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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



A Glorious

Odyssey Yet Miles To Go...

Against the backdrop of the ongoing celebrations of 75 years of India's independence, we reached out to Indians living in diverse regions of the world to know what changes they have seen over the years in the image of their motherland abroad, and where the largest democracy in the world stands today. It makes for an absorbing story and in a way holds a mirror to the ground that independent India has covered over the decades. The common refrain of the responses we received underlines that overseas Indians are respected for their talent, and India is considered a power to reckon with, though some negative perceptions exist too. It is a feel-good but realistic story that does provide a reality check. We could sense between the lines that NRIs have had to struggle to establish their credentials, and pay an emotional price of being away from family and hearth. And even in their moment of success, they cling to their culture with passion, pride and longing.

In this issue, we also look at how the Indian youth are thinking about 75 years of independence, and what their ideas are about India's future. Also, at how khadi has changed in the last 75 years because khadi symbolised nationalism in a way no other symbol did during the freedom struggle. In the Art section, Raseel Gujral Ansal reveals the new interest that her father, Satish Gujral's paintings are evoking in Britain.

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we work, and how we work. Policymakers are now coming to terms with the gig economy, where there is no formal employer-employee relationship in a specified office space. It is new territory, largely uncharted, where workers need to be provided with social security.

Yoga has been used for many things including physical, emotional and mental well-being. This time, we look at how yoga helps us to age gracefully.

There is an interesting diaspora profile, meet Kamala Kaur, who discovered mountaineering and found a new life.

The official journey of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav began on 12th March 2021 which started a 75-week countdown to India's 75th anniversary of independence and will end post a year on 15th August 2023. We are avoiding the extreme of being too solemn or too loud about it. It is a time for reflection and taking a detached look around to discover what this journey truly means. India has come a long, long way in these seven and a half decades, but there are many more milestones to be achieved.

Happy reading the Independence Special Issue of *Pravasi Indians!*

Rashmi

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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FIRST JOB, FIRST CAR



From a pampered household in Hyderabad to a summer job in a screw-manufacturing company, shares **MUSTAFA SIDDIQUI**

The year was 1973 and I was a teenaged *desi* from a fairly well-to-do family of Hyderabad who had come to the US, leaving behind a pampered life of servants, social status, a loving and caring family, and never having to worry about money, never having to get up to get a glass of water, or to serve food, or walk a few blocks to get something. We had servants to clean the house, a cook and her assistant to do the cooking and washing of dishes, servants to get groceries, a driver to take us around, and when we were younger, an *ayah* (personal nanny) to take care of us. Yet, we still complained.

I came to America in January 1973 and started 12th grade in high school. I stayed with my uncle and his family and continued with some of the luxuries from back home minus the servants, drivers, or maids. I had to start doing my own dishes and my own laundry, yet still had the luxury of my aunt doing the cooking for her family and me.

Summer in the US means school holidays. This is during the months of June, July, and August. Just before school ended, one of my teachers asked the students in my class what they would be doing during summer break. Most answered that they planned to work.

“Work?” That four-lettered word was not

yet in my dictionary! All of a sudden, a whole new vocabulary/concept hit my 17-year-old brain. Me, work! Where? How? Why?

America, in the 1970s, was still very conservative, with very strong middle-class work ethics. Hard work was very much appreciated and expected by almost everyone. Not having a job was considered a blemish on your personality and a sign of laziness or disability.

At that time, I was living in the Franklin Park suburb near the O'Hare airport in Chicago. This was mostly a “blue collar” area with a lot of restaurants, hotels, and factories. Since I did not have a car or know

how to drive, my uncle gave me his old bicycle. This was my mode of transport. At first, I bicycled around my neighbourhood, and stopped at many restaurants, hotels, and grocery stores, asking if they had any jobs for me. I was offered a job at a fast food restaurant, cleaning tables and helping in the kitchen for \$1.50 per hour. The manager of the restaurant, a 60-plus-year-old man, pointed to himself and said, "Son, look at me, someday you could have my job!"

No, thanks! I had higher goals and ambitions. I didn't want to be him after 40+ years of cleaning tables!

After going around various businesses, and looking for jobs with some menial offers, I gave up and went home disappointed. My uncle asked how my job hunting had gone. I told him about my disappointment. My uncle, having lived in America for 10+ years, sat me down and explained how it was not normal for a teenager, with no work experience nor higher education, to expect higher-level jobs. He added, "In America, no job should be considered below your dignity. In fact, a job is better than no job." He told me how he and his friends had struggled to get to where they were.

The next day, I expanded my job hunting radius. I was nearly two miles away from where I lived when I saw a sign on a building saying they were hiring people for \$3.75 an hour plus overtime. I parked my bicycle and went inside to enquire. They made me fill out a job application asking for my name, address, phone number, driving licence number (none in my case), prior work experience (none, first job), educational background (still in high school), previous employer references (none, first job), personal references (my uncle). The front desk clerk told me to wait, took the application inside, and after 10 minutes came back with a scruffy-looking African American older man who asked me to come inside for an interview. After a few minutes of looking over my sparse-looking application, he said it was my lucky day and he was going to hire me!

I was overjoyed, dreaming of big bucks flowing in. Maybe I will have to work in the office, do some filing, maybe answer telephone calls, sell company products. My daydreaming came to a screeching halt when he took me to the factory floor where they manufactured screws! My job, he explained, would be to put threads on screws. It was a screw machine factory.

America, in the 1970s, was still very conservative, with very strong middle-class work ethics. Hard work was very much appreciated and expected by almost everyone. Not having a job was considered a blemish on your personality and a sign of laziness or disability.

Since I didn't have any experience, I would be paid \$2.75 per hour for 40 hours per week with up to 10 hours of overtime (paying time and a half for every hour in excess of 40 hours per week—\$4.15 per hour). This meant I would earn 40 hours x \$2.75 = \$110 per week plus 10 hours x \$4.15 = \$41.50 totalling \$151.50 per week. This amount was surely a lot better than what I would make cleaning tables at a restaurant! I accepted.

STARTING MY JOB

The next morning, I reported to work at 7 am, to work until 5 pm. I worked nine hours with a one-hour unpaid lunch break, Monday to Friday, and five hours every Saturday. This was a small screw manufacturing company with 20+ machines, each with its own operator, like me, given boxes and boxes of unthreaded screws that we had to feed the machine, one screw at a time, for 8+ hours a day. The machines spewed oil on the screws where they were to be threaded,

spilling over your hands, spraying on your clothes and on the ground.

I was trained to insert the screw with the right hand, and with the left hand turn on the lathe to cut the screw. One day, my left hand hurt so I was slack, inserting the screw with my right hand and turning on the lathe with my right hand as well. My floor supervisor saw me doing that, watched me for a while, then came over and said, "Son, God gave you two hands, use both of them."

When the floors got wet with spraying oil, we were supposed to sprinkle sand so that people would not slip. People walked on the sanded floors, forklifts also ran over the sand. After several days, the sand would cover the floor and get caked. The supervisor would ask us to scrape the sand off the floor.

During our work breaks, we would rush to the toilets. After a few days, the toilets looked and smelled pretty bad. One day, while I was in the toilet, a gentleman walked in, looked around, and asked me to clean the toilets and mop the floor. I was taken aback! Me, wash the toilets and mop the awful floor! I guess he noticed my hesitance. He opened a closet in the bathroom, pulled out a mop and a toilet brush, got some cleaning supplies out, and started to do the cleaning himself for a few minutes. He then extended the mop to me and said that he was the owner of the factory and if he could do the work himself, he expected his employees to do it too.

One day, I accidentally stuck my finger into the machine instead of the screw. The pain was acute. The supervisor came over and sent me to the hospital. After 13 stitches on my finger, I returned to work. For two days, they let me work in the office. On the third day, with a bandaged finger, wearing a glove on my hand, they made me go back to my machine. No mercy for an injured hand!

I worked there the entire summer. Each Friday was payday! I had extra money, my own, to buy anything I wanted! At the end of the summer, I had saved enough money to ditch my bicycle and buy my own car. A used car, but it was with my own money, my first car. ■



MUSTAFA SIDDIQUI

The author is a real estate investor, technology and banking consultant, who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the US.

INVESTING IN A GREENER FUTURE



BY PAWAN CHETAL

The author is founder and CEO, www.oneconsulting.in, and has over 35 years' experience in power, telecom and infrastructure.

There exist tremendous investment opportunities in the non-conventional energy sector for the Indian diaspora as the sector has seen significant evolution and growth in the past few years

The Indian energy sector is one of the most diversified sectors in the world. Energy in India is generated from commercial sources like coal, lignite, natural gas, oil, hydro and nuclear power as well as other viable non-conventional sources like wind, sunlight, and agricultural and domestic waste. The energy sector in India has been growing at a rapid rate and is expected to attain greater heights in future.

India has set an ambitious target to achieve a capacity of 175 GW (gigawatts) worth of renewable energy by the end of 2022, and expand it to 500 GW by 2030. This is one of the world's largest expansion

plans in renewable energy.

The country was the second largest market in Asia for new solar PV capacity and third globally (13 GW of additions in 2021). It ranked fourth for total installations (60.4 GW), overtaking Germany (59.2 GW) for the first time.

India's installed renewable energy capacity has increased 396% in the last eight years and stands at more than 159.95 GW (including large hydro), which is about 40% of the country's total capacity (as of March 31, 2022). The installed solar energy capacity has increased by 19 times in the last eight years, and stands at 56.6

GW as of June 1, 2022. The installed renewable energy capacity (including large hydro) has increased from 76.37 GW in March 2014 to 159.95 GW in May 2022, i.e. an increase of around 109.4%.

The investment climate is very positive in the Indian energy sector. Due to the surge in the sector, it has witnessed higher investment flows than envisaged. As much as \$70 billion (about ₹5.2 lakh crore) has been invested in renewable energy across the country in the past seven years.

The government has initiated several policies for the energy sector to promote and garner investments from NRIs/PIOs.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is allowed up to 100% in respect of projects relating to electricity generation, transmission and distribution, other than atomic reactor power plants. There is no limit on the project cost and quantum of FDI. The Foreign Investment Implementation Authority (FIIA) has been established to provide one-stop after-care service to foreign investors by helping expedite approvals and clearances and sort out operational problems with other government agencies. The FIIA acts as a single-point interface between the investors and government agencies including administrative ministries, state governments, pollution control boards, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, regulatory authorities, tax authorities and the Company Law Board, among other entities.

GDP GROWTH OVERTAKES ENERGY GROWTH

India is all set to exceed the goals set out in its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. The emission intensity of India's economy will improve by 40% from 2005 to 2030, above the 33-35% set out in its existing NDC. Emission intensity is defined as the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions emitted for every unit of GDP. Importantly, it counts emissions beyond those related to energy (such as emissions from agriculture), and greenhouse gases beyond carbon dioxide (such as methane). It is distinct from the energy intensity of the economy, which is how much energy a country uses to generate wealth—measured in terms of its GDP.

As per "India Energy Outlook 2021" of the International Energy Agency (IEA), the GDP of India has increased six-fold between 1990 and 2019, whereas final consumption of energy has only increased two and a half times, indicating a rapid improvement in energy intensity in these three decades. This is primarily due to a shift away from biomass as primary fuel in the residential sector, the share of which reduced from 48% (1990) to 18% (2019), due to enhancement of electrification and liquified petroleum gas (LPG) penetration.

Efficiency gains from shifting from biomass (with very low conversion efficiency of 5-10%) to higher efficiency LPG and electricity are responsible for 60%

decline in energy intensity during the period. As per the analysis in BUR-2, India's energy intensity (at 2011–12 price level GDP) decreased from 0.2732 mega joule per rupee (MJ/INR) in 2011–12 to 0.2401 in 2016–17, indicating a reduction of more than 12% in five years. The decline is being attributed to the fact that GDP growth is faster than energy growth, which is made possible by a larger share of service sector growth in the country.

The share of non-fossil fuels in electricity generation has reached almost 60%, well above the 40% that India pledged. India's leadership in the deployment of clean energy technologies is set to expand its market for solar PV, wind turbine and lithium-ion battery equipment to over \$40 billion per year by 2040. In this case, and especially in the sustainable development scenario where the equipment markets for solar, wind, batteries and water electrolyzers rise to \$80 billion per year, the industrial and commercial opportunities from clean energy are even larger.

The government has placed major emphasis on development of clean energy sources in the country. The sector is one of the major contributors to infrastructure development in India and with the newer emerging themes (green hydrogen, storage, electric vehicles, solar cell and electrolyser manufacturing and so on), it is leading the way for sustainable development and creating a better future.

ATTRACTING FDI

FDI in India's renewable energy sector stood at \$1.6 billion (₹121.05 billion) in financial year (FY) 2021–22. The investment is the highest ever in the Indian renewable sector in a year.

The federal tax incentives, or credits, for qualifying renewable energy projects or equipment include the Renewable Electricity Production Tax Credit (PTC), the Investment Tax Credit (ITC), the Residential Energy Credit, and the Modified Accelerated Cost-Recovery System (MACRS).

Cooperation agreements have been signed by the Indian government with other countries, including Denmark and the UK. The areas of cooperation include forecasting and scheduling of off-shore measures to develop and sustain a highly efficient wind industry, onshore as well as offshore; technical capacity building for management of off-shore wind projects;

measures to ensure high quality of wind turbines, components, and certification requirements.

The Grid Connected Solar Roof Top Programme aims to achieve a cumulative capacity of 40 GW from Rooftop Solar (RTS) projects by the end of 2022. The programme will be implemented with total central financial support of ₹11,814 crore through DISCOMs.

India has been one of the top-performing clean energy economies in the 21st century, registering the fifth highest five-year rate of investment growth and eighth highest in installed renewable energy capacity, according to some of the research reports.

INCREASE IN RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY

According to publicly available data, since March 2014 the sector has seen a growth of 2.73 times in total installed renewable energy capacity in the country. In line with its announcement at the COP26 summit in Glasgow to increase the non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030, coupled with the target to become a net zero carbon emitter by 2070, India is set to push the pedal to accelerate the pace of development.

The peak electricity demand of the country has been showing a positive trend of increasing. During the last year, the power demand initially reduced due to Covid-19. However, there has been an encouraging growth rate from September 2020 and has reached peak demand of around 190 GW. The increase is on account of revival of the economic activities in the country. 'Vocal for local' and Atmanirbhar Bharat have also added to the increasing demand for power.

Over the last eight years, per capita electricity consumption has reported consistent growth from 914 kWh in 2012–13 to 1,208 kWh in the last fiscal, an increase of 32%.

India jumped 115 positions to 22nd (2020) from 137 (2014) in the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business – Getting Electricity' ranking. The Indian power sector is forecast to attract investments worth \$128.24 bn to \$135.37 bn between FY19–23. The future of the sector looks bright since by 2026–27 the country's power generation installed capacity will be close to 620 GW, of which 38% will be from coal and 44% from renewable energy sources. ■

CHARTING NEW TERRITORY

A report by NITI Aayog indicates the growing importance of gig workers and how they need to be protected through labour laws

BY KUMUD DAS

The writer is a Mumbai-based senior business journalist.

The needs of India's ever-growing population of gig workers must be addressed, says a just-released report by NITI Aayog. The report highlights the exponential growth prospects of the gig economy. However, it has also raised concerns about the need to create a social security umbrella for this workforce. Gig workers are basically those who act as platform workers, working outside the traditional 'employer-employee' arrangement.

The gig and platform economy's current workforce of about 77 lakh is expected to rise to 2.35 crore by the end of the decade, forming 6.7 percent of the non-agricultural workforce by then, from 2.6 percent at present. The report says 27 lakh workers are employed in retail trade and sales, 13 lakh in the transportation sector, and 12 lakh spread across manufacturing, finance and insurance activities. They will constitute 4.1 percent of the total workforce in India.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has brought gig workers under the ambit of the new labour codes. Once notified, gig workers will be able to avail of various social security benefits. The report observes that currently more than 75 percent of companies have a less than 10 percent gig worker headcount but this proportion is bound to rise, with MNCs turning to flexible hiring options.

