructure development in government schools which includes classroom buildings, hostels for students, playground development, furniture and other basic amenities to be made available for all.'**

through Farmer-centric Integrated Watershed Management. Ten villages in Bethamcherla *mandal* of Kurnool district, covering 7,711 hectares, were selected in consultation with the community. The overall goal of the POWERGRID-ICRISAT watershed initiative was to improve livelihoods of the rural poor on a sustainable basis through integrated watershed management initiatives and to develop pilot sites as a site of learning. To achieve this, 27 activities were planned and executed across the 10 villages. Based on the need assessment and feasibility, a total of 306 water harvesting structures and natural resource management (NRM) structures were built during the period (2014-2020), which include 18 check dams, four mini percolation tanks, and 167 farm ponds. Simultaneously, we took up a project site at Vijayapura district in Karnataka also.

The project got its due recognition from various platforms and the prestigious National CSR Award 2018 was conferred by the President of India on October 29, 2019 in the category.

We have replicated the project in Kalahandi, Odisha over the past one and a half years. In the first year itself, the project has benefited 1,750 households and it will be further implemented over the

next two to three years.

**I believe you have done some projects in the field of education also. What kind of projects have you taken up in that field and what is your experience?**

Yes, our second most important focus is in the field of education, from basic infrastructure development to providing digital education access to rural India. Our recent focus has been on developing smart classes which we have taken up in Haryana, Rajasthan, Assam, etc. We have taken up 810 smart classes in 405 schools of various districts in Haryana. Likewise, we have also taken up the initiative with Army Goodwill Schools in Jammu and Kashmir.

In the Northeast (Assam and Manipur), POWERGRID has initiated a project to support education of children affected by communal and ethnic violence who have lost their parent(s). From 2014 till now we have supported approximately 1,600 children's education from school level to higher studies with our implementing partner, the National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH) which is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Apart from the above, in rural India we have projects focused around infrastructure development in government schools which

includes classroom buildings, hostels for students, playground development, furniture and other basic amenities to be made available for all.

**We have learnt that POWERGRID is helping many hospitals in treatment of cancer.**

POWERGRID has focused on one other particular area, which is cancer treatment. We have contributed towards creating an infrastructure specialised facility for patients. We have taken this initiative in collaboration with the *Tata Memorial Centre (TMC)*, Mumbai. Financial assistance has been provided as part of funding along with the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India for creating a Nuclear Medicine Theragnostic facility for patients undergoing radioisotope treatment at *TMC/ACTREC*, Mumbai. Further, the CSR project of equipping a Modular Operation Theatre at the Women and Child Hospital, ACTREC campus, *TMC*, Navi Mumbai is under progress. The proposed facilities will enable 10,000 advanced surgeries on cancer patients, predominantly women and children.

The Capacity Development Centre in Oncology at Dr B. Borooah Cancer Institute (BCCI), Guwahati under the CSR scheme of POWERGRID was inaugurated by the



Ambulances waiting to be handed over to government hospitals in West Bengal

Governor of Assam, Prof. Jagdish Mukhi, on July 1, 2020. The new facility augments capacity development in the field of cancer research and education. It houses the Clinical Research Secretariat, Division of Molecular Epidemiology, Clinical Trial, Oncology Nursing Education in addition to a facility for accommodation of research scholars and visiting faculty.

Recently, POWERGRID has also taken up a project in Kerala for providing a Ring Gantry Linear Accelerator for radiotherapy treatment at the Regional Cancer Centre, Thiruvananthapuram.

### What is the mechanism in the Power Grid Corporation to decide on CSR projects? Do you have a specific committee?

Our priority is taking up projects in proximity to our establishments which affect the stakeholders directly. As per the law, we have to spend minimum 2 percent of our profit on CSR. In POWERGRID, we assign the CSR spending with People and Planet at the back of our minds. Our basis of social and environmental responsibility is the 3Ps Principle, which is People, Planet, and Profit. Every project that we take up goes through a rigorous process of Need Assessment, which looks into its coverage & impact on the society and the



**'During the Covid-19 pandemic, Vishram Sadans have provided comfortable stay for doctors and nurses who were working round the clock in government hospitals. We consider this a feather in our CSR cap.'**

environment on a sustainable basis. Yes, POWERGRID has a CSR Committee.

### You had mentioned during our conversation that you take up the projects and execute them in association with the district authorities without involving any other organisation. Do you think that has an advantage or you face challenges in execution?

Yes, a majority of projects are implemented directly by POWERGRID. If required at certain levels, the district administration is also involved for smooth implementation. However, we do have partnerships with some organisations when we need subject/domain experts to implement our projects. For example, watershed management required experts in that field and we partnered with ICRISAT for that. The education support programme in the Northeast has a partnership with NFCH, which has control in difficult terrain; violence-affected areas are sensitive which requires certain permissions and documentation, etc. For construction of Vishram Sadans in various government hospitals we partnered with Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation Limited (HSCC India). ■

# राष्ट्रसेवा से मिट सकती है प्रवासियों के अलगाव की पीड़ा

तरह तरह की दुविधाओं से घिरे प्रवासी भारतीय चाह कर भी अपने देश की सेवा नहीं कर पाते। अपनी धमनियों में बहने वाली भारतीय संस्कृति और परंपरा से जुड़ कर तथा उन अनुभवों को साझा कर वे संभवतः बहुत हद तक इस ग्लानि से बच सकते हैं। प्रवासी भारतीयों का अपनी मिट्टी से अलग होने का वियोग और उनसे जुड़े कड़वे अनुभवों को उकेरता यह आलेख।



मणीन्द्र नाथ ठाकुर

लेखक जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय के राजनीतिक विज्ञान के प्राध्यापक हैं और भारतीय ज्ञान-परंपरा और राजनैतिक-चिंतन के सामयिक पक्षधर रहे हैं। इनकी एक पुस्तक *ज्ञान की राजनीति: समाज अध्ययन और भारतीय चिंतन* अभी अभी प्रकाशित हुई है।

आधुनिक विज्ञान और समाज अध्ययन के भाषा की एक बड़ी समस्या है कि इसमें 'मन' की कोई समझ नहीं है। जब कोई 'मन की बात' करता है तो इसका क्या मतलब होता है? जब कोई कहता है कि मेरे मन में एक बात आ रही है या कहता है कि मेरा मन खराब हो रहा है या फिर किसी व्यक्ति के बारे में कहता है कि मेरे मन से उतर गया या मेरा मन वहाँ खूब लगता है, तो इन सब में 'मन' का क्या मतलब है? मन की सुनो, मन में जो आए वही करो आदि-आदि हमें अक्सर सुनने को मिलता है। और प्रवासी भारतीयों से ज़्यादा मन के बारे में बातें कौन करता है। निश्चित रूप से 'मन' हमारे अंदर की एक अनुभूति है, जिसका कोई रूप या आकार नहीं होता है। यह एक सूक्ष्म चीज़ है जिसके अस्तित्व को हम अनुभव तो कर सकते हैं लेकिन इसे देख और छू नहीं सकते हैं। मन की भी अपनी आँखें हैं, उनके कान हैं। एक तरह से

समझें तो आदमी के अंदर का वह एक और आदमी है, जिसे बंगाल के बाऊल लोग कहते हैं 'मोनेर मानुष'। इस लेख में प्रवासी भारतीय लोगों के इसी मन को समझने की कोशिश करना चाहता हूँ। किसी के मन को समझना तो कठिन है, लेकिन उसके अंदर झांकना असम्भव नहीं। खास कर उनके मन में भारतीय संस्कृति, ज्ञान परम्परा और राजनीति को लेकर जो ऊहापोह चल रहा है उसे समझना ज़्यादा कठिन नहीं है।

