

# AVENTURE

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**INSIDE CAMPUS**

Environment Day

**CONVERSATION**

Trailblazer Woman

**THEATRE**

Yakshagana

**TRAVEL**

The Morning of the World



**CENTRE PIECE**

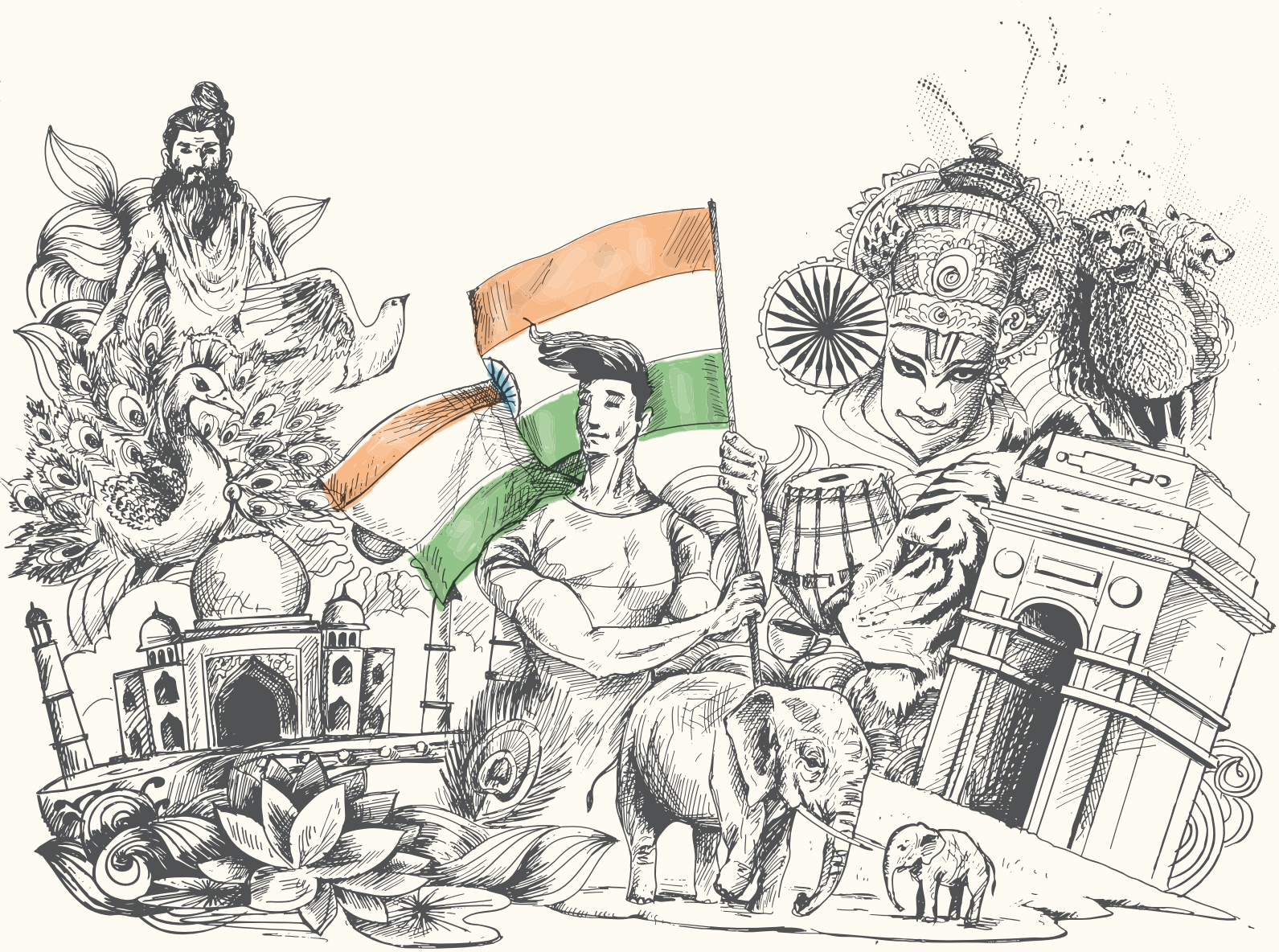
# Exploring The Contours Of Freedom



# 75



Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav



From August 1947 to August 2021, the connotation of 'freedom' has altered significantly. Freedom which then meant the birth of a 'nation state' run by a democratic self-government today is a far more complex and layered experience for the citizens of this diverse country. In commemoration of the 75th Independence Day, we have attempted to unravel this layered experience. We spoke to a cross-section of the citizens of the country, hailing from varied socio-cultural and economic backgrounds to learn what freedom means to them. This dialogue has thrown up several questions: What is freedom quintessentially? Is it a monolithic, immutable entity? Is political freedom from a colonial power sufficient? Is personal freedom, often, at loggerheads with the establishment? What are the factors threatening personal freedom and liberty? Is the political, religious and cultural atmosphere conducive to every citizen's freedom and security? These are questions to be addressed by policy makers, for-profit entities as well as civic society. Having said that, we, each one of us, cannot absolve ourselves from the responsibility of exercising our own sense of personal freedom, but in doing so, also ensuring that we are not trespassing upon another's freedom.

Ask not what your country has done for you but what you have done for your country; most of us may have no fitting reply to JFK's question. But Bengaluru-based nonagenarian Almitra Patel certainly has. It is most befitting to pay a tribute to this phenomenal lady, who has been instrumental in persuading the government of India to formulate the Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules in 2000. The Conversation section traces

how Almitra Patel took it upon herself to 'clean-up' the country.