Welcoming the NITI Aayog report, Shaik Salauddin, general secretary of the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers (IFAT), was quoted as saying that it is good that NITI Aayog has addressed the issue of some important social security measures such as paid sick leave, healthcare access, insurance, and the like. However, it has not provided any mechanism or solutions for implementing schemes for such measures.

The flip side is that gig workers don't have pension and insurance cover. The platform worker is placed at the unique intersection of formal and informal classification. The Social Security Code (SS Code) has spoken about providing certain benefits such as accident insurance for those registered under the Aadhaar-seeded e-shram portal. There is much that remains to be done. The report cites international precedents to suggest a protective framework—such as pension and leave on the lines of the UK and the US. The problem is that, unlike in those countries where gig workers are treated as employees, the situation is different in India in the absence of a proper legal framework.

Kumar Shekhar, VP-Member Operations, Tide (IN), a UK-based fintech company that launched its operations in India in 2020, talks about the implications of financial inclusion and ease of doing business in the next phase of growth for gig and platform workers. He says, "Gig workers have become an integral

part of our economy, they have been instrumental in keeping several businesses operating, especially during the pandemic."

Gig workers spell empowerment and independence, and NITI Aayog's proposal to put financial services at the heart of the gig economy will help. Moreover, implementing ease of doing business, by having a single-window system or a one-stop digital platform, will not just help gig workers/entrepreneurs obtain all business-related pre-operational regulatory approvals and complete formalities without much hassle, it will also accelerate their growth in India, he said.

Two in 10 gig workers are primary earners who support their families and choose gig work as a means of core livelihood, whereas four in 10 are ambitious financial planners who co-earn with other family members and view gig work as a temporary transition to a better opportunity. The rest are dependants with no-to-low obligations who earn extra cash through gig work.

The growth in numbers of this segment of workers has spawned corresponding interest in them. A report by KarmaLife, a financial solutions provider for gig and blue-collar workers, and LEAD at Krea University was undertaken to throw light on the day-to-day work and financial lives of gig workers.

According to a finding by the International



Labour Organization (ILO), digital gig platforms powered by venture capitalist funding have grown exponentially from 142 in 2010 to 777 in 2020. While some qualified professionals may choose to work freelance and are counted as part of the gig economy, there's a common perception that many gigs are run by people who may not have had the chance to acquire formal higher education degrees. Then there are the few who opt for gig work for a second income.

The demographic is also predominantly male, with delivery and driving being the most common examples. But the study finds that even across such tasks, and especially in developing countries, about a quarter of the workers have higher-education qualifications. So, is a lack of good job prospects pushing people towards gigs, and what does that mean for their income and job safety? In other words, can gigs become careers and transform the future of work?

According to ILO's data, the gig platform was the main source of income for about 84 percent of app-based taxi workers, 90 percent of delivery workers, and about 33 percent of those working on various online web platforms.

The NITI Aayog report says that fiscal incentives such as tax-breaks or start-up grants may be provided for businesses that provide livelihood opportunities where women constitute a substantial portion of

According to ILO data, the gig platform was the main source of income for about 84 percent of app-based taxi workers, 90 percent of delivery workers, and about 33 percent of those working on various online web platforms.

the workers. Likewise, a platform with high accessibility or a high degree of participation of PwDs (Person with Disability) too may be rewarded with fiscal incentives.

Apart from incentivising platforms that focus on recruiting women workers, who currently comprise a small part of the gig worker community, the report recommended that businesses have a higher share of women managers and supervisors in the organisation to ensure that communication to workers does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

The report also recommended firms adopt policies that offer old age or

retirement plans and benefits, and other insurance cover for contingencies such as injury arising from work that may lead to loss of employment and income. Such plans and policies may be uniquely designed by a firm, in partnership with insurance companies, or could be designed and offered in collaboration with the government, as envisaged under the Social Security Code, 2020. Besides, a social security cover out of a corpus fund can also help gig workers in case of contingencies.

The NITI Aayog report also suggested that social security benefits be extended to workers in partnership mode, as envisaged in the social security Code. It also said businesses should consider providing income support to workers as it would be a "critical step in providing assured minimum earnings and social security from income loss in the wake of uncertainty or irregularity in work". It also recommended offering paid sick leave to workers apart from insurance cover.

The report claims to offer "perspectives and recommendations on the future of work". It serves as a handy guide to this growing segment of the labour force while including some valuable recommendations, which need to be more widely discussed. There is no question that at least some coherent thinking needs to be applied to gig work in India. ■

Review

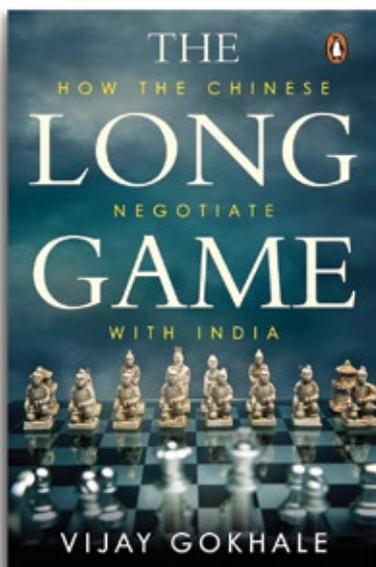
LEARNING CHINESE CHEQUERS THE HARD WAY

Ambassador Vijay Gokhale traces the Chinese tactics and Indian naivete of the 1950s, and how India picked up the game and countered Beijing's moves



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.



The Long Game: How The Chinese Negotiate With India
Imprint Vintage Books | ₹699 | Pages 200

India has not and will perhaps never be able to forget the ignominious defeat at the hands of Chinese forces in the month-long engagement of 10,000 ill-equipped Indian troops against 80,000 trained troops of the PLA from October 20 to November 19, 1962 in which China took possession of the Aksai Chin before declaring a unilateral ceasefire. Described as a 'Himalayan Blunder' by Brig. John Dalvi, the defeat led to the resignation of Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon and the Army chief, Gen. P.N. Thapar. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru could never recover from this shock, especially as the Opposition lost no opportunity to remind him of the prescient words that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel wrote on November 7, 1950, that "even though we regard ourselves as friends of China, the Chinese do not regard us as their friends...The Chinese government has tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intention. They managed to instil into our Ambassador a false sense of confidence in their so-called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means. The action of the Chinese, (with regard to PLA in Tibet) in my judgment, is little short of perfidy".

However, this debacle forced everyone in India—the army, the diplomatic corps, the bureaucracy, the media, and political parties—to think deeply about China and understand that China posed a bigger threat to India than Pakistan. On the political front there were interesting fallouts. The Dravidian parties firmly aligned themselves with the nationalist cause, and even though there was dissension in the Communist Party of India (CPI), the majority faction—led by S.A. Dange and P.C. Joshi—decided that nation came before ideology. The nation came together in its grief, but it also set in motion a rethinking of our strategic doctrine vis-a-vis China.

The lessons that India has learnt since then have been documented in Vijay Gokhale's masterly treatise, *The Long Game: How the Chinese Negotiate With India*. It covers the gamut of India-China relations from 1949 to 2019. Just as Henry Kissinger's book, *On China* (2011), helped in an understanding of the US perception of the games the Chinese play, Gokhale's book offers invaluable insights into where we went wrong in the first decade, and how we have now begun to understand the strategic game of China.

The six themes that Gokhale covers in his book include the recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) by India in 1949, the agreement on trade with Tibet in 1954, India's nuclear tests in 1998, the formal recognition of Sikkim in 2005, the negotiations

on the 2008 nuclear deal with the US and, finally, the listing of Masood Azhar as a terrorist in the UNSC sanctions list.

Both India and China became independent around the same time, but China was locked in a bitter struggle between the nationalists (KMT) led by Chiang Kai-shek and the communists led by Mao Zedong. However, for the record, it must be stated that Chiang Kai-shek's regime had reiterated that Tibet as a part of China did not acknowledge the Simla agreement of 1914 or the McMahon Line as the boundary. Meanwhile, in October 1947, when the KMT and CPC were locked in a bitter struggle for supremacy, the Dalai Lama's office in Lhasa addressed a letter to Nehru seeking a return of "all our indisputable territories gradually included into India ... parts of modern-day Arunachal, Ladakh, Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Bhutan".

Of course, the Dalai Lama's claims had no military backing, and K.M. Pannikar, our ambassador to China, felt that compared to the KMT, the CPC under Mao may give greater credence to India's interests in Tibet. Even though Patel was reticent, Nehru was keen to be the first among the Commonwealth nations to recognise the PRC. However, as Mao told Stalin, "we believe that we should not rush to be recognised. We must first bring order to the country, strengthen our position and then we can talk to the foreign imperialists". But Nehru and Pannikar rushed to recognise China even as Girja Shankar Bajpai was keen to raise the "special relationship with Tibet". Pannikar held the view "that since China had not raised the issue, it would be prudent to proceed on the assumption that the new regime did not intend to rake up the historical past of India's northern frontier". Nehru believed that India's early recognition of China would give it some leverage in building strong relations with the country. "India erroneously assumed that recognition of China would ipso facto lead to establishment of diplomatic ties, but China insisted that India sever its ties with the KMT which still held Taiwan, without any reciprocal assurance from their side about India's interests and special relationship with Tibet."

India could not understand China's strategy for Tibet largely because our political leadership was perhaps too trusting—or naïve, to put it more bluntly. China used all its cards tactically while India chose grand ideological positioning, and punched much higher than it was capable of diplomatically, politically, and militarily. China gave India the impression that it could mediate between Tibet and China, even as the PLA was stepping in to occupy Lhasa. It then asked India to withdraw its military escorts in Gyantse and Yadong as a gesture of goodwill, convert the mission in Lhasa to a consulate general and in the process also got one sanctioned for itself in Bombay. Nehru invited Mao as the chief guest to the first Republic Day parade in January 1951 while the Chinese in their internal memos continued to regard him as an "imperialist lackey". Also, by a very clever stratagem, the negotiations with Nehru were undertaken not by Mao but by Zhou Enlai, the prime minister, who was equivalent in protocol to Nehru even though effective power reposed with the former.

While China was consolidating its hold on the ground, Nehru assured Parliament in November 1951 that the "McMahon line is its boundary, and would remain so, map, or no map". On the other hand, the Chinese chose their words very carefully. In 1952 Pannikar was told that the Chinese saw no difficulty in India

Even after the agreement is signed, the Chinese engage in what is called 'post negotiation' to ensure that the narrative is managed. This 'communique' can then be used to twist the agreed upon text.

safeguarding its economic and cultural interests in Tibet, conveniently ignoring that India had economic, cultural, and political interests: in fact, India was the only country which had a diplomatic and military presence in Tibet. Again, under instructions from Nehru, the first Hindi map of India produced in 1952 used the word Cheen (China) to describe our northern borders whereas the British India maps had always referred to the region as Tibet!

Post-1962, India learnt its lessons and from then to now, we have been able to match the Chinese in their games. As Gokhale avers, we have now understood the Chinese stratagem of paying full attention to pre-negotiations, agenda setting, propaganda, non-official statements and outreach to collaterals involved in negotiations. It chose its negotiators with care, who in turn use many Chinese proverbs, flatter their counterparts by bestowing a Chinese name on them and offering hospitality much above their status, even while leveraging their 'hegemonic' position by virtue of being a member of the UNSC. Even after the agreement is signed, the Chinese engage in what is called 'post negotiation' to ensure that the narrative is managed. This 'communique' can then be used to twist the agreed upon text. They also make extensive use of their think tanks, and the international department of the CPC to hold talks with the political leadership of communist and likeminded parties, exchange programmes and the network of journalists and media personnel, who owe their affiliation to the CPC. Thus, the Chinese approach the negotiation process holistically. However, as the old adage goes, "you can fool everyone for some time, some people for some time, but no one forever", and the Chinese game is now better understood by India—we have, after all, been the victims of this stratagem. And so, in all our subsequent negotiations—on Sikkim, on our nuclear deal with America and in getting Masood Azhar declared as a terrorist, India has dealt its cards with equal, if not better, felicity, and shown the Chinese that we too are masters in the strategy game.

Gokhale has dedicated the book to the officers of the Indian Foreign Service. I would, however, recommend that it be also read by the mandarins of the finance, defence and home ministries—for the only way to equal China is to understand their stratagems and beat them in their own game! ■

Insight

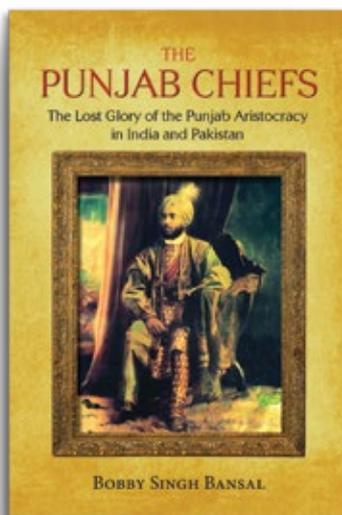
A COMPELLING PORTRAIT

A look into undivided Punjab, the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his court and courtiers, his wives and children, his descendants. A candid gaze at those in power and the life and times of a bygone era



BY
H. KISHIE SINGH

H. Kishie Singh is a journalist, author, motoring aficionado, globe-trotter on wheels and a public speaker. He has authored two books: *Good Motoring*, and *Whispering Deodars*, co-authored by His Holiness The Dalai Lama, the late Khushwant Singh and Satish Gujral, Ruskin Bond, among others



The Punjab Chiefs: The Lost Glory of the Punjab Aristocracy in India and Pakistan
Author: Bobby Singh Bansal | ₹5,995 | 532 pp

The first impression of *The Punjab Chiefs: The Lost Glory of the Punjab Aristocracy in India and Pakistan* by Bobby Singh Bansal, a coffee table book, is impressive—with the colourful vintage photograph of a Punjab chief.

Bobby Singh Bansal, a councillor of Syston, a small town in Leicestershire, a county in England's East Midlands, realised that Dalip Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was buried in Elveden, the Maharaja's estate, and an hour's drive from where Bansal lived. He wasted no time in visiting the estate and started to gather what material he could lay his hands on regarding Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his family, his generals, friends and courtiers.

Bansal set about searching for courtiers in the Maharaja's court in Lahore during his reign and managed to trace descendants of those families in India and Pakistan. This exercise took him all of five years; after all, Lahore was the capital of the kingdom of the Sikhs and a cornucopia of information. Covering 65 ancestors of aristocratic families, a family tree of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the book stretches across three pages. Unfortunately, however, it is dated only until 2000.

At the recent launch of the India edition of the book in Chandigarh, Bansal admitted that the list was incomplete and that names could have been misspelt.

Extensively researched and a repository of knowledge about the families in the limelight in those times, the gap in historical facts is due to chunks of records remaining behind in Pakistan, and many others being unearthed from trunks where they were at the mercy of the weather and termites. Some prominent families with an incomplete family tree include the Sodhis of Guru Harsahai, the House of Bagrian and the Sandhawalias.

Despite this, it is a treasure trove of Punjab's aristocratic times—a chronicle of the Sikh aristocracy from Maharaja Ranjit Singh to the present with mention of descendants like Bharat Inder Singh and Rani Jagdish Kaur of Fardikot.

Bansal admits the book is a continuation, or perhaps an extension, of the first edition of *The Punjab Chiefs* by Sir Lepel Griffin, published in 1865. Griffin's book was followed by an updated version by Charles Francis Massy in 1890, and again by H.D. Craik in 1909. The author



Bansal underlines emphatically that the history of the Maharaja's lineage has been distorted to satisfy accounts written by English writers

maintains, however, that his work is an "endeavour to correct and mend anomalies and inaccuracies in the 1865 edition of Griffin".

It starts with the House of Maharaja Ranjit Singh simply because the "history of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is, in fact, the history of Punjab" in many ways. But instead of his political exploits the author focuses on lesser known facts about the wives and children of the Maharaja. "History has never really depicted an explicit account of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's wives and children. The book would be deficient without the inclusion of the Maharaja's family, specially his lesser known sons," says the author at the beginning. For example, very little is known about the Maharaja's descendants like Kharak Singh, Prince Nau Nihal Singh and even Duleep Singh, who had eight children from his two wives.