प्रसिद्ध फ्रांसीसी मनोवैज्ञानिक लकाँ ने इंसानी रिश्तों को समझने के लिए कुछ कॉन्सेप्ट का उपयोग किया है जिससे प्रवासी मन को समझने में हमारी कुछ सहायता हो सकती है। लकाँ बताते हैं कि बच्चे प्रारम्भिक दौर में अपने शरीर को अपनी माँ के शरीर से अलग नहीं समझते हैं। अलग समझने की प्रक्रिया शुरू होती है - लगभग दस से अठारह महीने के बीच। इसलिए आप देखेंगे कि जब बच्चा थोड़ा बड़ा होता है तो एक ऐसी स्थिति आती है जब दर्पण में अपने आप को देख कर वह चकित होता है कि यह है कौन? कभी अपने आप को छूता है कभी दर्पण को और कभी अपनी माँ को। दरअसल वह पहली बार अपने अस्तित्व को अपनी माँ के अस्तित्व से अलग समझने की प्रक्रिया से गुजर रहा होता है। लकाँ इसे मनुष्य के विकास का 'मिरर स्टेज' कहते हैं। यह बदलाव बच्चे के लिए सुखद नहीं होता। इसके बाद बच्चा अपनी माँ से और ज़्यादा लगाव महसूस करता है। इस लगाव को लकाँ 'इमागो' कहता है। यह दूरी जितनी बढ़ती है मन में मोह उतना ज़्यादा पनपता है। मेरा मानना है कि यही बात संस्कृतियों के बारे में भी लागू होती है। संस्कृतियाँ मनुष्य की माँ जैसी होती हैं। हम जब तक उसमें

घुले-मिले रहते हैं उसकी समझ अलग से नहीं बनती है। जब उसका अभाव होने लगता है तो हमें उसकी यादें या समझ ज़्यादा होने लगती हैं। प्रवासी भारतीयों के साथ ऐसा ही कुछ होता है। अपने वतन को छोड़ने की लाचारी भी होती है और वतन के छूट जाने का ग़म भी। वतन छोड़ना कोई आसान काम नहीं है। परिवेश की अर्थव्यवस्था, अच्छे रोजगार की तलाश या अभाव और सामाजिक असमानता जैसे कई कारणों से लोग गाँव या शहर छोड़ बाहर जाते हैं। वहाँ पहुँचकर उन्हें सब कुछ तो मिल जाता है, लेकिन वह संस्कृति व परिवेश जिसमें वह जन्म लेते हैं, जो रक्त के साथ घुल कर उनकी धमनियों में बहती है, उसका अभाव खटकता रहता है। उनके मन की दुविधा यह है कि वहाँ जा भी नहीं सकते हैं और उसके बिना रह भी नहीं सकते हैं। मन देश और विदेश के बीच पेंडुलम की तरह डोलता रहता है। सपने में गाँव नज़र आता है और जागने पर शहर में अपना भविष्य। प्रवासी भारतीयों का मन इसी द्वंद में आजीवन उलझा रहता है। इसी द्वंद या दुविधा का इस्तेमाल सामाजिक संगठनों को बनाने में होता है और कई बार राजनैतिक संगठनों के समर्थन में भी। संस्कृति के प्रति जो प्रेम है उसके दुरुपयोग की भी उतनी ही संभावना है। स्वदेश प्रेम में लोग धुतराष्ट्र बन जाते हैं और न्याय अन्याय के बीच का फर्क भी भूल जाते हैं और अंध राष्ट्रवाद का भी शिकार हो जाते हैं। इसलिए जब देश में राष्ट्रवाद धीरे-धीरे अस्मिता की राजनीति में बदलने लगता है 'इमागो' के कारण प्रवासी लोग उसे देख नहीं पाते हैं। जब तक यह समझ आता है समय गुजर गया होता है। अन्य समाज में अर्थोपार्जन तो किया जा सकता है लेकिन लोगों की हालत वैसी ही हो जाती है जैसे मीठे पानी



के तालाब की मछली को निकाल कर विशाल समुद्र के खारे पानी में डाल दिया गया हो। एक बार कोपेनहेगन के रेलवे स्टेशन पर मैं ट्रेन का इंतज़ार कर रहा था। मेरे अलावा केवल एक और यात्री था जो अफ्रीका के किसी देश का निवासी था। ट्रेन आने में देर थी। मैं एक आम हिंदुस्तानी की तरह उसके करीब गया और उससे बातचीत करने लगा। मैंने पूछा कि यह शहर उन्हें कैसा लगा। उनके जवाब कि 'पिछले दस वर्षों में मैं पहला आदमी था जिसे उनके बारे में जानने में कोई दिलचस्पी दिखी' ने मुझे चकित कर दिया। काफ़ी समय तक वह अपने गांव के परिवेश और अपनों से बिछुड़ जाने की कहानियाँ सुनाता रहा। मैं उसकी दिलचस्प कहानियाँ सुनता रहा और प्रवासी भारतीयों के मानस की तुलना उनसे करता रहा। अलगाव का यह दर्द उनके अंदर भी है और अपने लोगों के साथ जुड़े रहने का मन उनका भी है। लेकिन उसमें एक और दुविधा है। कई बार उन्हें लगता है कि जिन लोगों को, जिस समय को और जिस परिवेश व समाज को वे पीछे छोड़ आये हैं, उसमें वापस जाना सम्भव नहीं है। बीच-बीच में वापस जाने का उनका अनुभव भी ठीक नहीं रहा है। इससे उनका अलगाव और बढ़ ही जाता है। प्रवासी भारतीयों को राष्ट्र सेवा करने का मन हो ये लाज़िमी है। उनके मन में जो अलगाव का दर्द है, एक तरह से राष्ट्र सेवा उसकी दवा है। लेकिन इस दवा का सेवन सही तरीके से हो बहुत ज़रूरी है। इसमें पहली सावधानी यह रखने की ज़रूरत है कि हम अपने राष्ट्रवाद की समझ को सहेज कर रखें। राष्ट्रवाद संस्कृति प्रेम तो है लेकिन यह प्रेम किसी सांस्कृतिक अस्मितावाद और फिर धार्मिक उन्माद या सांस्कृतिक राष्ट्रवाद में न परिणत हो जाए। उन्हें अपने देश में

## पश्चिमी समाज जिस दार्शनिक संकट से गुजर रहा है उसका निदान भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा में खोजने का दायित्व भारतीय प्रवासियों का है।

चल रही राजनीति की सही समझ होनी चाहिए और साथ ही देश के आर्थिक सामाजिक संरचनाओं की भी। इसके लिए उन्हें सरल भाषा में भारतीय राजनीति और अन्य विषयों पर लिखी सारगर्भित पुस्तकों की सहायता भी ली जानी चाहिए। बौद्धिक विमर्श को सांस्कृतिक गोष्ठियों का हिस्सा बनाना चाहिए। दूसरा तरीका हो सकता है अपने समाज के लिए कुछ सामूहिक काम करना। हो सके तो अपनी आमदनी का एक हिस्सा भारत के उन लोगों पर खर्च करें जिन्हें वाकई इसकी ज़रूरत है। भारत के युवा छात्रों के संगठनों से जुड़ कर उन्हें बड़ा सोचने में मदद करना भी एक बेहतर तरीका हो सकता है, राष्ट्र के प्रति अपने सम्मान को व्यक्त करने का। अपने समाज की अगली पीढ़ी से जुड़े रहने का यह