As with every issue, we offer you a wide variety of content. Find a painter's journey into the deep waters, and the struggle of a family of artisans to resuscitate the exquisite Rogun Art form; a glimpse into Yakshagana, the traditional dance-drama of south Karnataka, alongside a peek into how the Malayalam cinema industry is making films out the 'here and now' of quotidian life; and, a review of the psychological thriller novel 'The Push'. This medley is rounded off by a breath-taking close-up of the Indonesian province, Bali, the land, its people, culture, spirituality, art, cuisine et al.

As much as we would like to remove the pandemic from our consciousness, it seems to linger on. In adapting and going beyond this adversity we discover a new dimension to our psyche. That is exactly what Rearview documents.

Do browse through the Inside Campus section for an update on the activities being conducted at JAIN, albeit virtually.

Wishing more power to India and its citizens. Trust that the 15th of August is yet another day for us to revisit and revise our perceptions and actions to remain inclusive and tolerant.

Happy Reading !  
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# INCULCATING THE SPIRIT OF ONENESS



Independence and knowledge of rights are two complex notions that have sparked numerous arguments and conversations around the world. While many organisations today are voicing out people's social, economic, and political rights and the difficulties confronting society, the greater concern is about how individuals

construct knowledge and meaning about their rights and the issues affecting the community.

In a country as diverse as India, to accept and appreciate individuals whose ideologies and weights differ from ours may lead to conflict. When we talk about moral independence, equality is an important normative ideal that cannot be overlooked, and I strongly believe that education may hold the key to solving the problem.

Education allows us to put ourselves in the context of who we were, who we are today, and where we are going in the future. Education is certainly beneficial, when we use our reasoning minds to make sense of the events that are taking place around us.

As part of the basic principles instilled in us by our educational institutions, we learn to accept and respect others who are different from us in their ideas philosophies, and practices, which is a difficult lesson to learn otherwise. An unbiased setting, such as an educational institution, provides an opportunity to observe and socialize with a variety of individuals, gain an understanding

of their perspectives, and take the first step toward a cohesive society.

To a greater extent, educational institutions are responsible for putting the plan into action in order to raise awareness and foster a deeper knowledge of societal concerns. As educationists, we should be dedicated to influencing our students in such a way that they not only acquire this insight but are also capable of imparting it to others.

**AT JAIN, EDUCATION IS STRUCTURED IN A WAY THAT IT INCORPORATES AN AWARENESS OF DIVERSE GROUPS OF PEOPLE AND THEIR CULTURES.**

At JAIN, education is structured in a way that it incorporates an awareness of diverse groups of people and their cultures. This in turn strengthens the experience of harmony, which is critical in a society that is continually ripped apart by divisive events and factors.

Apart from developing competent human resources capable of delivering a brighter future for this planet, we need to assist them in defining liberty and instill in them an appreciation for and value of protecting our liberty and all that it entails. How this can happen and what can be done to raise people's awareness of their rights is the true test for today's educational system.

**DR. CHENRAJ ROYCHAND**  
CHANCELLOR

# TOLERANCE – BEDROCK FOR PEACE



Politics at the international level may be fraught with many a compulsion of greed and one upmanship. But within the territory of a nation, the politico-cultural-religious landscape can remain harmonious and peaceful with tolerance. Tolerance, I believe, is an overriding virtue, that enables us to co-exist with

others who are 'different'. Different doesn't necessarily mean superior or inferior. Difference doesn't place the 'self' on a higher moral ground nor the 'other' on a lower moral ground.

In the two-decades following freedom when India the nation-state was being built, resolving the enormous differences of its peoples, be it in geography, language, religion, caste, festivals, cuisines, dress, political orientation, was a huge challenge to the leadership. It is on the basis of tolerance towards the rest that the nation evolved. Tolerance is an indispensable virtue today. India as every other nation in the world is pluralistic. Even as we are upholding and celebrating inclusion on the one hand, intolerance is growing on the other. If the nation and its people have to prosper and live in peace, tolerance is imperative.

As John F Kennedy has said, tolerance does not imply the dilution or negation of your belief-systems or the abandoning of your faiths. But it only underwrites respect and space for those of others.

Yet in our nation as elsewhere in the world there is a great paucity of tolerance. And the wave of intolerance is only brewing stronger and stronger. Children and youth particularly are easy prey to radicalisation as they are impressionable. A colossal change in perspective to imbibe tolerance is the need of the hour. It begins with small steps. Exercising tolerance in the smaller communities of kith and kin, and friends, and the community within which we live is a starting point.

**DR. N SUNDARARAJAN**  
PRO-CHANCELLOR

**TOLERANCE, I BELIEVE, IS AN  
OVERRIDING VIRTUE, THAT  
ENABLES US TO CO-EXIST  
WITH OTHERS WHO ARE  
'DIFFERENT'.**

# FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY



The country that was born at midnight of 15th August, 1947 is celebrating its 75th year of Independence. Every Independence Day (in fact, every day) celebration is an occasion for the youth of our country to contemplate on the contours of personal liberty. Many times, asking the right questions, rather than seeking the right answers, may point

the way forward. Having been born into a politically free country, how have we as a nation and as individuals exercised freedom? Have we exercised it keeping in mind the larger good of the nation in accordance with the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity? Without infringing on the freedom of our brethren?

“With Freedom comes great responsibility,” said Eleanor Roosevelt. And responsibility is not an inherent virtue. It is a quality that has to be imbibed, nurtured and exercised each time a decision is made. And being responsible also means the strength of character to accept the consequences for choices and actions. This does not come easy. It requires immense effort to be fair minded, committed, conscientious, the list is endless and thus defines the pervasive character of an individual. It is perhaps because of this, that Eric Fromm in his book ‘Escape from Freedom’ says that freedom often becomes a burden. Modern man, he says, very easily ‘surrenders his freedom to dictators’ or ‘loses it by transforming into a small cog in the machine, well fed, and well clothed but not free.’