Bansal underlines emphatically that the history of the Maharaja's lineage has been distorted to satisfy accounts written by English writers. The account of Maharaja Duleep Singh is riddled with misinformation and half-truths. Equally baffling was that he was flooded with "numerous assertions and claims by relatives as descendants of the Maharaja. I have been inundated by many

unscrupulous individuals in connecting their names with the Maharaja's lineage, who, however, never provided me with any evidence to corroborate their fanciful claims," notes the author.

There is mention of less important houses like Alawalpur, near Jalandhar, and Arnauli, which, aristocratic in their own right as local satraps, joined hands with the more influential houses.

A rich new dimension is added when the narrative shifts focus from Maharaja Ranjit Singh and family to the courtiers. And in the telling we have a glimpse of undivided Punjab and the private lives of the Punjab gentry. If we have the House of Ayudhia Prasad and the House of Akalgarh evidencing the shades of Hindu aristocracy, we also have the House of Kalaswale (Pakistan) underlining the Muslim ancestors of the Bajwas. The family of Diwan Ayudhya Prasad came from Kashmir to Benaras. However, it was his son, Ganga Ram, who made a name for himself, rose in social circles and ultimately joined the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and became a key person in his coterie. He would be the Maharaja's ambassador for treaties and for liaising with foreigners.

The House of Akalgarh had its founder in Diwan Sawan Mal Chopra. His son, Lala Hoshnak, earned a respectable place for himself in the court of the Maharaja. His services were largely used by the Maharaja for accounting purposes.

On the House of Nakai there is an interesting mention of how Sardar Atar Singh and Sardar Ishar Singh converted to Islam and yet retained their aristocratic lineage. Sardar Mohammad Arif Nakai and Sardar Mohammad Suleiman Nakai uphold the tradition of the family, among others, later on.

And how the House of Harika had its origin in Mathura, from where it shifted to Gurdaspur, then to Jaisalmer, is rivetting. A family member down the lineage moved to Patiala and became the Chief of General Staff of Patiala. There is the House of Jaijee which refused to pay *jizya* to the Mughal rulers and got the subtitle, Jaijees.

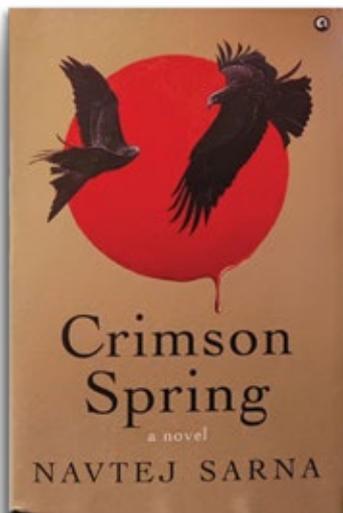
The history of the Maharaja's court would be incomplete without the involvement of the ladies who were able administrators and even went into battle. Maharani Jind Kaur is a classic example where the Queen Mother was in complete charge of the state. ■

New Release

SWEPT BY THE TIDE OF HISTORY

Navtej Sarna brings out the angst and poignancy of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, refracted through the lives of simple people

BY PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO JR



Crimson Spring
By Navtej Sarna | ₹899 | 295 pp

While reading this novel, you must remove the historical and literary scaffolding that author Navtej Sarna sets up. The historical scaffolding is about the dates, the terrain of Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, the chronology of events from the days leading to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and what followed, and winding its way to the hanging of Udham Singh in 1940 after he killed Michael O'Dwyer, who was the lieutenant governor of Punjab. There is also a need to ignore the explanations the author provides through many interviews. The literary scaffolding lies in the gallery of characters he sets up, some of them fictional, some real, through whom he tells the story. It is an artifice, an interesting one. Something that a good writer like Sarna does not hesitate to place up front. But the reader can do without them and plunge directly into the story.

The story of Maya Dei and Joga Singh is at the heart of the book, and how these two are caught in the political storm of 1919 Punjab. Maya is the simple rural woman of Punjab, she has her feelings and she has her values. Her faith provides the ballast. She walks through life's vicissitudes with integrity. Joga is a man who chooses to lead the quiet life despite his education and his prospects in urban Rawalpindi. He keeps to his books and to the plain rhythm of an idyllic rural haunt with its fresh mountain streams and open fields. Maya and Joga are the quiet people who enjoy the blessings of life without being too self-conscious about the felicity of the life they chose without deliberation.

The Jallianwala Bagh explosion takes place and Maya and Joga are caught in it. Sarna describes the aftermath of the explosion with Homeric simplicity: "The sun went down in an ocean of blood and the night that enveloped Jallianwala Bagh was death itself, visiting



The story of Maya Dei and Joga Singh is at the heart of the book, and how these two are caught in the political storm of 1919 Punjab.

each shadow, teasing out and trapping each escaping life." And Maya's traumatic moment is narrated in these short sentences: "Nobody else in the world knew that Joga Singh was dead, shot neatly through the forehead on Baisakhi day. Only she could do what needed to be done. She tried not to think of anything else." The tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh is embodied in the lives of Maya and Joga. The other tender stories briefly narrated are of Mehtab Singh and Jindi, and of Hugh Porter and Milly.

The other characters—Ralla, Kirpal—are lovable, lonely individuals. Ralla finds his inner strength in the faith provided by his spiritual mentor. Kirpal, despite his exposure to the big, wide world and its momentous war, sinks into existential desolation, but he overcomes it and readies to join the fight against the brutal coloniser—joining the movement for the reform of gurudwaras.

But Sarna captures the temporary moment of desolation powerfully: "All that he had been doing with pride now seemed so useless, futile. The uniform, the rank, the glory of battle was a sham, a huge deception."

What makes this book an absorbing read is that it is written with a novelist's circumspection for language, which is witty and arresting. Sarna describes the small gesture of Punjab Chief Secretary Porter to correct the wireless message he has dictated: "...he read carefully through the draft wireless message he had dictated, a blue pencil poised in his hand for corrections like a harpoon looking for a fish under the water's surface."

The Ghadar strand of the story is perhaps the most neglected part of the Punjab of those days. Sarna tries to weave it into the main story as it were. It can even be said that the Ghadar story is the main strand. But somewhere it remains unassimilated. We do not get a picture of Ghadar people, but only their mission to drive out the British. It is told through Sucha's awakening, the orphan who reaches Tibba, the fictional village with its *akhara*, the wrestling pit, and the *theka*, the drinking den, and is taken care of by Bhima. The Ghadar folk remain hazy. Umrao Singh. Baba Wasakha Singh. The Ghadar movement must have fired the imagination of the patriotic people then.

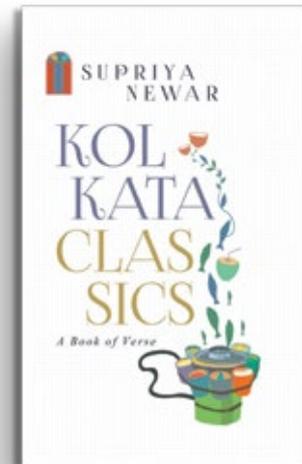
But what hangs heavy in the book is Sarna's earnest attempt to get the sense of Jallianwala Bagh and the Punjab of the times right and that is why he includes the Udham Singh story. And the restrained language falters when he writes the Udham Singh diary: "I have become immortal. I have become Bhagat Singh." Something as bad as Thomas Hardy's last lines in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, as pointed out by R.G. Collingwood! ■

Poetry

READING AND WRITING POEMS CAN CALM YOU

Poetry brings joys and helps us get in touch with our deeper self

BY SUPRIYA NEWAR



Kolkata Classics
Author: Supriya Newar

Available worldwide on Amazon

The year 2022 started on a muted note for nearly everyone. The Omicron was surging, posting daily numbers that were sometimes higher than the Sensex; lurking around the corner, waiting to catch you. My building complex was no different. Every hour, the phone would ping with a notification of a new case reported in some apartment. House staff was strictly stopped. December and January are by all accounts the merriest, most colourful months in Calcutta, but this year, all social meets and greets had come to a grinding halt. I found myself moping too. Feeling crestfallen. Staring at walls.

In all of this, one morning, the vegetable vendor's cries from the by-lanes behind my building carried all the way up to my 13th floor. He was loud and clear and utterly familiar. It is not that that was the first time I had paid attention to his call; I had always marvelled at how each of them could throw their voices, their individualistic bells and cries and their rather creative jingles that they came up with to bridge the divide between the roadside and the high-rise.

But that day, his high-pitched holler comforted me. All afternoon, I sat glued to the spot and heard each and every call for its melody, its music, its human voice. Finally, by the evening, I had scribbled a poem dedicated to these vendors, the Pheriwalas.

Right after writing it, I felt a deep sense of calm, a release. I realised that in times of turmoil, we instinctively seek the familiar and in more equanimous times, we strive for the unachieved, the unfamiliar.

A few years ago, after consuming a packet of Masala Muri, one of the most loved street foods of the city, I had come back and scribbled a verse on it. I had titled it Jhalmuri. That poem was languishing in my computer. I decided to share both these poems – Jhalmuri and Pheriwala with my publisher. His response was a positive one. He confirmed that this could indeed turn into something special if I could put together a compelling collection.

After 4 months of this conversation with him, Kolkata Classics – a book of verse was born. It did not need much research as me digging deep into my own insights, my absorptions and pulling out every bit of Kolkata that resided in me.

Kolkata Classics therefore captures the quintessential spirit and

energy of the city, lovingly called the City of Joy. 24 odd verses look at extremely ubiquitous elements of the city and present them to the reader in catchy verses that offer a smile, a giggle, a ponder, a poke and some musing. All my poems are generously sprinkled with local words and terms that are widely known and just in case, a detailed glossary is provided too.

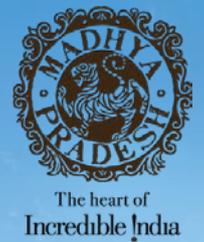
From quaint by-lanes to the potters' colony – Kumartuli, from the true-blue Bengalis' love for maach to their obsession with indigestion and ombol; over bhaanrs of cha and mouthfuls of jhalmuri and intellectual addas – I have tried to serve you my savouring of the city with transportive expressions that will hopefully cajole you into taking a second look at all that makes Calcutta a classic, a constant muse. All that gives it its unique character, its signature.

It may be noted that each of the elements I have picked to write about have continued to survive, sometimes even thrive, in a world dictated by unfathomable rapidity of change that has been triggered by technology but has consumed every bit of our life. So, whilst we depend on Alexa to switch off our lights or tell us what we had for breakfast, we still reach out for the humble chaata when it rains. Whilst we post pictures of our global sojourns and adventures, our eyes can't escape the tears when year after year, Maa Durga bids us adieu – a poem I call Immersion.

May I also take this opportunity to share with you, that my love for poetry is long and abiding. I have consumed poetry in different languages and have found that in all the hurly burly of life, poetry can be a great companion – a source of strength, perspective and joy. Kolkata Classics has, by God's grace received heartfelt appreciation from across quarters. There have been media reviews that have been nothing short of enviable. But the remarks that I hold closest to my hearts is when a friend calls me to say that her husband has kept the book by his bedside; or that a son recites one of the poems at the dinner table because it entirely fits his father and his family.

I hope Kolkata Classics can secure not just a spot on your bookshelf but one in your heart as well. ■

Seek blessings of Shiva during the month-long festival of Shravan in MP



Shravan, a month devoted to Lord Shiva, falls in July-August every year. This is not just a month but a festival that is celebrated with supreme zeal in the heart of 'The Incredible India' Madhya Pradesh. This festival also opens up great scope for all the travel enthusiasts, to experience and cherish the unique celebrations across the state. Madhya Pradesh is blessed with two Jyotirlingas. One is the Omkareshwar Mahadev at Omkareshwar while the other is the Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga in Ujjain. Besides, many ancient shiva temples are there.

While travelling to these places in Shravan month, you would also witness groups of Kanwariyas (pilgrims), who travel barefoot wearing saffron robes carrying Kanwar. As the country gears to celebrate this month-long festival, we welcome you to witness beautifully adorned temples bathed in fresh blooms and glittering lights. Witness the grandeur of Shravan month at these temples in the Heart of Incredible India.

Mahakal Temple, Ujjain

One of the 12 Jyotirlingas, Mahakaleshwar temple, popularly known as Mahakal temple, is one of the most sacred Shiva temples in Ujjain. During Shravan month, devotees gather in large numbers every Monday to witness 'Mahakal ki Sawari', a special procession that is taken out on Mondays of this holy month. The procession is taken out with full glory in which police on horses, Special



Forces, police bands, and devotees chanting spiritual and religious songs march ahead of the palanquin. Thousands of devotees sought Lord Shiva's blessings during the spiritual and breath-taking view of procession. Police personals give guard of honour to the Lord Mahakaleshwar at temple gate.

If you have planned to visit Mahakaleshwar temple this month, do not forget to seek blessings from Harsiddhi Temple, Kal Bhairav Temple, Mangalnath Temple, Shri Chintaman Ganesh Temple, Navgrah Shani Mandir, and Gadhkalika Temple.



Nagchandreshwar Temple, Ujjain:

This temple is opened only on the occasion of Naag Panchami in the month of shravan, making it a special day for devotees to worship the snake deities. Inside the temple are the rare idols of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati with family placed on Sheshnag. It is located at the third floor of the Mahakal temple. Lakhs of people from across the country seek blessings at Nagchandreshwar Temple on Naag Panchami.

Shri Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga

The key attraction for the pilgrims who visit



Omkareshwar is Omkareshwar jyotirlinga, one of the ancient sites of the 12 sacred jyotirlingas. The sacred island that is shaped like 'Aum', draws millions of travellers from across the globe. There are two Jyotirlingas, Omkareshwar and Mamlleshwar. Both are the form of the same Jyotirlinga. Mamlleshwar Jyotirlinga is on the south bank of the Narmada and Omkareshwar sits on the Omkar Mountain towards the north bank of Narmada River. Narmada River flows in the middle of both the temples. It is believed that a pilgrimage to the Omkareshwar isn't complete

without paying homage to the Mamleshwar temple.

Chauragarh temple, Pachmarhi

Chauragarh temple is situated at an altitude of 1326 metres in Pachmarhi. The temple courtyard is stacked with thousands of Trishuls (tridents). Most devotees carry the Trident on their shoulders and complete the determined journey moved only by their faith. Tridents stuck in the ground around the temple create a forest of Trishuls. There are two stories related with the Chauragarh temple. It is believed that Lord Shiva took refuge in these hills to escape from Bhasmasura. Another significance is that Chaura Baba did 'Tapasya' for many years on this hill. After which Lord Shiva appeared to him and said that this hill will be known as Chauragarh from today.

Pashupatinath Temple, Mandsaur

A site of spiritual significance in Mandsaur, Pashupatinath Temple is popular for its eight-faced shiva linga. The shivalinga weighs approximately 4,600 Kgs and is almost 7.25 feet tall. The eight faces are carved upon the linga into rows and depict Shiva as Bhava, Pashupati, Mahadeva, Ishaan, Rudra, Sharva, Ugra, and Ashani. This is a very unique Shivlingam and people from all over the country visits here for Darshan.

Bhojeshwar temple, Bhopur

Situated around 28 km from Bhopal, 'The capital city of Bhopal', Bhojeshwar Temple is also dedicated to Lord Shiva and beckons a large number of devotees especially during Shravan month. Carved out of a single stone, the massive linga in the sanctum stands tall at 2.35 m with a circumference of nearly 6m. It is set upon a three-tiered sandstone platform over a 6m square. Its amazing architecture has earned it the title 'Somnath of the east'.

INDIA@75

THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE DIASPORA

Commemoration of 75 years of India's independence or – to put it in official parlance – Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is a celebration of the ageless glory and diversity of Indian culture and the progress the nation has made in the economic, social and political spheres. How do Indian communities abroad feel about it all? *Pravasi Indians* spoke to some NRIs to get a feel of their perspectives on this emotive issue...