सबसे अच्छा तरीका हो सकता है। और तीसरा तरीका हो सकता है प्रवासी भारतीयों के अनुभवों को साझा करना। यह प्रवासियों के जीवन संघर्ष को अगली पीढ़ी के लिए संजोये रखने की प्रक्रिया हो सकती है। लेकिन सबसे महत्वपूर्ण तरीका हो सकता है भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा से अपने संबंध को बनाए रखना। सम्भव है कि जो लोग विदेश जाते हैं उन्हें भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा के बारे में पर्याप्त जानकारी न हो। यदि प्रवासी भारतीय इन ज्ञान परम्पराओं के बारे में जानकारी हासिल करें, दूसरों से साझा करें और इसके प्रचार प्रसार में सहयोग दें तो यह भारत की ही नहीं बल्कि मानवता की सेवा होगी। पश्चिमी समाज जिस दार्शनिक संकट से गुजर रहा है उसका निदान भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा में खोजने का दायित्व भारतीय प्रवासियों का है। संस्कृति प्रेम का उद्गार अक्सर केवल कर्म कांड में होते देखा गया है पर सच्चा और वास्तविक संस्कृति प्रेम को ज्ञान कांड में संलग्न होना चाहिए। संस्कृति मनुष्य की माँ है और ज्ञान सम्पदा किसी भी संस्कृति की आत्मा होती है। यदि प्रवासी भारतीय देश की उस आत्मा से प्रेम करें उसके सच्चे स्वरूप को समझें और उसकी पवित्रता से अपने नए समाज को अवगत करायें तो यही सही राष्ट्रभक्ति होगी। इस से भारत का भौगोलिक विस्तार नहीं बल्कि सांस्कृतिक विस्तार होगा। यही भारत के राष्ट्रप्रेम की परम्परा रही है। सम्राट अशोक ने अपने समय में बुद्ध के ज्ञान को दुनिया भर में बाँटा था। आज दुनिया को पुनः भारतीय ज्ञान सम्पदा की ज़रूरत है और भारत के लोगों ने बहुत संघर्ष कर उसे मानव कल्याण के लिए सुरक्षित रखा है। ■

# ईवी का बढ़ता बाजार



विशेषज्ञों के अनुसार आने वाला समय बिजली चालित वाहनों का ही होगा। आग लगने की घटनाओं से ईवी की बिक्री प्रभावित होने के दीर्घकालिक आसार नहीं हैं

**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।

देश में इन दिनों बिजली से चलने वाले वाहनों (इलेक्ट्रिक वेहिकल्स या ईवी) की खबरें सुर्खियों में हैं। जहां आने वाला समय इनका बताया जा रहा है, वहीं इनमें खासकर, दुपहिया वाहनों में आग लगने की घटनाओं से एक किसम की असुरक्षा की धारणा भी बनी है।

नीति आयोग का अनुमान है कि 2030 तक भारत में 80 प्रतिशत दुपहिया और तिपहिये, 40 प्रतिशत बसें और 30 से 70 प्रतिशत कारें बिजली से चलने वाली होंगी। नीति आयोग के मुताबिक, भारत 2070 तक जीरो इमिशन यानी शून्य कार्बन उत्सर्जन की महत्वाकांक्षी योजना बना रहा है और सरकार का पूरा फोकस और फंड इलेक्ट्रिक मोबिलिटी की दिशा में है। मार्च 2022 में, सड़क परिवहन और राजमार्ग मंत्री नितिन गडकरी ने संसद में उल्लेख किया कि 2019-20 तथा 2020-21 के बीच दुपहिया ईवी में 422 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी हुई, तिपहियों में 75 प्रतिशत और चौपहिया वाहनों में 230 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि दर्ज की गई। इलेक्ट्रिक बसों की संख्या में भी 1200 प्रतिशत से अधिक का इजाफा हुआ। लेकिन भारत में पूरी तरह से इलेक्ट्रिक इकोसिस्टम की डगर बहुत आसान भी नहीं है। दुपहियों और चारपहियों के इलेक्ट्रिक वैरिएंट की कीमत आम तौर पर नियमित फ्यूएल (पेट्रोल, डीजल आदि) विकल्पों की तुलना में बहुत अधिक होती है।

लगभग 60 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ता मानते हैं कि ईवी उनके बजट में नहीं आता। इलेक्ट्रिक मोबिलिटी को अपनाएने की दिशा में यह संभवतः सबसे बड़ी बाधा है। आवश्यक

सुविधाओं की कमी के कारण उनके रखरखाव की लागत भी काफी अधिक है। देश में 65,000 से भी अधिक पेट्रोल पंप हैं लेकिन ईवी चार्जिंग स्टेशनों की संख्या केवल 1640 है। देश में ईवी के केवल फॉसिल फ्यूएल से चलने वाले 2 और 4 पहिया वाहनों के वैरिएंट पहले से उपलब्ध हैं। हाई परफॉर्मिंग लकजरी वैरिएंट या टेस्ला जैसी सुपरकारों ने अभी तक भारतीय बाजारों में दस्तक नहीं दी है।

ऊंची लागत और अधिक कीमत, अपर्याप्त बुनियादी ढांचा, अच्छा परफॉर्म करने वाले ईवी की कमी और इससे भी

**ईवी नए युग का उद्योग है और ऐसी किसी भी इंडस्ट्री के सामने आरंभ में आग लगने या अन्य संबंधित घटनाओं का होना स्वाभाविक है।**

- क्रिसिल के निदेशक हेमल ठक्कर

महत्वपूर्ण, हाल के दिनों में इनमें खासकर, स्कूटरों में आग लगने की घटनाओं से उपभोक्ताओं में चिंता भी बढ़ी है।

हालांकि क्रेडिट रेटिंग एजेंसी क्रिसिल ने कहा है कि बिजली से चलने वाले वाहनों (इलेक्ट्रिक वेहिकल्स या ईवी) में आग लगने की हाल की कई घटनाओं के बावजूद दीर्घकालिक लिहाज से ईवी की बिक्री प्रभावित होने की फिलहाल कोई संभावना नजर नहीं आती। लेकिन इससे इतना अवश्य हुआ कि तत्काल इन वाहनों की सुरक्षा को लेकर थोड़ी ऐसी आशंका जन्म लेती दिखाई दे रही है कि ऐसे वाहन सुरक्षित हैं या नहीं।

गौरतलब है कि पिछले दो महीनों के दौरान ईवी में आग लगने की कई घटनाएं सामने आईं जिनमें 9 अप्रैल को नासिक में एक कंटेनर में लोड किए जाने के दौरान 40 में से 20 इलेक्ट्रिक स्कूटरों में आग लग गई। इससे पहले मार्च में भी देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों में ओकिनावा और ओला समेत इलेक्ट्रिक स्कूटरों में आग लगने की चार घटनाएं हुई थीं जिनमें मौतें भी हुई थीं। इन घटनाओं के कारण सरकार को इनकी फॉरेन्सिक जांच करने का आदेश देना पड़ा था।

विशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि इलेक्ट्रिक स्कूटरों में आग लगने की सबसे बड़ी वजह उनकी बैटरियां होती हैं जिनकी निम्न क्वालिटी से ऐसे हादसे होते हैं। भारत जैसे गर्म वातावरण वाले देश में थर्मल रनवे की वजह से बैटरियों का तापमान अत्यधिक बढ़ जाता है जिससे आग लगने की आशंका बढ़ जाती है। विदेशों खासकर चीन से आयातित बैटरी इसके लिए अधिक जिम्मेवार हैं। इन बैटरियों की डिजाइन और निर्माण



**2019-20 तथा 2020-21  
के बीच दुपहिया ईवी में  
422 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी  
हुई, तिपहियों में 75  
प्रतिशत और चौपहिया  
वाहनों में 230 प्रतिशत की  
वृद्धि दर्ज की गई। इलेक्ट्रिक  
बसों की संख्या में भी 1200  
प्रतिशत से अधिक का  
इजाफा हुआ।**