I thus deem it necessary to remind our youth that freedom is a precious gift handed down to us by our leaders and countrymen and that we should exercise it with caution and responsibility, else

it will lead to anarchy. More often than not, unaware of the price a nation pays for its freedom, successive generations take freedom and their country for granted. In doing so, they also disregard personal liberty.

While the country has made immense strides in several areas, it is lagging behind in several others. There is enough reason to celebrate, but there is also enough reason to bemoan the trajectories the country has taken since. Freedom of any nature comes with an equal measure of both the desirable and the undesirable. The paradox is inherent. Standing at the fork, the choice is between evolution and devolution. And the one decisive feature that determines the path a nation or an individual takes is ‘freedom with responsibility’, and this alone can achieve holistic growth of a nation by bringing into its fold

all citizens that are on the periphery, all those that are still deprived of the rights as guaranteed by the constitution and fundamental notions of equality of human beings.

Education for all citizens of the nation is one of the greatest outcomes of independence. And

education is meant to inspire the youth to exercise the freedom accorded to them in their personal, social, cultural and political space with utmost responsibility and caution. So it is upto each one of us to ensure that we have the moral courage to lead our great nation to the zenith of ‘unity in diversity’.

**ONE DECISIVE FEATURE THAT DETERMINES THE PATH A NATION OR AN INDIVIDUAL TAKES IS ‘FREEDOM WITH RESPONSIBILITY’, AND THIS ALONE CAN ACHIEVE HOLISTIC GROWTH OF A NATION.**

**DR. RAJ SINGH**  
VICE CHANCELLOR





# UNSUNG HEROES

They toil in sunshine and rain  
Day after day without complain  
Making life less mundane  
For us who look upon in disdain.

Respecting and Acknowledging  
the Unsung Heroes



# ACCOUNTING, FINANCE AND TAXATION GLOBAL TRENDS



**A** virtual international conference on 'Emerging Global Trends in Accounting, Finance and Taxation' was held on 9 April, 2021.

The webinar opened with Dr. Dinesh Nilkant, Director of the School of Commerce, Dean - Faculty of Management, Jain ( Deemed-to-be University) speaking on how the current COVID-19 scenario has made it difficult to raise revenue. He highlighted the importance of redefining accounts, finance and taxation by making them compulsory subjects of study. He also commended the organising committee for choosing a significant subject for the conference.

Mr. Gaurav Kapur, Head of Policy, ACCA India and also the keynote speaker spoke on, 'Future of Finance - Emerging Trends and Skills Required'. Concurring with Dr. Dinesh Nilkant's theory, Mr. Gaurav, with his focus on the youth of the country, emphasised the impact of 'Vitamin M' deficiency and an inefficient workforce on organizational health. He said, "The world has changed, and is changing continuously; Digitisation and Analytics are the new norms in every business. Since business is changing, careers are changing too, leading to continuous change in required skill-sets." He stressed that digitisation was not just about

technology. "Digitisation is also about continuous re-skilling, and hence there is a need to redefine ourselves to fit into this transformed digital world," said Mr. Gaurav. Topics like forces of change, transformed operating models, 20 trends in shaping the careers in accountancy and five zones of future career opportunity were the highlight of his discourse.

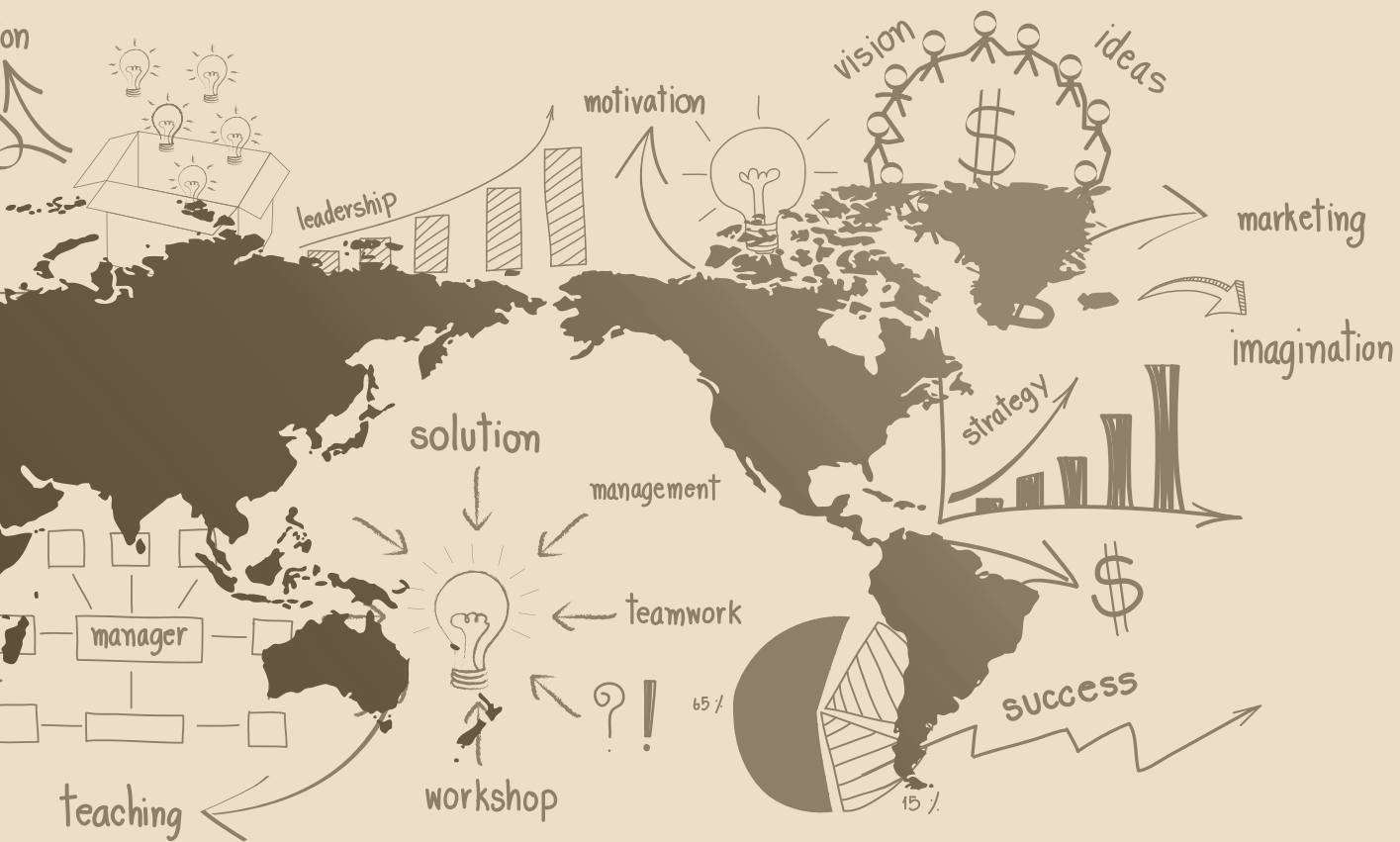
Panel Moderator Ms. Asha Merugu, ICAI, ICSI, Cost Accountant, CIMA. Dip. in IFRS, Director - Financial Accounting Services, Ernst & Young, Bengaluru, started the session by introducing the panel members who presented their views, concepts and pioneering solutions.