BY PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO JR

The writer is a New Delhi-based journalist who has worked with *The Indian Express*, *India Today*, *Gulf Today* (Sharjah), *The Straits Times* (Singapore), *tehelka.com* and *DNA*

What Indian emigrants feel about the homeland provides a good reality check for the country. There is the advantage of distance which offers a clear perspective about what the homeland is like, a mix of pride and nostalgia. The paradox is this: Indians continue to emigrate for better opportunities and living conditions. They long for India but find it difficult to come back. They will not get the kind of high-paying jobs they are holding or profitable businesses they are running in foreign lands. But they are attached to India through family, friends, sentiment, Bollywood songs. They have moved away from India, but they have not turned away from the motherland. They hold on to memories, and they keep up with Indian culture and traditions in their foreign homes. The cliché that you can take them away from India, but you cannot take India from them holds true.

It is a fact that emigrant Indians are a minuscule minority and their views do not reflect what India is all about. Theirs is a microcosmic point of view. But it is not a view that can be dismissed as of no consequence. Indians abroad have been sending money home, and their remittances contribute to the foreign exchange reserves in India. Gradually, they save money in Indian banks, either in rupees or dollars. And then they begin to invest in India. They have contributed to India's economy and India's global image. And

it has not been an easy choice. They struggled with India's insignificance and their own. And through their own efforts, they improved their lot, and helped in burnishing the country's image. While India struggled through its fractious society with its caste, communal and regional strife and kept Indian democracy and freedom alive and meaningful, the small band of NRIs struggled too to help themselves and the country. And they succeeded even as India did. Their views and experiences make sense in understanding India a wee bit.

When Nitin Dalvi moved to the United States in 1976, he recalls: "India did not figure in the thinking of the national media, much less the ordinary American. It was still seen as an exotic place with all the clichés of cows, elephants, poverty, hippies, gurus, etc." In the mid-1960s the Beatles came to India, learnt the sitar from Pandit Ravi Shankar, and then came again to the *ashram* of Mahesh Yogi at Rishikesh to learn yoga and spirituality. Many of us in India thought that India was getting famous, but it was quite different on the ground in America.

When Kavita Grover moved to Dubai in 1994, the perception was not very different. India was seen as a poor country and Indians were seen as fleeing the harsh conditions. Grover writes, "The general perception was that India is a developing country from where you





can hire Indians cheaper compared to a European, even a South African. They are good workers and don't complain of long hours."

But the mood and perception changes dramatically when Pratibha moves to Canada in 2021. She says, "I came to Canada, and I found Indians celebrating all festivals with full enthusiasm and spirit. People who are living here miss India and they are trying their best to impart Indian values to their children."

The more interesting aspect of the emigration story is that Indians stay deeply connected with the country. There is indeed hyperbole about their feelings for India but there are compelling reasons for keeping in touch with India. It is the family. Srikant Avatapalli, who moved to Singapore in 2003 to work with an Indian tech company there, compares notes about what it was like in 2003 and in 2022. In his memo-like response, he makes brief pointers of what it was like in 2003: "Expensive flight tickets made travel home less frequent, causing gaps in family bonding." And there was another reason too: "Even though expatriates wanted to come back they missed the lifestyle they enjoyed abroad." And the changes he notices in 2022: "Many of the NRIs moving to India are able to maintain the lifestyle they got used to abroad and remain closer to family and friends." The NRIs have paid a price, in emotional and social terms. And he notes with sadness and satisfaction that in 2022, "NRIs are closer to Indian culture, kids are learning Indian dance and arts." Keeping alive Indian culture though consciously away from the homeland does not give the same joy as living the culture at home.

When the NRIs wax eloquent about their emotional connect with India, it hovers between the banal and hyperbole, but it shows a desperate longing. Says Divya Kaeley, who migrated to Canada in 2012: "India was 'home' and will always be. I have my extended family back home and this keeps my connection with India going

strong." Neelam Verma, who left India in 2002 for Canada, says, "All my relatives, including my mother and brother and their families, are in India. I travel to India every year to meet with them. We still practise our culture at home and among friends and children. Our roots lie in India which cannot be uprooted, come what may." There is an uneasiness hovering in those sentences, the emotional price that the NRIs are continuously paying. Beyond the glitz and comfort of lifestyles abroad, Indians miss the cultural bonding that holds them together at home.

That the NRIs miss India is writ large in their views when asked about their connection with India. Says Rajat Jain who left for Australia in 2004: "I go back to India every year (except the last two years due to Covid) to see my family and friends. I also overdose on food, traffic, news channels, Bollywood, shopping malls and free unsolicited advice from an alarming number of people on everything. It is my annual pilgrimage home to reset and refresh my perspective on everything."

There is a sense of loneliness and longing that seems to forever haunt the much envied Indians abroad. So, when they express their view on what independent India means to them, they express an idealism which they may not be aware they nursed. Says Venkatesh Raghavendra, a social entrepreneur based in the US: "A land where everyone has equal access to opportunities and enjoys basic aspects of sustenance—safe water, food security and dignity." Neelam Verma is quite categorical: "Independent India for me is the freedom to practise your culture, religion, and travel to any part of the country without restrictions." Pratibha is quite blunt about what independent India means for her: "Independent India means we can be without fear and that there is no corruption. Hard working people should get their due. The worst things are corruption and lack of respect

for women. I found women are much stronger and independent in other countries which makes me stay in Canada.”

The sentiments express a dream, an ideal, with the implication that despite 75 years of independence, these goals and ideals remain to be achieved.

The NRIs are aware that they have left behind a country beset with problems, many of which defy solution. And they know that they have not found a paradise in the foreign country. Unlike the people of German, Polish, Ukrainian, Greek and Italian origin in the United States, Canada and Australia, who have left behind the home country and do not look back to it, the Indians who have left India find themselves tied to their homeland. Perhaps after a few generations, Indians will not feel the agony of weakening cultural roots. The Indians who continue to live there will live like Americans, Canadians, and Australians. But now Indians are struggling to keep alive the culture they have left behind, the family connections that are loosening by the day.

As India celebrates 75 years of independence, Indians abroad want to be part of the celebrations and feel the thrill but they know that they are far from home, and that they are not any more part of the daily struggle one billion-plus Indians undergo, fighting to survive another day. The idealism of the Freedom Movement has dimmed and even vanished as the heroic past recedes into the background. But the NRIs seem to keep the fire of idealism alive when they speak of what they perceive to be independent India. In

As India celebrates 75 years of independence, Indians abroad want to be part of the celebrations and feel the thrill but they know that they are far from home, and that they are not any more part of the daily struggle one billion-plus Indians undergo, fighting to survive another day.

the words of Lakshman, who left India for the US in 2013, “Independent India means a country that is not afraid to stand up for what is right. A country that is self-sufficient and values itself and does the right thing. A country that has a system of democracy and is progressive.” ■

GIVING BACK TO THE HOMELAND

NRI remittances to their families indirectly and invisibly have helped the Indian economy grow at an impressive rate

The money that NRIs had sent back to India through monthly remittances to their families, rupee and dollar deposits in Indian banks, and investment by buying or constructing a house indirectly and invisibly helped the Indian economy grow at an impressive rate after the 1991 economic reforms. Major changes have occurred in the patterns of remittances over the years, especially from 2016-17 onward.

It is not Kerala that receives the highest remittances anymore, it is Maharashtra. And it is not the Gulf countries but the advanced economies like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa that are the source of increased remittances. While emigrants to the Gulf countries were the low-skilled labour, the better skilled workforce is now moving to the AEs. And the change did not come about during the Covid-19 breakdown, but a few years before that. The share of remittances from the GCC countries went down from 50

percent in 2016-17 to 30 percent in 2020-21, and the share of the AEs stood at 36 percent in 2020-21. And the US accounted for 20 percent of the remittances to India.

Soumashree Tewari and Ranjeeta Mishra, who work with the Department of Economic Policy and Research with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), have done an interesting analysis of the patterns of remittances—a crucial part of foreign fund inflows into the country—and the countries which contribute to it. The authors have noticed the impact of Covid-19 on the NRI remittances.

Much of the skilled labour is now moving to the better-paid AEs for employment, but the emigration of low-skilled labour from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continues to go towards the Gulf countries. Kerala was the leading state in terms of remittances from the NRIs in the GCC, but now it is Maharashtra that receives larger remittances from emigrants to the AEs. Maharashtra received 35.2 percent of the remittances in 2021,

followed by Kerala (10.2 percent), Tamil Nadu (9.7 percent), and Delhi (9.3 percent).

It is now reckoned that 46 percent of Indian emigrant labour is in three countries, the UAE, the US, and Saudi Arabia. In 2000, the distribution of Indian emigrants was: 11.6 percent (UAE), 13.2 percent (US), 12.3 percent (Saudi Arabia). In 2020, the distribution is: 19.4 percent (UAE), 15.2 percent (US), and 14 percent (Saudi Arabia).

In 2021, the low- and middle-income countries like India received \$87 billion through remittances, and it was more than the remittances received by China and Mexico, which got \$53 billion, the Philippines (\$36 billion) and Egypt (\$33 billion) in the same income group.

It was common wisdom in the 1990s that China’s market reforms were fuelled by remittances sent home by overseas Chinese. The story of Indian expats doing their bit for powering the Indian market economy needs to be told and acknowledged.

VOICES FROM ABROAD

"Indian students and professionals have been instrumental in changing perceptions about India as a country in the whole world. I live in the US where Indians are perceived as hardworking, family-oriented, and intelligent people in general. I am deeply connected with India through family and make it a point to visit as often as possible. An 'Independent India' to me would mean a country able to develop and uplift its rural people and the poor and provide basic amenities to every citizen. As Tagore wrote, "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high." I too dream of an India where every citizen is enabled and empowered."

—Priya Arora, IT consulting professional, lives in US, left India in 2000.



"In my 17 years here in Australia I have seen it all – from the stereotypical to the nuanced. For the most part I think we are seen as an important partner, and a fierce competitor when it comes to the cricket! I go back to India every year (except the last two Covid-marred years) to see my family and friends. I also overdose on food, traffic, news channels, Bollywood, shopping malls and free unsolicited advice from an alarming number of people on everything. It is my annual pilgrimage home to reset and refresh my perspective on everything.

'Independent India' for me means that I am a proud overseas citizen of India, and that we are still a young country in the modern world despite being one of the oldest civilisations on Earth."

—Rajat Jain, senior executive in the payments industry, lives in Australia, left India in 2004.



"India is perceived as a country of caring, hospitable people, rich in its diversity – in every sense of the term – geography, culture, cuisine and people. The essence of my motherland is embedded in every cell of my body! To me 'Independent India' is a land where everyone has equal access to opportunities and enjoys basic aspects of sustenance – safe water, food security and dignity."

—Venkatesh Raghavendra, social entrepreneur working on issues of water and opportunity creation for young people, lives in US, left India in 1994.

"When I came to live in Canada, I found Indians celebrating all festivals with full enthusiasm and spirit. People who are living here miss India and are trying their best to impart Indian values to their children. Everyone is connected to the homeland through their heart because our base is in India. After coming here I found India is much better than other countries. Independence means we can walk without any fear and there is no corruption. Hardworking people should get their due. Unfortunately, I am alarmed by corruption and lack of respect for women in India, which is not so much the case in other countries. Women are stronger and more independent in other countries, and it has made me continue staying here in Canada."

—Pratibha, IT professional, lives in Canada, left India in 2021.

"As a former journalist, it's been of relevance to me to track perceptions of India within the European Union. There are two streams: The first, an India that produces engineers and a workforce that is truly forming the backbone across the EU, especially in Germany. From automation to AI, chemicals to power, an engineer in a position of strength is an Indian who is respected. But on the other hand we're still considered the land of snake charmers, with a non-native approach to English and a haphazard approach to foreign policy. The India that makes it to the news is not full of the stories we want to tell; partly to blame are those foreign journalists searching for something different, maybe even something exotic.

For me, India is in the Bollywood songs I listen to, in the lone fluttering flag outside the High Commission as I drive past, or in the row of candles that light up my balcony every Diwali and GURPURAB."

—Mehak Chowdhary, brand and marketing lead for companies in sport, energy, lives in Germany, left India in 2017.



"India is a growing nation but with a lot of struggles for the common man and women's safety is always a big issue which I see in newspapers. Overall, my connection is very strong with my family and friends, sometimes for import purposes as well. 'Independent India' means that everyone is free to speak and have all rights."

—Sandeep Wadhwa, owns a food distribution and catering company, lives in Canada, left India in 2011.



"Canada perceives India as a strong competitive democracy that has a significant presence in South Asian geopolitics. The credit goes to Prime Minister Modi, who has played a key role in bringing India to the forefront of world politics. Along with that, Indians living in Canada have contributed immensely towards the Canadian economy, many of them being big business professionals, politicians and philanthropists. India was 'home' and will always be. I have my extended family back home and this keeps my connection with India going strong. 'Independent India' is a place of opportunities for all, a place that expounds freedom of living in harmony with others and with nature, and leverages its own resources and capabilities to empower its citizens and gives them the freedom and prospects for

growth. I see an India that prides itself on its spiritual history and sets an example for other nations."

—Divya Kaeley, finance professional with a Canadian bank, lives in Canada, left India in 2012.



"India as a country is thought of as a fascinating place but full of contradictions! While others see it as aggressively progressive where everyone works in the software industry, is super smart with numbers and prays to thousands of gods, India is still perceived as a land of Hindus. People are mostly oblivious to the fact that it is home to the third largest Muslim population in the world, besides a number of followers of other faiths. Having left behind my parents, extended family and married into another Indian family, my connect has always been there and shall remain. I endeavour to visit India once every year. 'Independent India' to me is when we as Indians have freedom of thought, stay away from narrow-mindedness and petty non-issues, and, to quote Rabindranath Tagore, "where the mind is without fear

and the head is held high, where knowledge is free..."

—Shashwat Kumar, banking and capital markets professional, lives in UK, left India in 2003.



"In my country of residence, India is perceived as the land where most of the techies originate. Nobody is surprised to hear my profession, which is, software engineer. They reply with, 'Oh, of course, it makes sense.' Young Indians are seen as hardworking people who train their kids to excel in every exam and competition. Indian cuisine is loved by many. In terms of culture, more importantly, Indians go out of their way to help people—it is something we in India take for granted but here it is valued a lot. There is respect for Indian art and foreigners take pride in learning yoga. On the flip side, we are also perceived as loud due to the large families we invariably have. You usually see an Indian couple accompanied by their kids, the couple's parents/in-laws, cousins, etc. Back home, the quota system, dirty politics, non-

progressive agenda of governments and corruption are some of the factors that make me disappointed."

—Lakshman, software engineer, lives in US, left India in 2013.



"India is perceived as a friendly country and an economic superpower, unlike China which is considered a threat, especially after Covid-19. Most Canadians believe that all Indians practise Sikhism as this is the largest community in Canada and also very hardworking. These people have no qualms in taking up any kind of job to survive and stay away from alms provided by the government in the name of social assistance. However, professional degrees from India are still not recognised and those professionals who move to Canada from India have to upgrade and go back to local schools to be able to continue in their professions. All my relatives, including my mother and brother, are in India. I travel to India every year to meet with them. We still practise our culture at home and among friends and children. Our roots

lie in India, which cannot be uprooted, come what may. 'Independent India' for me is the freedom to practise your culture, religion and travel to any part of the country without restrictions."

—Neelam Verma, paralegal professional, lives in Canada, left India in 2002.