- सड़क परिवहन और राजमार्ग मंत्री  
नितिन गडकरी

भारत के मौसम के अनुकूल होना चाहिए तथा लिथियम आयन वाली बैटरी को सख्त परीक्षण के बाद ही भारत के बाजारों में बिक्री के लिए उतारा जाना चाहिए। क्रिसिल के निदेशक हेमल ठक्कर का मानना है कि यह नए युग का उद्योग है और ऐसी किसी भी इंडस्ट्री के सामने आरंभ में इस प्रकार की समस्याएं आना निहानत लाजिमी हैं। बहरहाल, इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि ऑटोमोटिव प्रोफेशनलों तथा आम लोगों दोनों में ही यह धारणा बढ़ रही है कि आने वाला समय इलेक्ट्रिक यानी बिजली चालित वाहनों का ही होगा। ईवी के लिए बढ़ रही मांग या क्रेज ग्लोबल वार्मिंग को सीमित करने के लिए कार्बन उत्सर्जन को कम करने के लिए पेरिस समझौते के तहत निर्धारित वैश्विक जलवायु एजेंडा से भी प्रेरित है। भारत को अपनी ऊर्जा खपत के लिए लगभग दो तिहाई तक आयातित ईंधनों पर निर्भर रहना पड़ता है और आने वाले समय में इनकी वजह से बुनियादी ढांचे से संबंधित समस्याओं तथा वायु प्रदूषण में और अधिक इजाफा होने की आशंका है। भारत ने ग्लासगो सम्मेलन में 2030 तक कार्बन उत्सर्जन को घटा कर 1 बिलियन टन तक लाने और 2070 तक इसे शून्य (नेट जीरो) कर देने का संकल्प भी लिया है।

भारत सरकार ने देश में ईवी इकोसिस्टम विकसित करने तथा इसे बढ़ावा देने के लिए कई कदम उठाये हैं जिनमें ईवी के त्वरित अंगीकरण तथा विनिर्माण (फेम 2) स्कीम, आपूर्ति पक्ष के लिए एडवांस्ड कैमिस्ट्री सेल (एसीसी) के लिए उत्पादन से जुड़ी प्रोत्साहन (पीएलआई) स्कीम, बिजली संचालित वाहनों के लिए ऑटो तथा ऑटो कंपोनेंट पीएलआई

स्कीम प्रमुख है। सरकार इससे जुड़ी टेक्नोलॉजी, अनुसंधान एवं विकास तथा कुशल श्रम को भी बढ़ावा देने की कोशिश कर रही है जिससे रोजगार सृजन के अतिरिक्त ऊर्जा आयात से निर्भरता भी कम हो सके। बिजली मंत्रालय ने 3 किमी के एक ग्रिड में तथा राजमार्गों के दोनों तरफ प्रत्येक 25 किमी पर कम से एक चार्जिंग स्टेशन लगाये जाने की अनुशंसा की है।

कहना न होगा कि सरकार अपनी तरफ से इस उद्योग की पुरजोर सहायता कर रही है और अधिक से अधिक उपभोक्ताओं को इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन मालिकों के रूप में तबदील करने के लिए इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों की खरीद पर सब्सिडी भी उपलब्ध करा रही है। कर्ज लेकर इलेक्ट्रिक कार खरीदने वालों को 1.5 लाख रुपये की कर छूट भी दी जा रही है। इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों की खरीद पर जीएसटी को शून्य सेस के साथ केवल 5 प्रतिशत पर निर्धारित किया गया है।

सरकार की फेम स्कीम यानी हाइब्रिड और इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन के त्वरित अंगीकरण और विनिर्माण योजना के दो चरणों के तहत, सरकार देश में इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन के विनिर्माण के लिए बुनियादी ढांचे में सुधार लाने का प्रयास कर रही है। तेल विपणन कंपनियों द्वारा देश भर में 22,000 ईवी चार्जिंग स्टेशनों की स्थापना किए जाने की भी योजना है। 2022 के आम बजट में ईवी को चार्ज करने के एक सरल तरीके के रूप में बैटरी स्वैपिंग नीति की भी घोषणा की गई। पिछले वर्ष सरकार ने ऑटो निर्माताओं के लिए पीएलआई की भी घोषणा की थी जिसका लक्ष्य इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों के निर्माण को बढ़ावा देना है। ■

# *script your own,*

# VERY OWN STYLE



**KUNAL ANIL TANNA**

Stylish silhouettes in textures and colours that make a cool and easy style statement.  
[@kunalaniltanna](#)

A medley of summer looks from young Indian designers for you, largely loose and flowing, with a less defined silhouette, where comfort is the key. The beauty of the fashion scene today is that there is no 'one' look and this allows you to determine your own style. Cool comfort, semi-formal, totally trendy, whatever your sense of style or mood dictates. We have put together a slice from various collections, mostly by young designers, to capture what's out there.

BY RUKMA SALUJA



**SARAB KHANIJOU**

Uncluttered lines that complement different body types make the Sarab Khanijou man fashionable and flamboyant.

@sarabkhanijouofficial



**THE SUMMER HOUSE**

In fabrics that are lightweight and breathable, the look is always cheerful and stylish.

@thesummerhouse.in



**HOUSE OF MASABA**

Young, fuss-free and a versatile silhouette for chill and fun.

@houseofmasaba



**PINK CITY BY SARIKA**

Ethnic silhouettes with modern sensibilities in bright colours and intricate embroidery suitable for most occasions.

@pinkcity2014

# JOY IN THE JUNGLE

Nallamala Hills in Andhra Pradesh with their thick forests, thundering waterfalls and wondrous nature are a perfect getaway for adventure and wildlife buffs

**BY SYED SAAD AHMED**



**N**othing prepared me for the spectacle at Farahabad viewpoint. The hour-long journey along a track winding through a luxuriant forest is pleasant, but unremarkable. So I was not expecting much at Farahabad until I reached the edge of a cliff. From the sheer drop below, the forest extended unto the horizon. Amid the unending carpet of green... a lake shimmered.