Dr. Rajesh Kumar, M.Com, Ph.D., Founder - Vittam Pravina Gurushala (Finance Expert Academy), Mr. Subbarayudu Tallapragada, AICWA, US CPA, Certified Information Systems Auditor, Founder Director - EntPerMaSys Consulting, Mr. Prateek Mankad, ACA, PGDM-IIM B, Co-founder - World of Financial Reporting, Mumbai, Mr. Rohit Nahar, ACA, Senior Manager, Ernst & Young participated as panelists at the conference.

Dr. Rajesh Kumar initiated the discussion on the need for re-engineering in academics. He highlighted the role of the THREE stakeholders on academic institution i.e., students, teachers and management, as change makers. While Dr. Rajesh presented valuable insights into the duration of the graduation course and practical relevance of the subjects studied, he also said that the attention of academics should shift from exam orientation to relevance and application of subject knowledge.

He also validated his discussion by quoting an example of a person who may have never studied taxation formally, but can file tax on his own, owing to technology and adaptability. Ms. Asha further endorsed the concept by narrating a story which demonstrated how practical application makes a difference in learning.

Mr. Prateek Mankad took over and emphasised that new ways of accounting and taxation should be discovered as the existing ones are fading. He said, "Everything is being digitized and we have no choice, but to adapt. At present, the



trend is to embrace technology and focus on upskilling ourselves continuously.” Ms. Asha added, “Virtual auditing is the highest form of technological advancement in accounts, finance and taxation.”

Mr. Subbarayudu who delivered the keynote address, emphasised the critical nature of data protection and confidentiality in finance and accounting. “In today’s world, finance is largely controlled electronically, and one must consider the significance of data protection and cyber-security,” he said. He also stated that a data breach can cost dearly to a company and has an impact not only on sales, but also on brand and loyalty. Ms. Asha gave the example of the Facebook privacy crisis to illustrate how data, rather than becoming an asset, can become a vulnerability for a business in the event of a security breach.

Delivering a talk on the trend of growth in tax base was Mr. Rohit Nahar. He talked about how digitised tax, online audit, and online tax filing are becoming the new online norms. He also discussed various

aspects of the drastic shift in traditional tax functioning and said that it is inevitable that every process becomes technology-dependent, as we deal with huge data. The panel discussion was followed by the presentation of research papers. The invitation to submit papers had received an overwhelming response from authors in India and abroad, and were classified and organised into tracks such as accounting, banking and taxation.

The research paper presentation was followed by a session on ‘Technology Transforming the Future of Accountancy and Finance’, by Mr. Dev Ramnarine, FCCA (UK), Founder – Thrudheim LLC, USA. Speaking about the pandemic that has transformed the way we do things, Mr. Dev highlighted the importance of adopting technology. Topics like data analytics, robotics, artificial intelligence, and IOT being some of the interesting aspects of the discussion, the session concluded on the note that technology-adoption has opened several job opportunities for digital professionals. A faculty member from the School of Commerce, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University) presented a

detailed conference report of the day. Dr. Easwaran Iyer, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru, addressed the conference and shared his experience on accounts, finance, and taxation system getting advanced over time. During his keynote address, the Pro Vice Chancellor mentioned how digitization and transparency in the banking sector has made it nearly impossible for people to open several bank accounts using different names due to the emergence of linkage to PAN Card and Aadhar Card.

As parting words he spoke about globalization affecting the taxation policy of India and the evolving arena of taxation, while emphasising the necessity for educators to keep themselves updated on the emerging trends in accounting, finance and taxation.

The session concluded with a valedictory address.



# ECOSYSTEM FOR CYBER SECURITY

**J**ain (Deemed-to-be University) observed Cyber Security Awareness Month from 17 March to 26 March 2021. Webinars were held across its campuses with a focus on “Initiatives of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Center” (I4C). With a view to strengthen cyber security and to tackle the unforeseen challenges of cybercrime, April is celebrated as the Cyber security Awareness month.