FINDING NEW RESONANCES

The British Museum is keen to acquire Satish Gujral's works on the Partition theme to add to its 'From Indus Valley Civilisation to Independence' section

It happens rarely that an artist becomes relevant in a new social context because his work meets the demands of a new age. But this has happened with Satish Gujral, the prominent Indian artist of independent India, whose work has found new relevance in a Britain facing up to the challenges of a multi-racial society and the tensions between different ethnic groups. Gujral in his time was part of the circle of influential people in the Delhi of the 1950s, where he had access to Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter, Indira Gandhi. He met Nehru when he had to get the then prime minister's approval for his portrait of Lala Lajpat Rai. His brother,

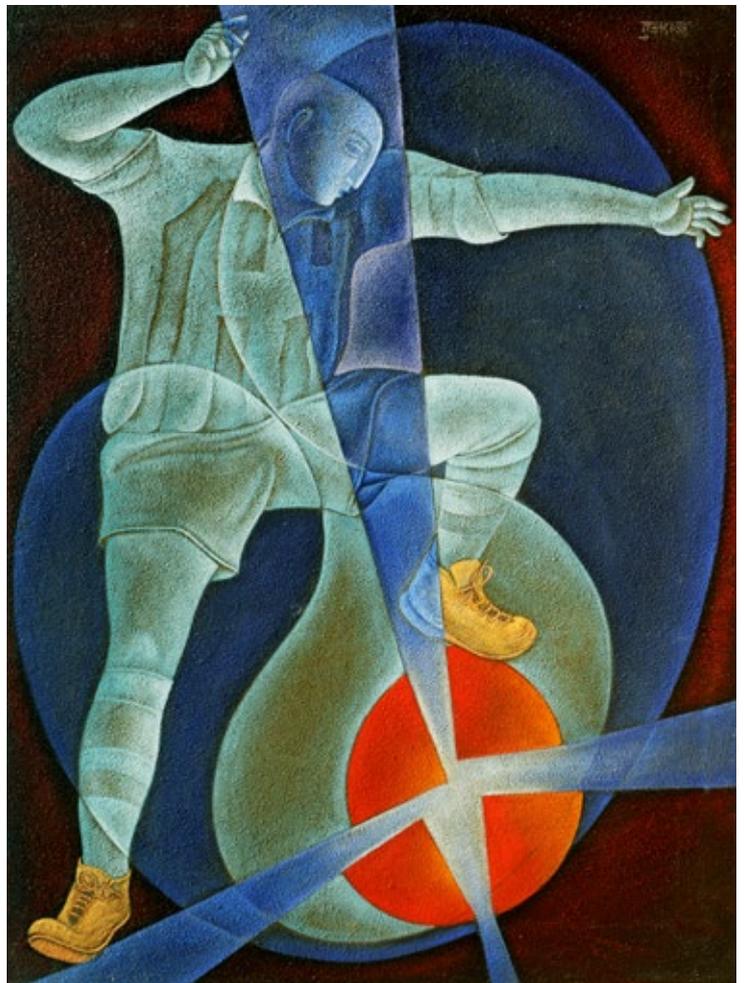
Inder Kumar Gujral, was part of the Congress party led by Indira Gandhi and how he fell out with her during the Emergency is a tale of charming political and social gossip.

Satish Gujral's daughter and architect Raseel Gujral Ansal finds herself in the unenviable position of dealing with the artistic legacy of her father. She is involved with the Kiran Gujral Legacy Trust (KGLT), which is set up in her mother's name, Kiran Gujral. The trust has forged collaboration with educational entrepreneur Amreesh Andrew Chandra and his project, 'Canvas' and with Lord Kamlesh Patel in Great Britain.





“This is the penultimate work of a man who has been entombed in a soundless state for eight decades. He has walked the valley of silence. So much indeed that it sometimes made him doubt his own existence.”





In an interview with *Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr*, RASEEL GUJRAL ANSAL talks about recent developments in Britain involving her father's work. Excerpts:

Two themes—disability and Partition—have emerged in connection with Satish Gujral's work in England this year, which also happens to be the 75th year of Indian independence. Tell us about Lord Kamlesh Patel, Yorkshire cricket and Gujral's paintings on sports. How did it happen?

The Kiran Gujral Legacy Trust (KGLT) has been instituted under the patronage of my mother, Kiran Gujral. We aim to articulate KGLT's vision through the medium of Satish Gujral's art. The core tenets are tolerance, compassion, and the triumph of individual endeavour against adversity and discrimination. We aim to align our contribution with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to Good Health & Well-Being, Quality Education and Gender Equality through strategic partnerships.

KGLT shares a strong bond and connection with Amreesh Andrew Chandra, founder of Canvas, who was very inspired by Satish Gujral's life and what it stands for. Consequently, he felt compelled to align with KGLT's philanthropic endeavours, to create forums for (the art) to be viewed and understood by a large cross-section of society.

How did Lord Kamlesh Patel, who became the head of Yorkshire Cricket Club, involve you and your father's work in dealing with the issue of racial discrimination?

Lord Patel's connection is two-fold with the project, Canvas.

Primarily, he is an advocate of the SDGs which can be seen through all his areas of work. His work in sports, mental well-being, gender equality, domestic abuse is all in line with the SDGs.

I was a keynote speaker at a function where a book on the programme of Canvas was launched by Lord Patel, in the House of Lords in London on July 12 because KGLT is the only charitable trust from India which represents art and culture and its manifesto is aligned with the UN's SDGs.

Satish Gujral is rare among artists in painting sporting action!

The country watches cricket with a consuming passion that brings daily life almost to a standstill and there's the music of the body playing to different rhythms. Gujral too felt caught by this physical vibrancy, this whole new area of movement, rhythm, and physical passion. So, he painted as he saw it in sport, in the muscled rhythms of winning and losing, in the leaps of triumph and the downward curves of the body's disappointment. Normally, an artist gets identified with certain themes and feels impelled to remain faithful to those. Vision means discovery, challenging a new element, and as Gujral discovered the area of the sporting body, he dared to touch it, feel it, express it, and paint it.

Anyone who sees the muscled tension in the throw of the cricket ball, the leap of the player to capture it, the rivalry of the two bodies caught in nervous tension, the excitement and the interplay of the physical, the sheer, almost sexual ecstasy of movement, the intensity is galvanizing. This is the penultimate work of a man who has been entombed in a soundless state for eight decades. He has walked the valley of silence. So much indeed that it sometimes made him doubt his own existence. In this series, he seeks compensation in motion, in rhythm, in the sheer genius of the play of the human body, and its ultimate poetry. The intensity of this aspect of his brush with sport once again compensates for the silence within.

What about the British Museum and the Partition drawings of Satish Gujral?

We have been in dialogue with the British Museum where the senior curator, Dr Imma Ramos, expressed the Museum's desire to acquire Partition drawings for the reimagined South Asian galleries which depict India from the Indus Valley Civilisation to Independence. Currently, the museum has one Partition print of Gujral's on display, in the segment on Indian independence. He is the only contemporary artist shown. In addition, there is a depiction of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Nehru's famous "Tryst with Destiny" speech. Hence the desire to acquire more original drawings of Gujral on Partition, to ensure that at any given time there is a constant showcasing of the artworks.

It would be an honour to have this effectuated during the 75th year of India's independence. We believe we are turning full circle: The British imperial rule in India, the resultant partition of the country, Satish Gujral expressing the trauma through his partition artworks, our family's lifelong commitment to the rehabilitation of women and children impacted due to the Partition with the money from the sale of the artworks to the museum going to the Nari Niketan my grandmother set up in Jalandhar, Punjab to help women and children affected by Partition. ■



MOVING MOUNTAINS

Mind over matter or human grit, call it what you will. How a young woman found solace in summiting mountains and the strength to leave a shattering past behind her

BY RUKMA SALUJA

Born and raised in Birmingham, England, Kamal Kaur had no idea she'd be summiting peaks and looking forward to scaling the next one even before she had time to get over the mountain blues. She sort of stumbled into it when after school she began volunteering at care homes for the elderly and for troubled children. Odd sort of career choice for a teenager, you might think. But as with most things, the universe conspires to bring you to a certain point from which you begin to make informed decisions.

"I had a rather troubled childhood," Kamal revealed during a recent visit to Delhi from London where she lives. For one thing, the family of immigrants (from Ludhiana, Punjab) was conservative, and she wasn't able to reconcile that aspect of her life with the 'open' society around her. She was unable to understand why she couldn't be like her schoolmates, dress the way they did and go where she liked the way they did. To top it all, she had a learning disorder, which

she wasn't willing to get diagnosed as she didn't want to hear that she was not up to the mark. Now, in hindsight, she knows that specialised teachers could have helped her deal better with dyslexia. It didn't help that the neighbourhood she lived in was not quite an oasis of peace; there were gangs of young men on the prowl and women were not safe. Inter-religion rivalry was rife and hatred towards 'the other' resulted in gang wars that spilled onto the streets.

"I was abducted and gang raped over a week." The voice is stark. She has learned to voice it. She knows she has to live with what happened and that she has had to move on. "I don't know how many men there were." Six months after the horror, she lost her mother and didn't know how to cope with what had happened. Those abusive hooligans were never found or tried, and she herself was able to get counselling only many years later. In the meanwhile, she spiralled into the hellhole of alcoholism. "I found myself slipping into destructive

behaviour; I was drinking and veering towards violence, which is when I decided I needed help. There were only two directions to take—towards drug abuse and drinking or I had to pull myself out of this."

Kamal began to volunteer at care homes for children and teenagers with mental health issues. "I was exactly in the place where I could be of help." So, when an abused youngster tells her 'you don't know what it's like' she is able to really empathise, share her own experiences and show a way out. She got into fitness as part of the activities at these centres. As her fitness levels increased, she was asked to participate in a 24-hour challenge to run through The Fells. "It was a lark. I was fit and feeling good and it was a lot of fun." She was then asked to be a part of a charity event to summit Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. "That was my first real mountain trek and was the most exhilarating." The smile is back on her face. There, she got into a conversation with a group who had just done Aconcagua in

Argentina and thought, okay, why not?

Now, it's part of her life, an addiction of sorts where she's always planning her next summit. It's as if she can't get enough. The most challenging so far was Ama Dablam in Nepal. "I caught a stomach bug in Delhi and carried it with me." A foolish move perhaps because she had to return after three days. She recovered and, determined not to go home without a climb, went right back. "The Sherpa had to push me up to the plateau on the summit and I collapsed the moment I set foot there." Kamal has summited 12 mountains, including Everest, Meru, Cho Oyu in Tibet and Elbrus in Russia, and been part of mountaineering expeditions to Denali in Alaska and the Pyrenees.

Sports injuries and extreme cold do not faze her. She shrugs them off as they are par for the course. The mental challenges are harder to overcome. She says, "It is always hard to continue when you are tired, or battle with the thoughts that go through your mind whether they are old memories that haunt me, self-doubt in my ability,

'Mountaineering is a sort of cleanser. At first the same thoughts fly around the mind and then you don't realise at what point you've stopped thinking at all.'

when the negatives of the climb can overpower the positives."

But that hasn't let her down. Her eyes

light up at the thought of all the peaks out there that she must climb. "Ooooh, now there's a question, there are so many, but for now.... Makalu, Kanchenjunga, Nanga Parbat, Broad Peak, Shishapangma. Then there's the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc in the winter, Alpamayo. I'd love to climb in Bhutan. The world has an abundance of wonderful places I'd love to climb... but definitely these, I know."

Her learning disabilities meant that she didn't enjoy studying; she worked in hospitality and retail which helped fund her love for summiting. Working in stores that sell outdoor goods is on point as she's able to talk about her experiences which helps customers make up their minds about what they need to get for their own travels.

"The biggest realisation, I think, is knowing that human survival instincts definitely do exist, to trust my gut instinct, my own ability and what determination and sacrifice can do when it comes to achieving and attempting my goal. I learn something new every time I do something and I just keep growing and hoping for the better." ■



चरमराती अर्थव्यवस्था

शशि कुमार झा

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



पुतिन की जिद और पश्चिमी देशों की पाबंदी ने खस्ताहाल कर दी है रूस की आर्थिक स्थिति। इस युद्ध की वजह से रूस को एक सदी में पहली बार फॉरेन-करेंसी सॉवरेन क्रण पर डिफॉल्ट करना पड़ा

रूस की अर्थव्यवस्था शायद अपने सबसे बुरे दिनों से गुजर रही है। यूक्रेन के साथ उसके युद्ध का उसकी आर्थिक हालत पर बेहद खराब असर पड़ा है। पश्चिमी देशों द्वारा उस पर लगाये गए आर्थिक प्रतिबंधों ने उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था की कमर तोड़ कर रख दी है। इस युद्ध की वजह से रूस ने लगभग एक सदी में पहली बार फॉरेन-करेंसी सॉवरेन क्रण पर डिफॉल्ट किया है जो अब तक की सबसे सख्त पश्चिमी पाबंदियों का परिणाम है जिसने विदेशी लेनदारों को भुगतान का मार्ग बंद कर दिया। युद्ध के आरंभ होने से पहले, रूस के पास लगभग 640 बिलियन डॉलर की विदेशी मुद्रा और स्वर्ण भंडार थे जिनमें अधिकांश विदेशों में रखे गए थे और उन्हें फ्रीज कर दिया गया है। इस पर थोपी गई विदेशी पाबंदियों के कारण इसका विदेशी वित्तीय प्रणाली से और अधिक अलगाव हो जाएगा। पिछले महीने ही, अमेरिकी ट्रेजरी विभाग ने अमेरिकी बैंकों के माध्यम से अंतरराष्ट्रीय निवेशकों को अपने अरबों के कर्ज का भुगतान करने की क्षमता समाप्त कर दी थी। रूस का दावा है कि उसके पास कर्ज अदा करने के लिए पर्याप्त धन है और वह डॉलर-डॉमिनेटेड क्रण का अपनी मुद्रा रूबल में भुगतान करेगा, लेकिन मुश्किल यह है कि पाबंदियों की वजह से विदेशों में रखे गए उसके फॉरेन करेंसी रिजर्व अब फ्रीज हो चुके हैं, इसलिए ऐसा होना मुमकिन नहीं हुआ।

इन आर्थिक प्रतिबंधों ने रूस को मंदी की इस स्थिति में ला खड़ा किया है। हालांकि अधिकांश युद्ध विश्लेषकों की यही राय है कि इस युद्ध को आराम से टाला जा सकता था लेकिन राष्ट्रपति व्लादिमीर पुतिन की भू-रणनीतिक और राजनीतिक हठधर्मिता ने उसे ऐसी जगह ला खड़ा किया जहाँ से निकलना अब उसके लिए बहुत महंगा साबित होने लगा है। रूस में वैसे भी डायवर्सिफायड इकोनोमी, एक गतिशील उद्यमी वर्ग, सख्त प्रशासन और स्थिर कारोबारी माहौल का अभाव रहा है जिससे कारण अर्थव्यवस्था का अब तेजी से सामान्य स्थिति में लौट कर आना मुश्किल दिख रहा है। इसके अतिरिक्त, इस संकट ने रूस की पहले से ही बनी पश्चिम विरोधी तथा अलगाववादी छवि को और उजागर कर



“हमें हिंसा और विद्वेष में कमी लाने के लिए देशों की संप्रभुता और क्षेत्रीय अखंडता का सम्मान करना चाहिए। किसी भी मतभेद और विवाद के समाधान के लिए वार्ता ही एकमात्र जवाब है।”

- विदेश मंत्री जयशंकर (यूक्रेन पर संसदीय बहस के दौरान)

दिया है जिससे रिकवरी की उसकी राह और भी कठिन हो गई है। अपनी दबंग छवि बनाने की पुतिन की कोशिशों ने देश को आर्थिक मोर्चे पर बहुत नुकसान पहुंचाया है।

वाहन उद्योग सहित औद्योगिक उत्पादन से लेकर घरेलू ऐप्लायंसेज तक पूरे उत्पादन में मई में वर्ष दर वर्ष के आधार पर भारी कमी दर्ज की गई है। विनिर्माण, खनन, बिजली, गैस उद्योग सबके उत्पादन में पिछले वर्ष की तुलना में खासी कमी देखी जा रही है। तेल की कीमतों में नाटकीय कमी का मतलब है सरकार के रेवेन्यू में बड़ी गिरावट और पुतिन की महत्वाकांक्षी सैन्य और सामाजिक व्यय परियोजनाओं के लिए कम धन। रूबल में निरंतर गिरावट और महंगाई दर के आसमान को छूने से देश का आम नागरिक सकते में है।