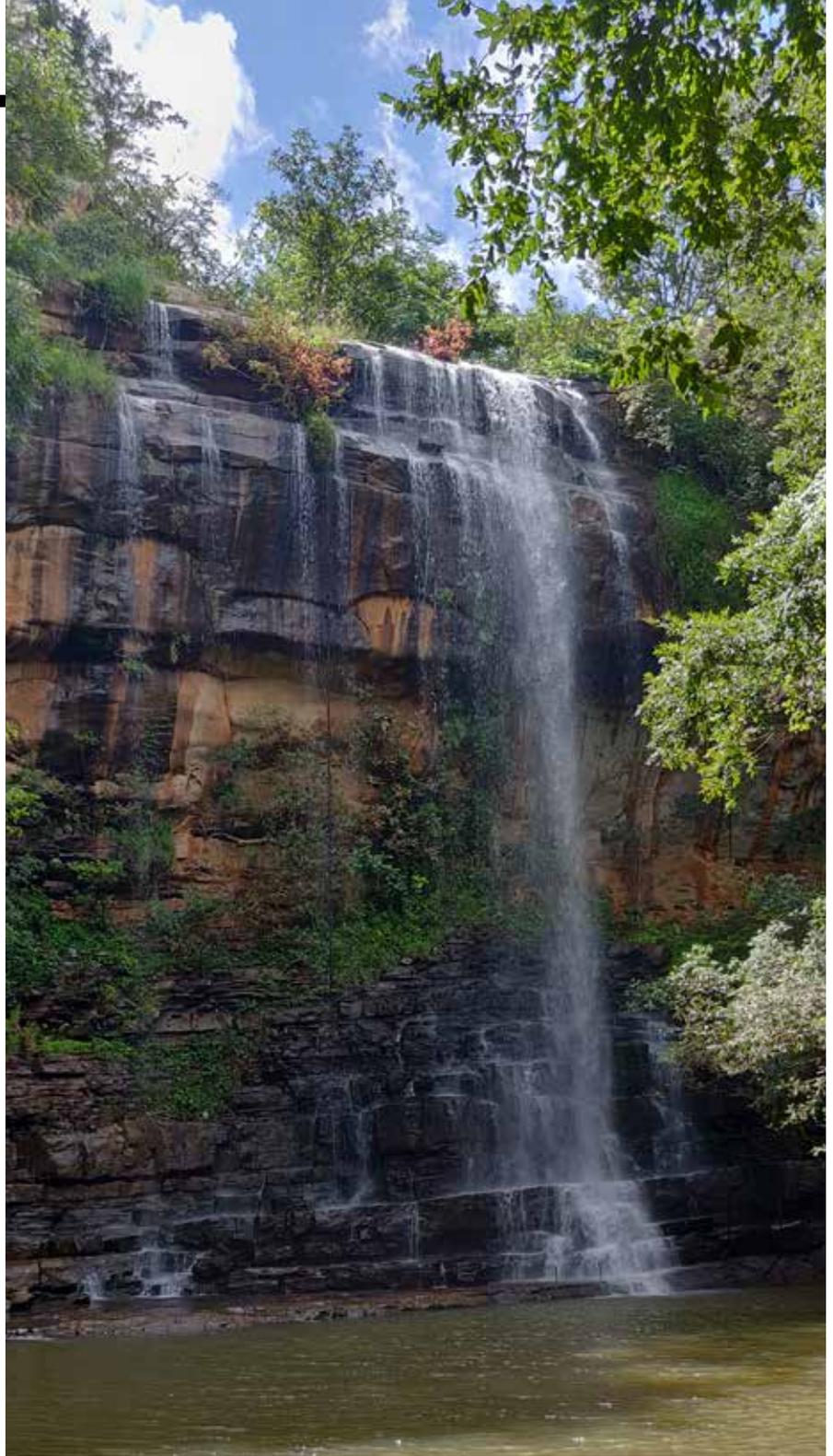
The forest guide said one can sometimes see animals at the watering hole, though none seemed to be there then. But I couldn't care less because the view had transfixed me. Only later did I notice a decrepit structure lording it over the cliff. The guide claimed it was a government resort that insurgents had blown up years earlier.

Farahabad (meaning place of joy) was once the summer resort and hunting grounds of Hyderabad's Nizams. One can still see the ruins of the royals' lodge on the road to the viewpoint. It is deep within the Nallamala Hills, a section of the Eastern Ghats that extends from Telangana to Andhra Pradesh, and is now part of the Amrabad Tiger Reserve.

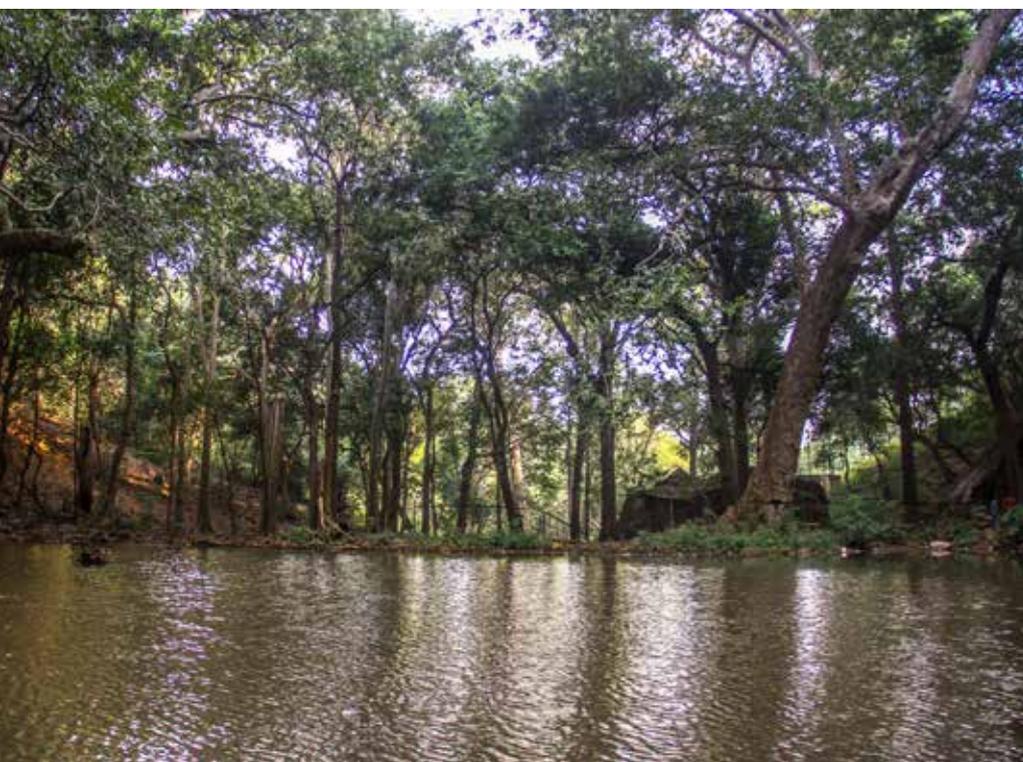
The reserve has 80 species of mammals and 300 kinds of birds, but only the giant flying squirrel made an appearance during my safari. Conspicuous with its colourful coat, the squirrel is so named as it can glide between trees. I saw it from one of the two watchtowers along the track to Farahabad, which also present views of the forest canopy and Nallamala's undulating terrain.

Another gorgeous spot, especially at sunset, is the Octopus viewpoint. About 35 km from Farahabad, it overlooks the Srisailem Dam's backwaters fringed by hills. The name derives from the various channels of the Krishna river snaking into valleys, supposedly resembling an octopus's tentacles.

Nallamala has plenty of waterfalls, but the most accessible is Mallela Theertham. While the water flow varies depending on rainfall, it is a delightful spot in all seasons. One has to walk down steps carved into a hill to reach there. The water collects in a shallow pool ringed with verdure. It



Farahabad (meaning place of joy) was once the summer resort and hunting grounds of Hyderabad's Nizams. One can still see the ruins of the royals' lodge on the road to the viewpoint. It is deep within the Nallamala Hills.



reputedly has medicinal properties, drawn from herbs as it flows through the forest. However, I am not sure if the short shower I had underneath the falls was enough to imbibe these properties.

Among the many shrines in the hills, the Uma Maheshwaram temple is the easiest to visit. It is the northern gateway to the holy town of Srisailam. The temple is nestled in a cliff face, where impromptu waterfalls form when it rains. There are many minor shrines under overhangs nearby.

The tourism department runs a guided trek from Mannanur to Uma Maheshwaram. Walking along hilly trails, rocky outcrops,

and dry riverbeds provides an immersive experience of the forest landscape and flora. To promote community-based ecotourism, the government employs guides from the Chenchu community, the region's indigenous inhabitants.