Cyber Security Awareness Month (CSAM) is an initiative to adapt and promote cyber security

hygiene and incorporate stronger security measures. In today’s digitised world, the more we remain connected, the greater the need to safeguard our digital presence. Thus every individual is responsible and accountable for safeguarding digital identities and footprints, making it a shared responsibility. The more we share, the more we must care!

Several webinars and quizzes were conducted across the campuses of JAIN to observe CSAM. A webinar was held

to give wide publicity to MHA's twitter handle @CyberDost which provides updates and advisories at regular intervals for prevention of cybercrime. School of Engineering along with the NSS wing of Faculty of Engineering, conducted a National Level Quiz and a webinar on cyber security awareness, which witnessed the participation of more than 300 students. The objective of this quiz was to spread awareness around cyber security's best practices amongst citizens who access online services, and to impart basic security hygiene to utilize digital services securely.

Amongst the many national level webinars conducted throughout the month to observe CSAM, the first, held on March 17, was based on the theme 'Safeguarding Against Malware and Safety of Mobile Apps'. The webinar was open for students, research scholars and faculty members of various institutions. It gave insights on various aspects of safeguarding against malware and safety of mobile apps. Some of the topics included were:

- Case studies - dominance of mobile camera, microphones.
- Demonstrations on how messages and contacts are stolen from mobile devices.
- Tips, settings and precautions to safeguard mobile devices.
- Guidelines on how to report frauds as explained on the cybercrime website.

Mr. Adithya C.A., Assistant Professor at Department of Computer Science and Engineering, (Jain deemed-to-be University) who is a certified ethical hacker with rich experience in security-based applications such as network security, cryptography, database security and ethical hacking presented valuable information on various types of

cybercrimes and demonstrated some real time examples of the same. The webinar provided information about novel ways to safeguard against malware and safety of mobile apps and was a great learning experience for all the participants.

The second webinar, held on March 22 focused on 'Different cyber frauds and Social Media usage'. Prof. Apoorva K A, Senior Faculty, iNurture Education Solutions Pvt. Ltd., who is also a certified Digital Ready Trainer with holistic knowledge in the field of digital forensics, threat intelligence and information security outlined the many facets of different cyber frauds and social media usage, including topics like,

- Awareness and demonstration about common online frauds like financial fraud, job fraud, matrimonial fraud.
- Safe use of social media platforms and clarification on dos and don'ts on social media.
- Personal information disclosure on public platforms.
- Modus operandi of cyber criminals through activities like air ticket QR code, fake Whatsapp messages etc.
- Tips, settings and precautions to avoid frauds.

Another webinar was held on 26 March 2021 with Prof. Sharvil Kishore Darne, Trainer - Cyber security, iNurture Education solutions, Bangalore delivering a talk on "Malicious Websites and Safe Browsing Habits".. Having earned global certifications and badges such as EC Council Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH), Insight VM Certified Administrator, Insight App Sec Certified Specialist, Certified Information Security Expert (CISE) from the government of India, Mr. Sharvil has

professional experience in the field of Cyber Security, Ethical Hacking and Dev Sec Ops implementations.

### Highlights of the webinar:

- Analysis and discussion of previous cybercrime cases.
- Demonstration of phishing attacks/smishing scams with examples.
- Safeguarding tips for Credit card details and other PII.
- Demonstration of how personal and financial details are hacked.
- Cyber volunteer - Registration and reporting of frauds, with examples.



The webinars presented participants with an opportunity to gather valuable information and contributed to a better understanding of the global cyberspace architecture. Certificate of participation was distributed at the end of the webinars.

# YOGA

## FOR WELLNESS

### SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

**Y**oga is a mental and physical exercise rooted in Indian philosophy. Derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yuj', meaning connect or combine, it refers to the process of an individual-self merging with Cosmic Consciousness or the Universal Spirit. The age of the 'Sat Yuga' is considered to be the period when yoga emerged, but the origins of yoga remained unknown until the greatest civilization, the Indus Valley civilization, was discovered.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. Yoga was given to the world by India's ancient past. It is a comprehensive approach to health and well-being. It's not merely about fitness, but a path to uncover a personal world and natural feeling of unity.

The declaration came at the behest of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi during his address at the UN General Assembly on September 27, 2014. Highlighting the importance of Yoga and its benefits to mankind, he said, "Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; and, a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not merely about exercising the body but a path to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help in well-being."

Since its inception in 2015, June 21 has been observed globally as the International Day of Yoga. Jain (Deemed-to-be University) celebrated International

Yoga Day, 2021, virtually owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Annually, International Day of Yoga is enthusiastically observed by the JAIN family at all of its campuses. Jain (Deemed-to-be University) acknowledges and emphasises the importance of Yoga as a healthy practise that balances mind, body and spirit. On the Seventh International Yoga Day, JAIN students and faculty members were urged to practise 'Yoga for Wellbeing' in accordance with the University Grants Commission (UGC) standards. The entire session was conducted over digital media platforms in order to avoid large crowds and to comply with the physical distancing norms.

To commemorate International Yoga Day, a webinar was held, with a participation of over a 100 students. Following an introductory video highlighting the importance of yoga and various asanas, Maj. Dr. Rekha Sinha addressed the audience highlighting various advantages of yoga like improving flexibility, building muscle strength, bettering bone health, increasing blood flow, maintaining nervous system, intensifying enthusiasm and self-confidence by transforming thoughts.

This was followed by a speech by yoga teacher Mr. Sreekanth Bhatt who offered significant insights into the relevance and benefits of yoga on human health.