वाहन उद्योग रूस के सबसे मजबूत पक्षों में रहा है पर वहीं उसकी स्थिति सबसे ज्यादा खराब है। कार उत्पादन में तो वर्ष 2021 की तुलना में 96.7 प्रतिशत तक की गिरावट आ चुकी है। फ्रांस की ऑटो कंपनी रेनो जो रूस की सबसे बड़ी कार निर्माता कंपनी एवीटूवीएजेड को कंट्रोल करती है, ने मार्च में ही यूक्रेन पर रूस की चढ़ाई के विरोध में यूक्रेन के नेताओं के दबाव में आकर मास्को में अपने ऑपरेशन बंद कर दिए। एयर कार्गो में वर्ष दर वर्ष के आधार पर 86 प्रतिशत की कमी आ चुकी है। फ्रिज से लेकर वाशिंग मशीन, ऐसी इलेक्ट्रिक मोटर से लेकर टीवी सेट सबके उत्पादन में 2021 की तुलना में लगभग 50 प्रतिशत तक की कमी दर्ज की जा रही है। वहां के आंकड़ों से प्रदर्शित होता है कि रिटेल टर्नओवर तथा रिटेल कांफिडेंस में एक

साल पहले और वर्ष 2022 की शुरुआत की तुलना में काफी कमी आई है, होलसेल टर्नओवर से लेकर कंज्यूमर डिमांड, पेंशन, वेतन सभी कुछ नीचे जा रहा है। हालांकि रूस के केंद्रीय बैंक ने दावा किया कि उसके देश की जीडीपी में 7.8 प्रतिशत की गिरावट आने की आशंका है, लेकिन पश्चिमी देशों के विश्लेषकों और विभिन्न आर्थिक संस्थानों का अनुमान है कि वर्ष के अंत तक रूस की अर्थव्यवस्था में 15 प्रतिशत तक की गिरावट आ चुकी होगी। इसके अतिरिक्त, रूस के साथ महंगाई दर के मोर्चे पर भी मुश्किलें खड़ी हैं और बेरोजगारी के मोर्चे पर भी।

पुतिन सरकार ने अपनी अराजक हो रही अर्थव्यवस्था को छुपाने के लिए आर्थिक आंकड़ों के साथ भी काफी हेरफेर की है, सार्वजनिक बहसों पर पाबंदी लगा दी है और यूक्रेन के खिलाफ युद्ध छेड़ने के बाद से आम लोगों की आर्थिक डाटा तक पहुंच भी बाधित कर दी है। सरकार की मंशा रूसी कंपनियों तथा लोगों को पश्चिमी पाबंदियों से सुरक्षित करने की है और यही वजह है कि वह दुनिया के सामने अर्थव्यवस्था के ध्वस्त होने की वास्तविक तस्वीर छुपाने की जुगत में है।

रूस के बैंकिंग रेगुलेटर पर पाबंदी थोपे जाने के बाद से, रूस पश्चिमी देशों में रखे गए अपने लगभग 300 बिलियन डॉलर गवां चुका है, यह राशि युद्ध शुरू होने के समय के रिजर्व का लगभग 50 प्रतिशत है। केवल सोना और चीनी मुद्रा युवान को ही केंद्रीय बैंक के नियंत्रण में रखा गया है। यही नहीं, मई 2022 के बाद से रूसी सरकार ने रूस के सभी करदाताओं को यह जानकारी देने से मना कर दिया है कि सरकार किस प्रकार उनके पैसों को खर्च कर रही है। अप्रैल में, बजटीय आंकड़ों से प्रदर्शित हुआ कि रूस के सैन्य खर्च में लगभग 150 फीसदी इजाफा हुआ है जबकि तेल एवं गैस के अतिरिक्त लगभग सभी क्षेत्रों से आय में 18 प्रतिशत की गिरावट आई। उल्लेखनीय है कि भारत ने रूस से कच्चे तेल की खरीद कर काफी हद तक उसके प्रति अपना सहयोग प्रदर्शित किया था।

फिलहाल युद्ध, अर्थव्यवस्था तथा सामाजिक बाध्यताओं पर होने वाले मासिक व्यय का कोई सटीक आकलन लगाना मुमकिन नहीं लग रहा। देश की आर्थिक बदहाली का असर छोटे या कस्बाई क्षेत्रों में बहुत अधिक नहीं दिख रहा लेकिन मास्को में यह बदलाव सबसे अधिक मुखर है। कभी पूरी तरह गुलजार रहने वाले शौपिंग सेंटर अब खामोश पड़े हैं। ग्राहकों और और उनके च्वायस दोनों में कमी आई है। यूक्रेन पर हमलों के विरोध में कई विदेशी ब्रांडों ने रूस में अपने ऑपरेशन स्थगित कर दिए हैं या पूरी तरह बंद भी कर दिए हैं। बहुत सारी दुकानें बंद हो गई हैं।

कुल मिलाकर, यह जाहिर हो चुका है कि रूस को यूक्रेन पर हमले की वित्तीय मोर्चे पर भारी कीमत चुकानी पड़ी है और इस युद्ध की वजह से रूस ने लगभग एक सदी में पहली बार फॉरेन-करेंसी सॉवरेन क्रण पर डिफॉल्ट किया है। उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि अब भी रूस को सद्बुद्धि आए और वह अपनी हठधर्मिता छोड़कर खुद को और लगभग पूरी दुनिया के आर्थिक तंत्र को फिर से पटरी पर लाने की कोशिश में जुट जाए। ■

Flavours

SWING A SONG

LET THE JOY POUR FORTH

There's something happening round the year in this wonderful country of ours. Come the monsoon, we have a slew of festivals. Teej, although celebrated only in a few states, is special for the sheer exuberance that comes with the downpour

BY RUKMA SALUJA

We look forward to the monsoon for so many reasons, for our crops, recharging aquifers and water tables, feeding our rivers, respite from the relentless heat we've endured for months. And so when it does rain we celebrate. The smell of the earth after the first rain has even been captured in bottles by perfumers is divine. July, August and September correspond to the Indian seasons of *Saawan* and *Bhadon* or *Shravan* and *Bhadrapada*.

Teej is the main festival associated with the monsoon and is celebrated in some states in the north of the country, although the south has its own version of monsoon celebrations though on a smaller scale, largely within the family. As is the way with Indian festivities, the celebrations at Teej are

sometimes preceded with women fasting for the welfare of their husbands, visits to the parents, and an exchange of gifts. We are used to colour and exuberance in our festivities and this one is no different: It is marked by homes bedecked with flowers and *rangoli*, and women adorned with flowers, henna and bangles, laughter while playing on swings, and songs and dances.

Legend has it that after fasting rigorously for more than a hundred years, Parvati was finally accepted by Shiva as his consort. Teej is therefore a celebration of the devotion and steadfastness of a wife. Teej itself could be an insect that appears with the first rain in Nepal, where it is celebrated on a grand scale.

For Subha Singh, a housewife in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, it is a three-day event. On the day before Teej, the women wake up long before sunrise, bathe, pray, and eat *sargi*, which could be *fruit*, *khajuri*, fresh and dry *fruit*, milk and juice. They fast for the rest of the day and break the fast with a light *saatvic* (without garlic or onions) meal at the end of the day.

On the morning of Teej this is repeated and since the *pooja* is of Shankar and Parvati, the clay images are made at home and seated on a new and colourful *chunri* along with a *kalash* containing *tikka*, *akshat*, and a

mango twig, covered and with a *diya* on it. The *pooja*, which includes a *katha* about the Shankar-Parvati legend, lasts about half an hour when *prasadi* is first offered to the gods and is then distributed. The offerings include *anartaa*, *tritiya* and *khajuri*.

It's time for the festivities to begin which last the day and continue through the night. Dressed in new and colourful clothes, adorned with flowers and bangles, it's a time for song and dance.

Haryali Teej in Haryana, on the other hand, is purely about celebration, when the women go home to their parents to get away from the stress of the marital home (that was a joke), or perhaps to just celebrate with family and childhood friends. Green is the colour from the clothes and bangles to the henna. Ropes tied to trees as makeshift swings are a must and in fact even a part of the gift hamper for new brides celebrating their first Teej. As this is a festival for married women, the gifts must include bangles, *bindi* and henna, the very basics of *shringar* or the make-up and adornments of married women. Binu Chaudhry, who runs Ghar ki Rasoi, a tiffin service in Hissar, says, "Here, there is virtually no religious element, it is all about fun and laughter, dressing up, eating *ghevar*





and *suhaali*, and competing on the swings." It's *pucca khana*—when the big *kadahi* comes out, you know it's time for celebration. The special food served at festivals and special occasions includes *poori*, *halwa* and *kheer*, the three essentials along with options of *chole*, *kaddoo*, *aloo*, *paneer*.

In Rajasthan it is a mix of the two aspects. They fast and they have fun. Rani Sahiba Shweta Kumari of Jodhpur (if titles were allowed) says, "We dress in bright *lehengas*, put henna, wear bangles, fast." Swinging is a part of the festivities. It's the little variations that make each one special. And so, as Shweta explains, they pray, or do *pooja* (sounds nicer, doesn't it?) in the shadow of a tree. They take the husband's name in a riddle. This is the only time in the year they can, in fact, say his name aloud. Reciting the Shiva-Parvati story is a part of the ritual. The sweets here are *sattu laddoos*. The gifts exchanged among the married women are to do with elements used by married women. And then there's the *ghoomar*. This has to be the prettiest dance in the country, bright jewel-coloured *lehengas* swirling in rhythm to the vibrant sound of the *dhol*, mesmerising.

Bharti Garg, originally from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, who brought her childhood

Legend has it that after fasting rigorously for more than a hundred years, Parvati was finally accepted by Shiva as his consort. Teej is therefore a celebration of the devotion and steadfastness of a wife.

traditions to her marital home in Delhi, says, "We don't fast. It's a day of celebration. We exchange gifts." The colour of the day is mostly green, can be any, actually, except black and blue. The *baina* or the gift hamper is largely the same but must include *ghevar* and *meethe poode*. "It's *teej ka tyohar, sola singar*, a festival celebrated by women, although it's for the husbands." She's amused at how this sounds but she continues unfazed, "Unmarried girls also apply henna

and wear bangles and make-up. Everyone sings and dances, everyone has fun."

It is the same for Soni Agarwal, former president of Inner Wheel in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. "This is a festival of *ulhaas* (joy) after the long hot summer when rain finally breaks the intensity of the heat. We wear green *lehriya lehengas* or saris, and bangles. Makeshift swings are adorned with Ashoka or mango leaves. We have song and dance competitions." Now musical instruments and trends are different but traditionally, the accompaniment to the merriment was always the Indian drum (*dhol*). "We still begin our festivities with the *dhol*," says Soni. "The DJs take over after that." Breaking from the bad press the relationship usually gets, she explains this is when there's gentle teasing between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, between the sisters-in-law, when the mother-in-law gives money and tells the daughter-in-law to buy herself new ornaments like the *bicchiya* or *paijeb*. The food is largely a *chaat* menu that includes popular items like *dahi pakodi*, *chaat papdi*, *pani ke batashae*, *aloo tikki*, *matar tikki*, *paalki*.

Ghevar is a must in its various forms of plain, *malai*, *kesar* and others. It is made, and eagerly consumed, only in the monsoon month of *Saawan*. ■



ANARTAA

INGREDIENTS

- Rice 500 gm
- Sugar 500 gm, mixed with water and made into syrup
- Sesame for sprinkling on the *anartaa*
- Ghee for frying (ghee because it is made as *prasad* and should be pure and unadulterated)

METHOD

Wash, dry and powder the rice
 Mix sugar and water to make thin syrup
 Add the powdered rice to the sugar syrup
 Cool and make roundels on the palm of the hand and flatten
 Sprinkle with sesame seeds
 Fry lightly in ghee



KHAJURI

INGREDIENTS

- Refined flour / *maida* 500 gm
- Sugar 400 gm
- Ghee 100 gm
- Green cardamom, powdered

METHOD

Mix together all the ingredients in crumbly dough
 Make roundels or elongated shapes
 Fry in ghee



SUHAALI

INGREDIENTS

- Whole wheat flour 250 gm
- Ghee 3 tbsp
- Jaggery 100 gm
- Vegetable oil for frying

METHOD

Mix together wheat flour along with *jaggery water* into a stiff dough. Make roundels, flatten and fry



MEETHE POODE

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups
- Sugar 1 cup
- Green cardamom ¼ tsp, crushed
- Vegetable oil for frying

METHOD

Mix together flour, sugar, ghee, water and cardamom powder in a dough
 Dry fruit (optional)
 Roll out the roundels, and fry on medium heat

CELEBRATING THE MYSTIC OF SHRAVAN

The rains have always been special. It's when we are spoilt for choice when it comes to celebrations and special preparations

BY MALATI K. VIJAY

The month of *Shravan* is considered holy across India. And in South India, it's filled with lots of festivals and cultural events. The month also heralds the onset of the South-West Monsoon, so it's a joyous time for farmers. It's a time for enjoying the season as everything around turns green and looks fertile.

Taking advantage of the auspicious period, people take up several *vrats* or fasting. While the entire month is propitious, Monday, Tuesday and Friday are considered extra special. Monday is set aside for worshipping Lord Shiva by observing a fast, Tuesdays are for Goddess Parvati, called the Mangal Gouri *vrat*, and Fridays are for propitiating Lakshmi.

Apart from these special days, there are many festivals celebrated this month—Nag Panchami, Varalakshmi Vratam, Rig and Yajur Upakarma and Krishna Janmasthanmi. The last day of *Shravan* is celebrated as Pola, when the bull, the friend of the farmer, is worshipped in Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka.

There are some special dishes prepared using *til* (sesame) and nuts that are nourishing during the monsoon. *Laddoos* made of sesame, groundnuts, puffed chickpea, puffed rice, puffed wheat, and so on are healthy as well as tasty with the addition of jaggery. *Usli* or *sundal* is a mild spicy South Indian well flavoured dish with a basic tempering and topped with grated fresh coconut.



CHANA USLI

INGREDIENTS

- Boiled brown chickpeas or chana: 2 cups
- Grated fresh coconut: ½ cup
- Oil for seasoning: 1 tbsp
- White urad dal: 1 tbsp
- Mustard seeds: ½ tsp
- Asafoetida (*hing*): one pinch or ¼ tsp
- Chopped green chillies: 3-4 or more if you like more spice
- Curry leaves: a few
- Salt: 1 tsp or to taste

METHOD

Heat the oil in a pan, add mustard and white *urad dal*, let the mustard sputter, throw in the curry leaves, chopped green chillies and asafoetida (*hing*). Add the boiled chickpea/chana, sprinkle salt and stir well. Add coconut and chickpeas, turn for a few seconds and take the pan off the heat. Enjoy the tasty and nutritious *usli*.



SESAME LADDOO

INGREDIENTS

- Sesame seeds (*til*): 2 cups
- Powdered jaggery, loosely packed: 2 cups
- Roasted and husked peanuts: ½ cup
- Desiccated (or dry) coconut: ½ cup
- Water: ½ cup
- Cardamom powder: 1 tsp

METHOD

Dry-roast sesame seeds and desiccated coconut and peanuts separately on medium heat.

Crush peanuts coarsely and combine the three ingredients along with cardamom powder.

In a thick-bottomed vessel, on a medium flame, dissolve jaggery in water until it thickens.

Mix the jaggery syrup with sesame, coconut and groundnut.

Cool and make *laddoos*.

KHADI:

The 75-year journey

Khadi has a historical connotation but does it still resonate with the young Indian? We speak with experts to understand the best way forward to keep this beautiful fabric relevant

BY RUKMA SALUJA

Khadi, handspun cotton on the *charkha* and woven into fabric on traditional manual looms with slubs and irregularities firmly in place. Not intentionally, but because of the handmade element and lack of technological expertise back in the 1920s when it became a rallying point and a part of the Swadeshi movement. That's not to say it was a new idea at the time. Handspun and handwoven go further back in time to before the machines took over. Gandhi ji made it a movement of the people for the people to take a stand against the British predatory practice of buying low-cost raw material from India and selling finished fabric back to Indians at high profit margins. In later years, it lost sheen, becoming the fabric of choice for professors and nerdy

intellectuals. Until designers like Rohit Bal, Ritu Beri and Ritu Kumar, Anju Modi, Rajesh Pratap Singh and others began to use it in their collections.