Since Nallamala is an eco-sensitive zone, some of its attractions are accessible only at certain times. One can visit the Saleswaram waterfall during an annual pilgrimage held for three days in April. The perennial waterfall drops from a height of 200 metres. Lodi Mallayya is a cave next to a pool hemmed in by craggy cliffs. One can go there on the auspicious day of Tholi Ekadashi in July. ■

## GOOD TO KNOW



### LOCATION

Mannanur, 150 km south of Hyderabad on National Highway 765 to Srisailam, is a good base to explore Nallamala Hills



### ATTRACTIONS

Farahabad safari, Octopus viewpoint, Mallela Theertham, trekking, Uma Maheshwaram temple



### PACKAGES

Telangana Tourism offers a 2D/1N stay that costs ₹4,800 for 2 people. It includes accommodation, trekking, safari and tour guide charges



### HOW TO BOOK

[www.amrabadtigerreserve.com](http://www.amrabadtigerreserve.com)

The safari's highlights are the forest and the views rather than animal sightings

Vehicles cannot cross the Mannanur checkpost on National Highway 765 from 9 pm to 6 am

Every  
Spice  
has a  
Story



# The Garlic Cure

Those who love garlic stay healthy and thin.  
Really, it's true!



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*.

**W**hat's not to love about garlic; it is our heart's best friend, helps lower bad cholesterol, is a cancer slayer, and (this will probably interest you the most) it is great for weight loss, too! How? Well, not only is it extremely low-calorie (3-4 cloves will give you only 13 calories), it works on multiple levels.

A great detoxifier, it helps rid the body of toxins. A detoxed body functions more efficiently, and is therefore naturally healthier and thinner. Additionally, it delivers great looking skin. It is a diuretic and helps get rid of excess, unwanted water from the body (read no more bloated tummy) and associated symptoms like uneasiness, nausea and overweight. This makes it the perfect antidote to all the junk you willingly (or unwillingly) eat.

Garlic boosts metabolism by stimulating the nervous system to release adrenalin. It helps the body burn calories more efficiently and keeps you feeling buoyant. It helps control cravings by regulating blood sugar levels. This is a check against unnecessary munching. Importantly, this helps keep diabetes at bay. Garlic helps regulate appetite; it signals satiety to the brain when one has eaten and you are then less inclined to eat. Research now also indicates that the anti-inflammatory properties of garlic may even aid in weight loss by helping

regulate the number of fat cells that get formed in the body.

### THERE'S MORE!

Garlic helps lower blood cholesterol and boost digestion. It also helps lower blood sugar, increase energy and boost the immune system. It is probably the easiest and most handy way to keep your body functioning at its efficient best.

The best news, of course, is that you need only 1-2 medium cloves every day to score the benefits. All it takes is getting used to its pungent smell and taste. Not such a tall order, I think (considering the benefits).

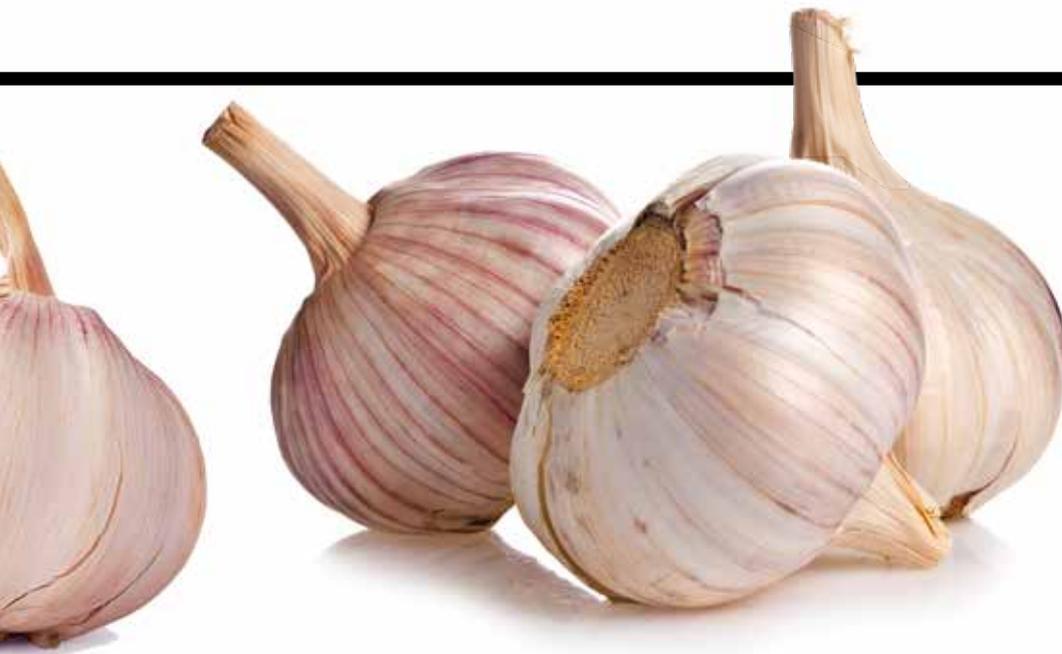
### HERE'S ANOTHER TIP

To max the benefits, crush and let it sit for a couple of minutes before using. That's because when raw garlic interacts with oxygen it forms allicin, the active ingredient that helps the most with your health.

### ALSO REMEMBER

Generally, the stronger the taste, the higher the health benefits of garlic. So, don't try to cheat. Go on, swallow a clove in the morning, slather some crushed garlic on your toast, add to salads, soups, stir-frys and curries.

Become a garlic lover from today! ■



## GARLIC CHUTNEY

Sauté 30 gm garlic and 2 green chillies in mustard oil for a few minutes. Serve it as a quick pickle with Indian meals. Or with a layered *parantha* straight off the *tawa* for a yummy in-between meals snack.



## THECHA

If you see green garlic (similar in appearance to spring onions) and are dying to use it, but don't know how, here is the easiest way of using these beauties. Roughly chop the green garlic and pound it along with *masala* peanuts and green chillies with a mortar and pestle to a coarse texture. Quickly flash-fry the mixture in peanut oil. Enjoy it with a steaming hot plate of *daal-rice*.

## GARLIC NAAN

So who doesn't like a fluffy, buttered garlic *naan*? Here is how you can make it in your kitchen and yes, without a tandoor!



### Ingredients:

All-purpose flour	250 gms. or 1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> cups
Plain yogurt	1/2 cup
Milk	1/2 cup
Baking soda	1/2 tsp
Powdered sugar	1 tsp
Salt	1/2 tsp
Vegetable oil	2 tbsp

### Toppings for Garlic Naan On Tawa:

Garlic	1 tbsp
Onion seeds	1/2 tbsp
Cilantro	1/2 tbsp

Mix together all-purpose flour, salt, sugar. Add oil and whisked curd, gradually add milk, knead into dough and place in a greased bowl. Cover for 2-3 hours or until it rises.

Divide the dough into six equal parts and, using a rolling pin, roll it out into oval-shaped *naan*. Sprinkle with garlic, onions seeds and cilantro and roll once to press toppings into the *naan*.

Apply water to the back of the *naan* and stick it to a hot *tawa*. When bubbles appear, flip the *tawa* to cook *naan* directly on flame.

Remove when brown and crispy and butter the top.

Enjoy this garlicky, buttery heaven on a plate!

# CREATING A BYGONE ERA AT HOME

You don't have to give an arm and a leg for an antique to add princely character to your spaces



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.

**S**paces imbued with a timeless aesthetic and a defined character have one thing in common: an old-world charm. The best way to achieve such an ambience is by incorporating antique pieces in your interiors, whether they are genuinely old or repurposed or even mere reproductions.

Antiques are a reminder of a glorious artistic heritage; relics from a splendid past that can enrich contemporary homes. Often, they represent a rare or lost art form or workmanship, making them virtually priceless.