He demonstrated and tutored participants in a variety of asanas, including *Taadasana*, *Vrskshasana*, *Pashchima Uttanasana*, *Trikonaasna*, *Sukhasana*, *Vajrasana*, *Padmasana*, *Bhujangasana*, and *Shavasana*. Additionally participants were also educated about several forms of *praanayamas*, including *brahmari*, *omkar*, and *naadi shodha*



pranayama, as well as the benefits of waking up and doing yoga during the *brahmi* muhurta (3-4:30 AM). Mr. Bhatt concluded the webinar by fielding questions from the audience and offering advice on how to lead a healthy life aided by yogic practices.

A quiz was held for about 70 NCC Cadets thereafter. Numerous inspirational and hilarious jingles were created by students. The members of the audience were encouraged to practise yoga regularly for a healthy and stress-free life, and the organisers received great feedback from the audience urging them to conduct more such webinars in the future.

As a part of celebrating International Yoga Day, the National Service Scheme Unit of Jain (Deemed-to-be University) in collaboration with Serenity Wellness Institute arranged yoga sessions from June 21st to 23rd at 8 AM for all faculty members and students.

This three-day workshop aimed to increase awareness about yoga as an ancient discipline and to honour the physical and spiritual strength of yoga. While Mr. Joseph E T, a qualified yoga trainer, addressed the 'Use of Yoga' and the 'Importance of Yoga' in a human being's everyday life, Ms. Shwetha B V, the session's second trainer, educated the participants on the advantages

of Pranayama and Yoga for Women's Health. Additionally, the programme included many yoga poses such as *Surya namskara* and *Kapalbathi* that thrilled and invigorated the attendees.

According to the UGC guidelines, students from various departments shared their pictures and videos on social media sites to stimulate public engagement. Following the virtual yoga demonstrations, virtual guest talks and workshops were held to highlight and promote yoga's transformative impact on people's lives.

A lecture on 'Wonders of Yoga' was held. Ms Sumithra Radhakrishnan, a yoga practitioner, instructor, and teacher with over two decades of experience, was invited as a guest speaker and she provided insightful perspectives on the importance of yoga. Participants practised yoga asanas such as *Tadasana* and breathing practises such as *Kapalabhati* during the one-hour lecture session. Mr. Manish Eggoni, Application Developer at CES Limited and a Certified International Yoga Trainer from Sri Sri School of Yoga in Bengaluru and Faculty at Art of Living, made a presentation on the occasion. The speaker, a fitness fanatic, feels that fitness is about much more than the physical body. Mr. Manish, while sharing his expertise of yoga, throughout his discourse emphasized on:

- Importance of Yoga for mind, body and soul.
- Benefits of Yoga.
- Importance of practicing yoga for at least 15 minutes a day.
- Importance of breathing and breathing properly.
- Practicing asanas for breathing, neck, legs and back for those who work on gadgets.
- Practicing Pranayama, Asanas and Meditation for 5 minutes every day.
- Benefits of Yoga for teachers and teaching.





# How Far Can We Go?

## Faculty Development Programmes

### Highlights

**A** five-day Faculty Development Programme was conducted for a select group of 100+ faculty members from Jain (Deemed-to-be) University to orient them to teaching and learning practices of the 21st century. A maiden initiative by Vice Chancellor-led CEET team, the workshop focused on empowering our faculty colleagues as they tread collectively along the path of academic excellence. The sessions shed light on some of the pressing concerns relating to learner-centric education, learning experience design, challenges and prospects of academia-industry interface, curriculum

development initiatives, etc. The speakers and resource persons included a rich mix of 135 eminent academic and industrial professionals who shared their views and insights with the help of formal presentations and also held the audience with engaging conversations.

The five day FDP workshop began with the accumulated wisdom of Dr. Chen-Raj Roychand, Chancellor, Jain (Deemed-to-be University). After the anecdotal glimpses of his personal journey echoing an unflinching spirit of valour and optimism, Prof. Raj Singh, Vice Chancellor, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) came forward

to lead the march. The statement of his illumined vision immediately unleashed a soaring jet of hope, energy and aspiration. A stage just perfect was set by the core leadership team. Breathing life into this endeavour were concerted efforts on part of Dr. Shradha Kanwar and Dr. Sujay Nair, (the two revered members of the CEET team) who delicately weaved together strands of fresh ideas and beautiful imagination to smoothen the on setting journey along the uncharted path of educational excellence. The environment around was brimming with warmth and euphoria and a learning experience, joyful and memorable for all, was in the offing.





educators across the globe are currently grappling with strategies to innovate and adapt themselves to diverse roles in relation to differentiated groups of learners and other key stakeholders. In the brave new world where emotional intelligence and smart social skills hold the key to coping with the dynamics, development of self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-love continue to remain fundamental. Drawing on psychotherapist Eric Berne's classic ego state model of behavioural diagnosis the twin sessions unlocked finer shades of human emotions revealing their varied manifestations into patterns of observable behaviour in humans. While role plays and interactions gave way to an uninterrupted flow of perspectives, gentle sprinkling of subtle humour and differing expressions broadened the scope of discussions making the exchanges more lively, refined and, most importantly, relevant. The detailed questionnaire-based self-evaluation exercise brought the attendees in secret communion with their inner selves. When the

session concluded for the day, each heart was still resounding with whispers of "Am I ok?"

The days following ran into meticulously planned morning and afternoon sessions that threw the spotlight directly on critical concerns of outcome-based education, learning experience design, challenges and prospects of academia-industry interface, curriculum development initiatives and the like. Experts that included academic and industrial professionals shared their views, insights and practices with the help of formal presentations and held the audience with engaging conversations. The learning sessions were intel-

ligently inter-spaced with brain teasers, mental exercises, quiz, puzzles and treasure hunt games.