Fashion moves on in search of newer textiles and styles. Besides, globally, the industry has made enormous strides in sophisticated technology and production. Low-cost, breathable, comfortable and sustainable, khadi always made a lot of sense. In recent years, it has found easy and casual acceptance with style-conscious shoppers. Or has it?

Gandhi ji spinning yarn on the *charkha* is the abiding image we have of khadi. But the world has moved on since then and 'that' khadi has morphed into yarn spun on amber and New Model *charkhas*, updated versions of the old one or you could say a

Acceptance of khadi as a fashion fabric by the young consumers is really important and it is only possible when they understand its history, uniqueness and sustainable aspect.

– Diksha Khanna



Diksha Khanna



replica of a non-mechanised or a manual powerloom. A contradiction in terms but that's what the upgraded version amounts to. Kshitish Pandya of Eco Tasar with roots in Bihar, who manufactures handwoven fabric for export and large-scale orders for home furnishings, believes it is all a matter of economics. "It is not viable to continue with that old style of weaving. There's the matter of quality and also of price. Obviously, mill-made fabric is going to be cheaper and of better quality."

The government of India understood this as far back as the Sixties and has made a push to subsidise it ever since. Pandya feels a better approach would be to support weavers and designers and allow it to become a niche artisanal product. "Handloom cannot meet the volumes the market demands," he says. "It doesn't make sense to have it compete with mill-made fabrics. This is the story even in technologically advanced countries. You still have artisans making handmade tapestries that sell at astronomical sums. We can accord our weavers and artisans the same respect." The push given by the government can only go so far if we continue to expect it to be on a par with industrially-produced textiles. "The Ambanis may be able to buy it at exorbitant sums of money at an event, but how often will it be worn and how many sales did that event or that gesture generate? What measly percentage of that money from that sale or that government push actually percolate down to the weaver? At best it's a talking point. We

It's a misnomer
that khadi is only
khaddar and
coarse fabric.

- Sudha Dhingra

want to keep alive the romance of khadi in the traditional sense."

Sudha Dhingra, professor at NIFT, and director at the Centre of Excellence for Khadi (CoEK), a government-funded project, feels there is a huge difference in what khadi was, and what it is. "It is no longer that thick, unattractive, rough-looking fabric. It can be as fine and diaphanous as muslin," she says. "It is no longer coarse *khaddar*. There's very fine cotton coming from West Bengal, and a fine silk called eri from Assam and the Northeast which is called ahimsa silk." The cocoons are not boiled to take the worms out. A slit is made in the cocoon to let the worm slip away. "CoEK aims to build capacity and leverage the fabric to the high-end rather than the mass consumer," she says.

The KVIC (Khadi & Village Industries Commission) started CoEK with the aim of diagnosing and correcting khadi's problems and image. Part of the aim is to bring in a fresher and younger aesthetic to the finished garments. With Delhi as its headquarters, there are centres in Shillong, Kolkata, Gandhinagar and Bengaluru. According to the website: "Khadi and Village Industries production is more than Rs. 27,000 Crore and providing employment opportunities to 1.34 Cr. persons." That's not surprising at all as apart from apparel, other items available include blankets, furnishings, stationery. Toiletries from brand Khadi are known to be made from largely natural, even vegan, formulations.

Khadi is sold at the Bhavans where the styling is old-fashioned and sloppy, where the bureaucrats running them are not aware of fashion. The same old *kurta-pyjama* sold for decades in the same old cuts holds little appeal for the fashion conscious shopper. Diksha Khanna (label: Diksha Khanna) says, "Khadi products are 'flawed' and not mindless creations of machines. This versatility makes it an all-season fabric. At the same time, khadi

We want to keep
alive the romance
of khadi in the
traditional sense.

- Kshitish Pandya

should be made into products that are relevant in today's fashion scenario. This needs a careful study of national and international trends in colours, styles and silhouettes and their interpretation for Indian and international consumers. Also, the design explorations could be made classier, keeping in mind the key forecast trends and the target market."

Dhingra has identified another bottleneck. Designers like Anavila Misra, Shani Himanshu, Rta Kapur Chishti, Anju Modi, and Rajesh Pratap Singh, who even makes a range using khadi denim, use it regularly but cannot call it khadi as that would require certification from KVIC, which involves a rather confusing, cumbersome and protracted procedure. Without certification, they use the terms handspun and handwoven. There are other young designers who are keen to use it and to market it as khadi but when they can't due to stringent government rules, the loss unfortunately is brand khadi's. The 'khadi numbers' therefore tend to remain slow if not static. Also, the cap on the numbers or volumes sold through KVIC with the khadi brand is a deterrent.

Perhaps Pandya is right; perhaps the government should not try to make it a commercial success through volumes. Handloom with its meagre output from the looms cannot achieve the quantities woven by the mills. Let it be exclusive, he suggests, so that the money and the respect percolate to the weaver, the artisan. ■

MAGICAL MOODS OF

India



To mark 75 years of Indian Independence a photo essay to celebrate this beautiful, vast and diverse country. we bring sights, moments and people captured by leading photographer **BHARAT AGGARWAL** as he travelled across this land

Bharat Aggarwal, a professional photographer based in New Delhi, has carved a niche in architectural and interior photography, and worked with passion in the field of travel and food photography. Starting his career in 2004, Bharat worked with *Outlook Traveller* before giving in to his creative instincts and breaking free. Since then he has built up an enviable portfolio having shot for various upmarket and leading hotels and resorts, architects, travel magazines and the food industry across the world.

Leading magazines such as *Wallpaper**

magazine, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Architectural Digest*, *Inside Outside*, *Home Trends*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Design Today*, *Centurion Magazine*, *Better Interiors*, *India Today Travel Plus* have regularly featured Bharat's work and travelogues. He is working on a personal series of black and white prints. Fascinated by the darker side of images, he has delved into art photography and is following it with all his heart. This includes a series on Kashmir, Ahmedabad and Old Delhi.

As a traveller and travel photographer, Bharat says exploring new cultures gives

him a high. He finds visiting local markets is a great way to feel the pulse of a place. Observing and capturing moments that showcase people in their day-to-day life is his passion. He wanders around streets aimlessly in new places, and this has given him some of his best captures of the spirit of India. His photos evoke memories and nostalgia. "Architecturally beautiful buildings, houses, monuments fascinate me. I get my vocation in architectural photography from having developed this love from my numerous travels," says Bharat. ■



Old Architecture From The Streets
Of Chandni Chowk

▼ Traditional Rajasthani Dance In Mehrangarh fort, Jodhpur

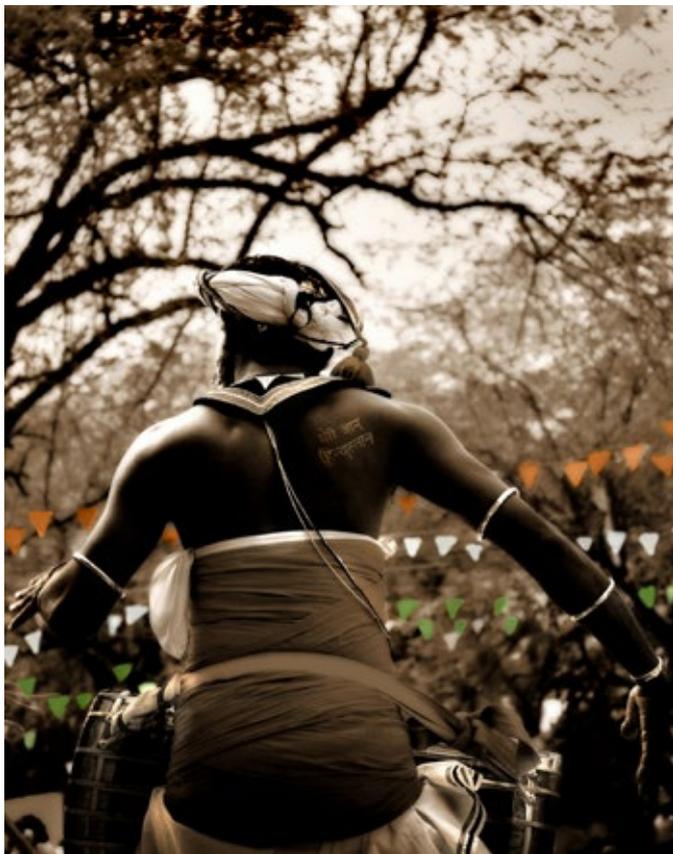


▲ Children in Benreu village, Nagaland



▲ Gyuto Monastery, Dharamshala

▼ Surajkund mela



▼ Enroute Bhuj To Mandvi



▲ Tribal Dance, Benreu Village, Nagaland

You can see more of his work on: Bharat Aggarwal Photography | www.bharataggarwal.com

**Refocus
on
Repair**


The importance of taking the Ayurvedic route to health, wellness and beauty and how you can incorporate it with some easy *asanas*

BY VIBHUTI ARORA

The writer is a Faceyogi/Skin techpreneur/Co-founder at House of Beauty & Face Yoga School and a staunch believer in non-invasive beauty tools and techniques to defy gravity.

Holistic Wellness

The Yoga Way

Remember the dark ages of body shaming challenges on social media like #collarbonechallenge and #bellybuttonchallenge? These were aimed at preaching body shaming and putting a specific body type and shape on a pedestal while proving others to be undesirable. Social media—the yellow brick road to make interactions easier—is also one of the reasons why the younger generation has been facing several eating disorders and diffidence spawned by lack of self-confidence. This superficial sense of self-worth based merely on having ‘a supermodel body type’ and Botoxed faces with unrealistic standards has degraded the youth’s idea of healthy living.

However, millennials and Gen Z have been paving the way for a holistic way of living, thanks to rising awareness of the

importance of keeping the mind healthy in addition to the body. Yoga and meditation are the de facto gymming of the new era. Ayurveda is not restricted to health and wellness but is the perfect way to enhance one’s beauty by providing a glowing skin. My practice of face yoga—the beauty gym for your face—aims at toning and relaxing those facial muscles and results in refined facial features like a defined jawline, slimmer nose and a lifted face.

Why you should practise yoga

Yoga has been part of our civilisation since time immemorial but unfortunately today we get tummy tucks done during lunch breaks and intoxicate ourselves to stay up for those all-nighters. This affects our stress levels, our hormonal functions, and erodes immunity.

The transcendence of yoga in later years

Yoga took several forms because it was internalised differently across cultures. People took different approaches to yoga, be it Ashtanga which focuses more on asanas or bhakti/meditation which improves focus and concentration.

Yoga: The remedy for all modern ailments

In a world where every task is cloaked as a time trial or a battle to prove one’s self-worth and where not accumulating enough achievements is equivalent to being a black sheep, most people (especially the youth) are grappling with mental health issues like stress and anxiety and sleep disorders such as insomnia. Aiming for the perfect body has induced eating disorders and impacted

self-confidence and self-worth, resulting in a search for solutions in rigorous gymming and strenuous exercise. Tiredness after gymming, its non-suitability for all age groups, requirement of proper space, expense and dependence on the right equipment—is it worth it?

Living the holistic way or taking the Ayurvedic approach accrues numerous benefits for physical, mental and overall well-being.

1. Aids Physical Health

To counter a sedentary lifestyle, practising active yoga helps melt body fat and helps tone muscles. By increasing the heart rate, it helps boost metabolism and ensures a healthy blood flow, maintaining cardiovascular and parasympathetic nervous health. It helps reduce cortisol levels, thereby regulating the adrenal glands which are responsible for maintaining the immune system. It aids in focus, sleep disorders and anxiety issues.



For those sitting 8 hours or more on a work chair
—**Dhanurasana/Bow pose**

- Lie on your stomach with feet slightly apart and arms on the side of your body
- Slowly fold your knees, stretch out and hold your ankles with your hands
- Breathe in while raising your chest, and pull your legs up and stretch out

2. Reduces Stress/Anxiety and relieves Depression

If you have acute or long-term stress, mind-body yoga calms your nervous system, providing oxygenated blood to your brain and easing the muscle tension. When we are stressed, we unconsciously adopt a long, rapid breathing pattern which disrupts our whole system. Yoga connects us to our

Yoga connects us to our inner self and teaches breath control, which in turn soothes our overall system and keeps our mind relaxed. Serotonin, which is our body's natural 'happy hormone', plays a key role in aiding depression and is said to increase by practising yoga.

inner self and teaches breath control, which in turn soothes our overall system and keeps our mind relaxed. Serotonin, which is our body's natural 'happy hormone', plays a key role in easing depression and is said to increase by practising yoga.

3. Enables Better Sleep

With online cinema available on demand, the first thing that is affected is our sleep patterns, which in turn affects our gut health. A proper sleep schedule doesn't just rely on eight hours of sleep, but is equally dependent on sleep quality. Yoga helps release sleep hormones, thus calming the mind.

By practising Face Yoga Nidra, a state of meditative consciousness called *samadhi* can be achieved which further results in better overall wellness. It starts with relaxing the mind and muscles of the scalp followed by forehead muscles, eyebrows, temples, eyes, nose, ears, cheeks, lips, tongue, jaw, neck and shoulder—in that order. It is highly beneficial to leave recurring thoughts behind.

4. Face Yoga: Your Beauty Gym

Backed by science and Ayurveda, face yoga is an inexpensive and a non-invasive way to achieve anti-ageing and has been a game changer in the skincare game. It is a mix of a facial massage, facial exercises and acupuncture which fights skin issues like wrinkles, fine lines, dark circles, puffy eyes, dullness, loose skin, and so on. Isn't opting for chemical-free options the obvious choice? We all know Botox is a food poisoning poison at the end of the day!

Botox is not the only way to retain a

youthful look. Relaxing and toning are two ways in which face yoga helps achieve wrinkle-free skin by targeting the right muscles. Not only does it de-stress the working muscles, it also wakes up the sleeping muscles and helps in lifting the face up, giving it a more sculpted look. It helps boost the collagen and gives the skin a radiant complexion. It also works wonders in improving lymphatic drainage and easing tension. By working on the right muscles, face yoga helps achieve a slimmer nose, chiselled jaw line and symmetrical face, providing the results of cosmetic procedures in a non-invasive way! ■

Steps to Signature 1 Minute Vibhuti Massage

for all the zonal targets of face:
Jaw & Jowl, Zygomatic Cheeks, Orbicularis Oculi (Eye Muscles), Forehead and Neck



- Apply face oil all over your face—jaw upwards, cheeks upwards and forehead.
- Apply upward pressure from the heel of your palm from jaw line upwards, from cheek muscle upwards—3 times.
- Do forehead wipes in opposite directions with firm pressure—20 times.
- Follow up by swipe-up motions along the under-eye area: "A" — Swipe—Lift—Drain.
- For upper eyelids make a V: Swipe—Lift—Drain.
- Make an X on your neck and massage 6 times.

INDIAN DESIGN

ethos for urban homes

After spices, it is indigenous handcrafted objects that travel with Indians wherever they go



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.

Some homegrown textiles, a carved idol of a deity, or a beautifully crafted spice box—these are not mere souvenirs, but a way to stay connected with the mother country and celebrate its time-tested heritage in their everyday living. It's these objects that help them create a home away from home.

Global citizens are exposed to multiple cultures; they want it reflected in their modern, minimalistic homes. What they are looking at is not necessarily typical Indian art and craft objects for their home, but contemporary pieces with universal appeal.

Unlike their parents' generation, global Indians may not prefer to wear their heritage on their sleeve, yet they long to make it a part of their cosmopolitan personality.

"Today, young people take great interest in our ancient traditions, and want to make them a part of their life. The Indian way of living is wholesome and our interiors should reflect that. Because, in the end everything is energy, so creating the right vibe is important," says architectural designer Geetanjali Kasliwal, who, along with her husband and designer, Ayush Kasliwal, runs AnanTaya Décor and AKFD. As torchbearers of contemporary handcrafted objects, furniture, and interiors with an Indian soul, they are well-known for reinterpreting the most obscure of art and design traditions for the modern milieu.