In India, traditional handicrafts are still in use with every region having its own unique style and technique, offering a wide range of options for modern connoisseurs. Wherever you live in the world, a souvenir from your homeland adds nostalgia and rootedness to your spaces. Of course, antiques could be collected from anywhere in the world during your travels, or sourced from stores that curate them from across the globe, bringing home an eclectic flair. With each piece telling a story, and acting as a vignette of history, they evoke a one-of-a-kind environment.

"Your home should tell a story of who you are and be a collection of what you love. The right blend of old and new, and the balance



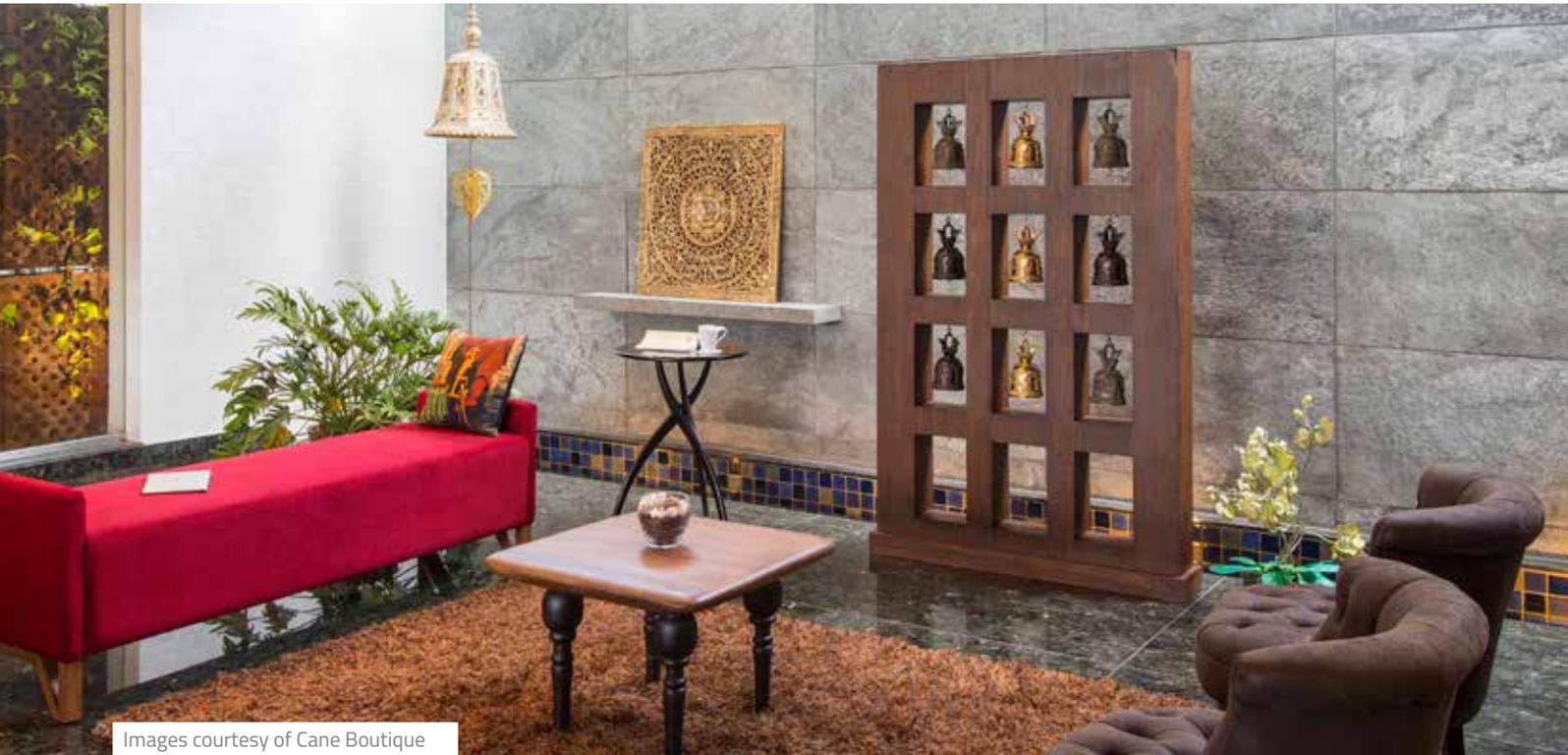
of colours complementing antiques from different periods can elevate any contemporary space," says Shabnam Gupta of The Orangelane. Known as the star' designer for her interiors projects for actors Parineeti Chopra, Kangana Ranaut, the late Irrfan Khan, and others, Gupta mixes art and antiques with eccentric colour choices to create charming spaces. Her store, Peacock Life, is a



Images courtesy of The Orangelane

treasure of antiques and artistic pieces that enhance contemporary homes with traditional allure. With a renewed interest in personalising home interiors and a love for all things artistic, demand for antiques has seen an uptick. That explains the spurt of online stores that curate antiques and reproductions from around the world. A good piece with a proper structure can be

refurbished and made to look new in different ways. Putting antiques in a contemporary environment, however, requires a deft hand that can provide balance, movement and warmth or the space could end up looking like a cold and static museum. Antiques should enliven the space and add dynamic energy or a serene vibe either by cleverly blending or juxtaposing old and new.



Images courtesy of Cane Boutique



## SOME EXPERT VIEWS ON INTRODUCING ANTIQUES INTO CONTEMPORARY HOMES

### A BALANCED BLEND

“There should be timelessness, and a balanced mix between the old and the new, with a revived habit of collecting art and homegrown antiques. Just a few personalised statement pieces will add individuality and complement the modern aesthetics,” says Gupta.

Sometimes, it may look like you’re juxtaposing antiques with contemporary items and allowing the contrast to spark interest, or it may appear as though they are all sitting in harmony with each other. By mounting antiques on a clean base of wood or metal, or by accenting them with straight-lined frames, they can be turned into contemporary accessories ready to adorn modern interiors.

### MAKE A STATEMENT

Sometimes, the easiest way to include an antique piece or a collection of them in a space is by letting them be the centrepiece

of the space. A strategically placed sculpture, a gorgeous chandelier in the living room or a gallery wall of antique *jharokas* or photo frames could become stand-alone attractions. An heirloom planter’s chair can grab attention amidst the contemporary seating arrangement in your living room.

“You could add a surprise element or make a bold statement with antiques. Not only do they add individuality to your space, they also become conversation starters,” say Rishabh Kapoor and Monica Chadha of Delhi-based Design Deconstruct. They have used antique artworks to decorate the ceiling of the entertainment space lobby of a farmhouse.

“Currently we see a fusion of styles. For example, a beautiful modern setting accented by a statement antique piece or art is something that is appreciated by many. India is so rich in art, heritage and craftsmanship, we have so many beautiful pieces worked in different materials and textures that one wants to invest in them to have that conversation piece,” says Khushi Todi of Bengaluru-based Cane Boutique.



Images courtesy of Design Deconstruct

### RECLAIMED / REPURPOSED PIECES

For one of her upcoming projects, Gupta employs heavily carved antique doors and windows to add traditional grandeur. In another one, she uses a reclaimed antique door as a coffee-table top. If you find a good piece of furniture that is worn out, you could give it a facelift with a coat of polish or your favourite colour and make it part of your interiors. In some cases, adding new upholstery to a chair might work as well. "By adding a complementary feature to an old piece, you can make it suitable for a contemporary space," say Kapoor and Chadha.

### INSPIRED REPRODUCTIONS

Everyone may not be able to invest in an antique, but reproductions make it easy to introduce old-world charm into one's home. When it comes to consoles, artistic chairs and accessories, there are many designers and stores that create reproductions.