The intellectual fillers and boosters like info graphic representation of ideas, learning portfolio uploads, sketches of one's cherished avatar or twinning with newly found buddies were meant to fizzle out even the slightest monotony and fatigue. The creative and collaborative assignments ensured co-creation of knowledge in myriad fun-filled ways. Some initial grumblings did arise on account of short assignment deadlines and daily demands of real time task submissions. However, the feeble utterances were soon lost within the folds of new explorations and discoveries. Knowing begets understanding and an enlightened understanding builds mutual trust and empathy. With a view to sprouting the tender seeds of empathy and care among teachers an open debate on the fourth day made select faculty participants wear the hats of enraged and engaged groups of students to approach and uphold the perceived classroom realities from the conformist and rebellious positions respectively. The unique initiative was the attraction of the day wherein the thinking minds battled giving vent to perceived beliefs, strengths, attainments, challenges, frustrations, anguish and hurt-all from the students' standpoint. The whole exercise triggered serious rethinking on alternatives to convert walled classrooms into open and inclusive learning spaces. In battles of intellect where ideas are put to hard trials and assumptions remain contested, internal churnings often herald new beginnings. The short five day programme tour concluded in showers of smiles with mutual thanks giving and shared expression of gratitude. When purity of purpose, sincere effort and collective inner resilience converge human initiatives become empowering and assume the essence and character of true satsang (akin to the Chancellor's celebrated descriptive used at commencement of the workshop), the event is bound to vibrate in higher frequencies, with the resonance feeling divine.

A trail of serious yet adventurous academic pursuits followed post the introductory session. From casual warm up movements of fingers and wrists to deep lessons on the science and art of unlearning, the flavourful and delectable knowledge offerings at every stage were indeed too hard to resist. Heart of the workshop being master class themed I'm ok, I'm Ok, You're Ok curated by Vice Chancellor spanned across two consecutive days delving on the critical component of mind management.

Confronted with an intensely complex and ambiguous educational landscape,

# INCLUSIVITY AND DIMENSIONS OF EXCLUSION

**J**ain (Deemed-to-be University), School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Interior Design, Department of English and Economics, Student Welfare Committee and sc/st Cell in collaboration with Department of Kannada and Culture (GoK) K. S. Narasimhaswamy Trust (R) conducted a Multidisciplinary and Multilingual Online International Conference on 'Inclusivity And Dimensions of Exclusion'.

About 400 participants attended the conference along with many academicians from JAIN and other Universities, including the Registrar of Jain (Deemed-to-be University) Dr. N V H Krishnan and the Conference Keynote Speaker Dr. Abraham Francis, Associate Professor & Head, Social Work, and Human Services College of Arts, Society, and Education (CASE), in the Division of Tropical Environments and Societies (DTES), James Cook University, Australia. The inaugural session was also attended by Major Dr. Rekha Sinha and Conference Coordinators Dr. Mekhala Venkatesh (Head-Department of English-UG & PG, Coordinator-Research Publications, SC/ST Cell, SHSS) and Dr. Jennifer Fernandes (Asst. Professor, Dept. of Economics, Student Welfare Officer, SHSS).

Keeping with traditions, the inaugural session of the conference began with a melodious rendition of the state anthem followed by a welcome note by Major Dr. Rekha Sinha, during which she quoted

Lisa Friedman's famous line from her book 'Removing The Stumbling Block', *"Inclusion is a mindset, it is a way of thinking. It is not a program that we run in a classroom in our school or a favour we do for someone. Inclusion is who we are. It is who we must strive to be."*

The Director stated that the theme of the conference was based on our Founder Chairman, Chenraj Roychand's vision and mission for the Jain Group of Institutions, which is to bring together people with diverse expertise across a range of disciplines to foster greater awareness and empathy to assist the marginalised in their journey toward the mainstream.

Welcoming all the participants, delegates, paper presenters on behalf of the hosts was Dr. N V H Krishnan, Registrar of Jain (Deemed-to-be University). Addressing the gathering, Dr. N V H Krishnan briefly introduced the university, stating that JAIN is a multi-disciplinary university, including streams in engineering & technology, science, humanities and social sciences, commerce, management & design. The university is known for entrepreneurship, sports, high quality academics, student centric learning and research. The Registrar also highlighted the dedicated research centers for Nanotechnology, Fire and Combustion, TBI, incubators for 86 enterprises, among others.

The conference was organised collaboratively by the 11 departments of

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, comprising English, Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Journalism, Interior Design, Hindi, Sanskrit, Kannada, Performing Arts and Library Sciences to provide a platform for a free expression of views on Inclusivity and the Dimensions which deliberately exclude others from participation.

Dr. Abraham Francis elaborated on the need for inclusivity in treatment of fellow human beings. He went on to prove his claim with several examples and said that, "The process of 'Othering' has become increasingly visible in contemporary cultural spaces, and has resulted in widespread discrimination on the basis of race, gender, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and other factors." As an example, he cited that throughout history, black people have been viewed as the 'other'. This process of 'othering' black people continues in countries like America, sparking widespread resistance. Women are subjected to 'othering' at work and in other social settings; it may even include ostracisation of pupils who earn poor grades. Dr. Abraham offered suggestions on how we may all be more attentive and watchful of our unconscious bias toward racial discrimination and other types of prejudice that contribute to collective exclusion.

The session concluded with paper presentations by more than 65 participants and a vote of thanks by the conference coordinator Dr. Mekhala Venkatesh.

# World Environment DAY 2021

In commemoration of World Environment Day, on June 5, 2021, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) organised a series of virtual events such as poster design, slogan writing, webinars and other activities to raise awareness about the United Nations Decade of Action on Climate Change and other significant environmental and sustainable living issues.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need to identify, develop, and implement sustainable development models that promote better environmental stewardship and contribute to the establishment of healthier and happier communities. Emphasising the significance of sustainable growth and caring for the environment, JAIN created various virtual occasions to reiterate the significance of the day.