Sarah Sham of Essajeess Atelier agrees: "Most people want to incorporate some portion of their heritage into their home, and as a studio, we have a strong sense of wanting to include materials and products made in India by Indians. But in terms of aesthetics, few people today want the super carved and detailed look. Adding a contemporary touch is the way to go."



Image courtesy of Essajeess Atelier

IDEAS AND INSPIRATIONS FOR INDIAN ETHOS IN URBAN HOMES AS INDIA CELEBRATES ANOTHER YEAR OF BEING INDEPENDENT

INDIGENOUS FABRICS AND MOTIFS

“It can be as simple as taking an Indian fabric or motif on curtain trimmings, or traditional embroidery on cushions, or the ancient way of knotting a rug, like in the Kashmiri carpet, but with a more contemporary design... these are some ways to instil Indian-ness into interiors,” says Sham. Silk, raw silk, textured cotton, linen, khadi, organza et al are popular for soft furnishings. Textiles with native motifs instantly transform the vibe.

The Kolam carpets designed by Tania and Sandeep Khosla, the graphic-designer-and-architect couple, in collaboration with Jaipur Rugs, is an apt example of incorporating an ancient folk art form into

contemporary design. *Kolams* or *rangoli*, made of rice flour, are line drawings adorning frontyards in most South Indian homes. The drawings are composed of curves and loops around a grid of dots to create mesmerising geometric forms. The charm of the hand-drawn *kolam* has been captured through hand-woven knots in these carpets. “Symmetry is central to *kolam* art. While we preserved the sacrosanct symmetry in individual forms, we broke it in the overall compositions to create dynamic, bold and layered designs. It is the juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary motifs, symmetry in form and asymmetry in composition that make the carpets so exciting,” say the designers.

COLLECTIBLES AND ANTIQUES

Even when they seem like random picks, collectibles and antiques have a strong connect with our consciousness. “Who you are forms



Image courtesy of Kolam Carpets



Image courtesy of AKFD & AnanTaya Decor

Image courtesy of AKFD & AnanTaya Decor



the canvas of your home. Who you are as a person is your value system that gets reflected in the memories. When we do something new, we populate it with these memory pieces, in this case, the antiques. They remind us of a historical context, carry a message, or become talking points,” explains Geetanjali.

Often, by using an antique object in an unusual manner, rather than the way it was intended to, you can inject freshness in the environment. “You could use an antique door to decorate a ceiling, or turn it into an artwork by mounting it on the wall,” suggests Sham.

USE COLOURS JUDICIOUSLY

We Indians love colour. However, for a pared back appeal, “use colours judiciously,” says Geetanjali. “But if you love colour, go all out to showcase it, because no one else can do it like we do. However, you need to balance the colours by choosing a base of natural materials, some nice textiles, then accent it with patterns, motifs that remind you of another era.”

The Khoslas bring a global appeal to the Kolam carpets by juxtaposing the decorative motifs with a more western colour palette. “Rather than using a saturated Indian colour palette, we created a nuanced mid-century palette of powder blue, dusty salmon, mint, ochre, garnet and charcoal black/grey,” they say.

Used in interiors since ancient times, brass and copper are finding many stylish applications including in inlays, panelling and in furniture and accessories, forging a new connection with the past.

A GROUNDED BASE

A neutral base allows you to play with many styles, materials and elements that establish the eclectic character you’re looking at. “When you have a natural base, you can add the spice through colourful, handcrafted panels, beautiful textiles, and of course wallpapers... they are so versatile,” says Geetanjali.

ACCENT FURNITURE

In a modern set-up, adding a piece or two of traditional furniture pieces creates visual interest. “The modern interpretation of an Indian *charpai* is an amazing piece of furniture not just for its aesthetics, but

Image courtesy of Essajees Atelier

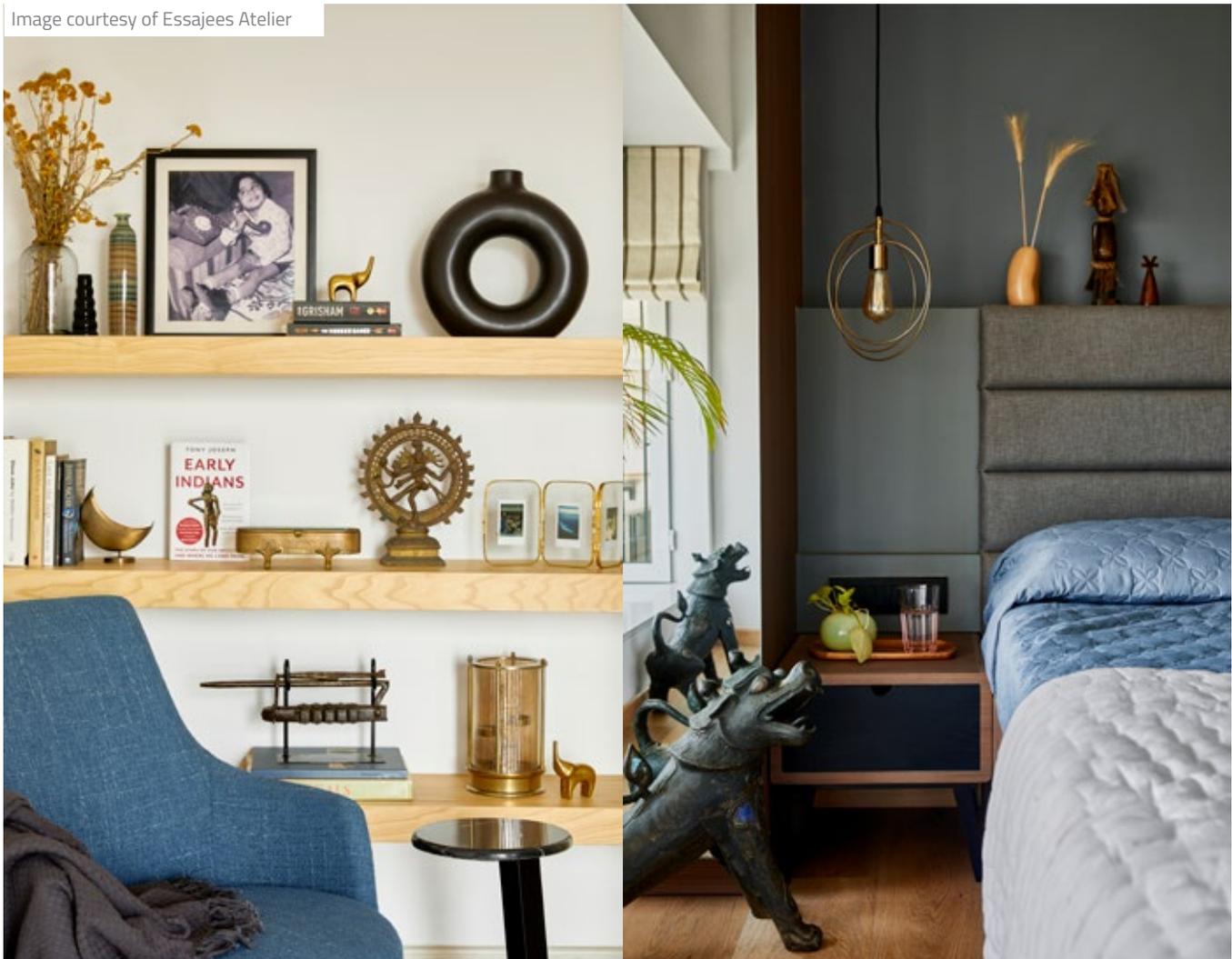


Image courtesy of Kolam Carpets



the way it lends itself to reinvention through different artisans. Similarly, the *moodha*, which allows us to fold our legs and sit, enables us to stay in touch with the Indian way of living," says Geetanjali.

AGE-OLD METALS

Used in interiors since ancient times, brass and copper are finding many stylish applications including in inlays, panelling and in furniture and accessories, forging a new connection with the past. "The one material that will never go out of fashion is traditional brass work. It fits perfectly in any interior," says Sham. AnanTaya champions the use of ancient metals in many of their designs. The Sultan range of tabletop accessories combines acacia wood and brass details. The gorgeous Spire collection of jars blends marble, copper and cast brass. And the Suri 2-tier platter celebrates hand-hammered brass and turned walnut wood.

A MINIMAL POOJA ROOM

Most Indian home décor is incomplete without an altar or a *pooja* room. If you're looking at including it in your home, this modern *pooja* room designed by Pavan Chatlani of Dash Square for his home is a good idea. The glass-enclosed small room features minimal aesthetics and sits discreetly within the living room. Or you could take inspiration from the hidden *pooja* room designed by Sham. ■

Young
&
Restless

DESPERATELY SEEKING FREEDOM



The independence associated with Independence Day no longer holds value for the youth. What does freedom mean to the descendants of the freedom fighting generation?

“We must be free not because we claim freedom, but because we practise it!”

I was reminded of this famous William Faulkner quote last weekend, and it couldn't have been in a more opportune setting.

We were at a brunch hosted by Hoshang Verma (name changed), one of Delhi's most loved fashion designers and his much younger, famously philandering husband. Hoshang may not have had a sold-out collection in years but he certainly hosts the most talked-about soirees in town. This one, too, was every bit as juicy and decadent as one can imagine. Except that the guest list also included one of the most admired young politicians, belonging to the city's ruling party.

As the bubbly flowed, so did the chatter, from one topic to another, ending right at the idea of *azadi* in today's India. Everyone stood up in attention; we had gone from foursomes to freedom, after all.

“I don't think Independence Day holds any value for the youth today. For them, it's just another holiday, and a dry one at that!” Hearing these words from the politico was both shocking and scandalous. Wasn't he supposed to channel all things patriotic? “Don't shoot the messenger, will you? I'm just speaking the truth. We're long past the *desh bhakti* era. The young generation is fighting for the future instead of wallowing in the past.”

You have to admit it's an interesting observation. Even though we pride ourselves on our great freedom struggle, unfortunately or fortunately, it doesn't seem to resonate with the modern men and women. Yes, they studied it all in school, and yes, they definitely respect and admire the likes of Gandhi, Bhagat Singh and Bose. But their interest in Independence Day ends at that.

What they do care about, instead, is how much independence they actually get to enjoy on a daily basis.

“Yes, we're technically a free country but in this current political climate, are we

really? A simple tweet can get you behind bars!” Samir Chopra (name changed), entrepreneur extraordinaire and the man behind one of India's leading food delivery giants, certainly wasn't in the mood to mince his words. When we met for drinks at a popular watering hole in Delhi, he was in the mood to keep it real. “Our Constitution guarantees us our right to freedom of speech and expression, and then the powers-that-be walk all over it.”

If the men are feeling jaded, imagine how things are for the women. Nandini Behel (name changed), model of the moment from Mumbai, put it best. “Women anyway have so much more to fight for. Just walking down the street and coming home safe is a luxury. How can anyone even expect us to feel free?” If the statistics around women's safety are to be considered, India is no country for women. “I was recently trolled on Instagram for putting out a beach selfie—my cleavage triggered a bunch of sexist men into giving me rape threats. And this was just another day in the life of an Indian woman!”

The LGBTQIA+ community too isn't too excited. And this despite the landmark Supreme Court judgment on Section 377, decriminalising homosexuality in 2018. “I don't think there's anyone in the community who isn't thankful for the judgment. But is that all we deserve?” Kavish Kumar (name changed) isn't just one of the country's most prominent gay rights activists but also a leading scriptwriter, based in Goa. And he's always dropping truth bombs about the situation in the country regarding his community. “We can't marry the person we love, or even open a joint bank account. This isn't freedom, is it?”

It's not all gloom and doom, though. A lot of young people today do feel we're in a good place.

Sanjit Sahni (name changed) definitely knows a thing or two about the youth's state of mind. He is, after all, forever

engaging with them, as a popular fashion influencer on social media. And when he says things aren't as dire, one is almost tempted to believe him. “It's become a fad to diss everything about the government of today; people conveniently ignore all the good that's happening just because they can't stand our PM. And that's not fair!” And what are these good things? “We're a much more influential country, globally, and a lot firmer in our stand on geopolitical issues. There's also the abrogation of Article 370, vaccinating 90 percent of the population against Covid-19, etc.”

But what about personal freedom? Akansha Nigam (name changed), stylist to the stars, firmly believes things are headed in a better direction. “I've never felt that anyone's freedom of speech and expression has been compromised. What else explains the name-calling I receive from men online simply for defending this government? The 'liberals' aren't so liberal after all!”

That's the thing about the young—just when you think you've figured them out, they make you think again. But no matter which way the tide turns, it's certain that young people know what they want, and they won't halt without getting it.

And isn't the greatest freedom of all, the freedom to fight for what you believe in? ■

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.

You know what's a great business hack?

STORYTELLING

Developing countries such as India can fast-track progress by embracing storytelling, argues business storytelling expert JYOTI GUPTARA



The first time I visited India, aged six, I remember being fascinated by the makeshift contraptions street vendors engineered to make their lives easier. (Washing machine-mixed *lassi*, anyone?) My father explained this was *jugaad*—ingenious little hacks in place of technology which some people couldn't afford. We Indians, I learned, are an entrepreneurial lot.

But many of us do not have access to the education or resources that would help us develop our full potential. Some need a basic education. Others require seed funding. I believe storytelling can help the whole country progress and prosper in at least three ways.

First, stories can help grass-roots entrepreneurs mobilise resources and create jobs because they increase the perceived value of a product or idea. In 2009, anthropologists conducted the 'Significant Objects' study by asking 100 writers to buy an item from eBay. These cost around \$1.25 each—totalling \$128. After inventing a story for each object, it was put back up for sale. The same thrift-store junk that had sales worth \$128 now had sales worth \$3,612. Stories had increased the value of each item by an average multiple of 28. Storytelling is an entrepreneur's best friend both starting and growing a business.

Second, on the global stage, stories can help position and differentiate brands. Brothers Chip Heath and Dan Heath, at Stanford and Duke universities, spent years researching what made various kinds of messages go viral. Their conclusion: well-constructed stories are the most persuasive and memorable form of communication.



Third, stories are wholistic education and can help develop India's human capital. While many developing countries rely on rote learning, storytelling conveys content and creativity because it helps people think for themselves. The brain simulates stories, putting you in the story so that you naturally apply its lessons in different contexts.

Peter J. Daniels, for instance, was a virtually illiterate bricklayer in Australia. When he heard a gospel message by Billy Graham, he realised he did not have to be the sum of his past. Now he had the motivation to learn, means were no longer an issue. Daniels taught himself to read and overcame a series of business failures, going from welfare recipient to giving away millions of dollars to others. The story you believe can transform your life for better or worse. Human resources trump natural resources. That is why some nations without any natural resources (Switzerland, Singapore) have become wealthy, while other nations with huge natural resources (Brazil, Congo) remain poor.

This is all good news for India, because Indians are natural storytellers. But we often don't recognise our strengths, or don't apply them in a business context. If we recognise the fact that we could be world-class storytellers, and learn to hone that talent for business purposes, we could be even more successful in business than we are currently.

I dropped out of school at the age of 15 to pursue writing full-time. This worked out wonderfully when I published my first bestseller at 17, but posed a challenge later, when I was trying to get an entry-level job in my mid-twenties! Then I learned to reframe my own story and how I positioned my services. I suddenly found myself bagging lucrative assignments so that I didn't need to be employed. Now, despite not having a degree, I teach master's students and coach post-docs.

Stories, I have learned, can be the educational *jugaad* that empowers any person or business to overcome internal or external limitations and grow. That's why I wrote my new book as a series of storytelling "hacks" for business and personal life, from strategy, marketing and sales, to reframing your own narrative and experiencing more success with less stress. ■

Jyoti Gupta is a business coach, speaker and bestselling author. His new book, *Business Storytelling from Hype to Hack: Unlock the Software of the Mind* (Pippa Rann Books), hits shelves this month.
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