"We are so inspired by the craftsmanship and intricate details of the heritage pieces and finishes that we have produced a line of

distressed and antique finishes that give the pieces a unique and rich look. Clients also want a bit of their heritage included in their space, be it in terms of an intricate Tanjore art piece, solid wood Kerala pillars, or Mughal inspired furniture, etc.," says Todi.

Kapoor and Chadha have used custom-made solid brass sculptures inspired by ancient carvings in a cave to add an eye-catching, exotic feature to a living room. Some of their furniture designs and interiors are deeply influenced by antique crafts.

### HOW TO SOURCE OR BUY

Several stores and dealers, online and offline, sell certified antiques across cities. Or you could look for them in thrift shops, flea markets or while travelling. "There are many vendors who source beautiful, certified antiques. I like to pick up my pieces personally on most of my travels to rural India," says Gupta.

The best part is, today you don't have to shell out a princely sum to pick up an antique piece. There are items for every budget range available. ■

Young  
&  
Restless

Did you know that Swedish crown princess Victoria married her personal trainer? That Billy Joel's ex-wife dated her surfing instructor after their marriage ended? That Madonna had a child with her personal trainer boyfriend, Carlos Leon?

# MIXING FITNESS with PLEASURE

Until a few years ago, women dating their personal trainers was as common as men cheating on their wives with their personal secretaries. No one was shocked, and everyone pretended to ignore such news. Almost overnight, things changed. Along came Tinder and suddenly, your next lay was just a swipe away. Women realised they didn't have to limit themselves to trainers, just like men moved on from their secretaries. The dating game in modern India went through a major shift and for a while, everyone was happy.

Now that the it's-no-longer-a-trend phase is over, and women are back to dating their personal trainers, there's a sense of *déjà vu*.

I was reminded of this new wave at a luncheon hosted by one of Delhi's most revered doyens, whose parties are always the talk of town. Sitting amidst the who's who of the capital, I was rather surprised to discover just how common this had become, yet again. "Why bother with the trash on Tinder when I have a perfectly wonderful guy in close proximity four times a week? Plus, the men on Tinder rarely have the physique!" Savita Sharda (name changed), founder of one of Delhi's most popular furniture brands, has been dating her trainer for almost a year now and is happier than ever. "Hooking up with a 27-year-old with six-pack abs is any day better than making do with someone twice his age and no abs whatsoever!"

It isn't just the appeal of someone with an enviable physique, though. It's also multi-tasking, apparently. Rhea Verma (name changed), model extraordinaire in Mumbai, is another one of those women who'd rather do their trainers than bother with men in other professions. "You're anyway meeting your trainer so often, aren't you? Might as well put all that time to good use! Plus, their fitness levels almost always ensure a great time!"

Generation-now takes fitness rather seriously, which means they're spending a significant amount of time in the gym. Doing the person who helps you with your squats is a natural progression. "I barely have time to squeeze in a workout in my schedule," said Shikha Talvar (name

The person who trains you isn't just working on your physical fitness. A good workout is as much for the mind, as it is for the body. A good trainer, hence, also tends to your soul while tending to your silhouette

changed), a prominent PR professional from Bengaluru. "Dating my trainer means I can save on time spent looking for a man!"

The person who trains you isn't just working on your physical fitness. A good workout is as much for the mind, as it is for the body. A good trainer, hence, also tends to your soul while tending to your silhouette. "Ever since I started working out in my early 20s, I've treated my trainers as friends. They know and deal with your body rather closely—your flaws, the parts you're good with, the ones you hide. It's an intimate equation, and sometimes that leads to other things," Sundari Sekri (name changed) makes a valid point. Renowned for her flawless figure, this reigning czarina of the small screen has had countless torrid affairs, many of which went from barbells

to boudoir. "I don't get what the fuss is about—people are way too judgemental!"

Aforementioned 'judgements' aside, women (and some men) doing the tango with their trainers is rather popular, all over again. And there's science to back it too. As per research put out by *Society for Neuroscience*, based in New Orleans, US, apart from releasing endorphins, exercising causes a woman's body to release oxytocin, a neurohypophysical hormone that's also released when she starts falling in love. Additionally, since exercise causes men to release pheromones from their armpits, the chances of a woman finding that man attractive are significantly higher. Basically, she's bound to fall for her trainer, hormonally speaking!

But hormones or no hormones, dating (or doing) your trainer is definitely uncomplicated. "He knows you're his client so the chances of love complicating an otherwise fun extra-marital situation are slim. And that makes it an ideal choice for women who are married but looking for some excitement on the side," said Nikasha Mehta (name changed), jewellery designer from Delhi, more famous for salacious gossip around her personal life than the neckpieces she's sold. "I wholeheartedly recommend it!"

A man who makes you sweat and then makes you come—talk about having your cake and eating it too. Or rather, working out with your trainer and later, having him work for you. How's that for a fitness regime? ■

## 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.

# Realty REBOUNDS



The real estate sector in India is making a robust recovery from stifling Covid-19 effects, making it an attractive proposition for NRIs, says **DEEPAK KAPOOR**

The real estate sector has demonstrated a swift and steady recovery from the Covid-19 aftermath. As the inoculation programme unfolded in full swing, the cases saw a significant drop. The strict implementation of Covid-19 safety norms, low interest rates, pent-up demand for homes and discounts by developers were also some crucial reasons for the real estate economy to return to a state of normalcy. Though, whether it has made a complete recovery is a question that will evoke differing viewpoints, nevertheless it is definitely on the right track.

Many real estate segments, including affordable, premium and luxury, are currently doing well. They have recorded pre-Covid sales that have brought relief to the markets and real estate developers. In some markets, volumes are back to pre-Covid level, higher than 2019, with unsold inventory also coming down considerably. All this, coupled with rising prices of commodities, including those used in construction, may together drive up real estate prices in India in the near future.

The state and institutional support have tremendously helped the real estate industry grow and remain resilient in tough times and become stronger. Announcements of new projects have also been made in metro cities and peripheral regions, reflecting the expanding presence of the real estate sector in all corners of India. It also shows that Covid-19 has not affected the industry majorly as the supply and demand chain has not tumbled and only grown larger post-pandemic. The completion of many towering infrastructural constructions has also livened up the real estate sector and contributed to rising sales. Buyers have also learned the

**Luxury real estate nowadays has encapsulated many new and high-end features that are also encouraging Indian expatriates to buy properties in India. It has attracted significant foreign attention, gaining admiration from NRIs and Indian communities overseas.**

value of owning real estate and why investing in it is a much better deal than any other white elephant investment. Property offers long-term benefits and is an excellent source of income in times of need. All these factors have together hastened the recovery process of the real estate sector and helped it emerge as one of the most significant contributors to India's GDP. The favourable changes in customer behaviour and the coming up of new projects are signs of good times ahead for the real estate sector.

Luxury real estate has documented a surge in both supply and demand which has outdone the pre-Covid deliveries. A growing population of High Net Worth Individuals (HNIs) in metro cities with income stability and economic prosperity are the biggest takers of luxury properties. The reported rise in fascination for high-quality living, grandeur, high-end security features and home decor has also been witnessed among young buyers.

All this has given a fillip to the growth of luxury housing. Resultantly, there is a spurt in demand for luxury condominiums and villas. It is one of the top trends that is driving the real estate market in India. Luxury properties are one of the most bankable real estate juggernauts that have refused to slow down during and after the pandemic and have held firm.

Overseas Indians have often been found praising property development in India, matching and superseding global standards. Luxury real estate nowadays has encapsulated many new and high-end features that are also encouraging Indian expatriates to buy properties in India. It has attracted significant foreign attention, gaining admiration from NRIs and Indian communities overseas. ■

The writer is promoter-director of Gulshan Homz, a unit of the GC Group, and formerly president of CREDAI, western UP



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