A webinar titled 'Clean the Earth - Create a Green Earth' saw an interesting and interactive discussion on a variety of environmental challenges. Numerous posters and visual representations, which served as the webinar's centrepiece, provided information on water pollution, soil contamination, radioactive soil contamination, deforestation, plastic accumulation and endangered species. Students exhibited posters and slogans such as 'It is not yours, it is not mine. It is a property of ours. Therefore, protect your mother who feeds you!', 'The unseen murderer - radioactive pollution!', 'Stop pollution immediately; you're making the air sick!', 'We only have one Earth; save it!', and so on. The webinar was designed to educate participants on ecological issues affecting Earth's atmosphere, as well as to promote awareness about the numerous ways in which each individual can contribute to a more environmentally friendly world. Over 75 students and faculty members participated in the webinar.

The World Environment Day, also known as People's Day, was observed to raise awareness about the importance of ecosystem restoration. A program was organised to increase awareness regarding environmental issues resulting from

the pandemic and encouraged sustainable development in a variety of ways.

Amid the continued pandemic, students planted seedlings, cleaned up litter near lakes, encouraged alternatives to plastic, and created a compost pile from biodegradable rubbish, all in agreement with COVID guidelines. Students also made motivational posters and short videos promoting appropriate mask disposal, paper recycling and garbage disposal to prevent deforestation, rising global temperatures and pollution. Posters and videos were shared on social media to educate people about the importance of our natural environment and to motivate them to take action in their local areas.



# Smart Villages for Sustainable Rural Development

**A**n international conference on 'Building Smart Villages for Sustainable Rural Development' was organised by the Department of Economics, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) in collaboration with the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore.

Aimed at bringing creative and sustainable solutions to the challenges plaguing rural areas such as inadequate sanitation, lack of healthcare facilities, quality education and skill sets, it attempted to infuse rural development with a holistic perspective. Academicians, researchers, students, and enthusiastic learners were invited to attend the conference, which featured presentations by expert delegates on a variety of issues related to sustainability and the economic development of smart towns.

The conference began with an invocation song and a dance performance by postgraduate students, followed by a welcome speech and inaugural session by the faculty members of the Department of Economics, Jain (Deemed-to-be University).

Dr. Xavier V. K., Head of Department, JJain (Deemed-to-be University) began the session by highlighting some of the initiatives taken toward sustainability. He also gave relevant information on several of the 17 sustainable goals (as proposed by UN members as part of Agenda 2030).

Dr. Mathew Chandrankunnel who delivered the felicitation address asserted that Asians and Africans must take the initiative to organise an Afro-Asian colloquium to share knowledge about existing challenges and solutions, therefore promoting awareness and assisting in the development of sustainable smart communities.



Prof. Dr. Masood Ahmed, President of the All India Management Schools Association in Hyderabad, was the keynote speaker at the conference. He is a management professor, author and director of Menco schools. He highlighted fundamental demographic variables and availability to public facilities while discussing the urban-rural difference. "According to world average data from 195 nations, 15 per cent of the world's population lives in rural regions, while in India, the figure is closer to 65 per cent. If the government is successful in providing clean, safe, and hygienic drinking water to the whole community, 50 per cent of communicable illnesses may be avoided," the speaker emphasised. He mentioned that scholars play a critical role in bridging the urban-rural divide by introducing alternatives.

Dr. Sherif Mohammed, another keynote speaker at the conference, expressed that building smart villages for sustainable rural development is a critical issue that must be addressed. Diverse perspectives and ideas must be developed to aid in the analysis of the best potential solutions to the challenges that exist in rural regions, as well as to give valuable information to the authorities charged with developing sustainable models, he said.



Dr. Manivanan Saman and Dr. Riyas Mohammed, both prominent intellectuals from Malaysia, served as additional keynote speakers for the conference, and their insightful remarks brought the first session to a close.

The second part of the conference was a technical session moderated by the teaching faculty of the Department of Economics, Jain (Deemed-to-be University). It began with a presentation on rural development by Dr. Kenneth Ngalamika, a management consultant of Kenmika Management and Consultancy Services in Zambia. He focused primarily on ten nations in sub-Saharan Africa and, later, on Zambia.

He discussed how, as a result of industrialisation in the 1800s, migration

from rural to urban regions turned metropolitan areas into modern cities but left rural areas underdeveloped. Urban-rural connections will aid in resolving the aforementioned issue, he opined. While Zambia is abundant in natural regions, rural areas face challenges such as lack of healthcare infrastructure and facilities and issues such as lack of skilled workforce, child marriage, and a lack of access to safe drinking water. He concluded by offering some solutions to the issues raised before. "A greater emphasis must be placed on agricultural development (such as irrigation and drinking water pumps) in order to alleviate poverty; registered SHGs - Zambia Cooperatives must be able to obtain financing in order to assist people in improving their standard of living; and smart education and electricity must be provided, among other things,"

concluded the speaker. Following the presentation from Dr. Kenneth Ngalamika, the participants were given ten minutes each to present their papers. The research papers addressed issues such as village ecosystems, health care infrastructure, alternative energy, demographic engagement, village poverty and livelihood, water conservation, watershed and waste management, SHG and community enhancement, dairy farming, ecological conservation, floriculture, nutrition enhancement, organic farming, poultry farming, rural development, sericulture, smart housing, smart lighting, smart education, sustainable construction, sustainable development, village infrastructure and others.

# Effective Online Teaching



**D**epartment of English, School of Commerce, School of Computer Science and IT, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) organized a 5-Day Online Faculty Development Programme on 'Effective Online Teaching Techniques in Literature and Language' from 19-23 April 2021.

Day 1 began with a formal welcome address by the Head of the Department of English. Dr. Dinesh Nilkant, Director, School of Commerce, inaugurated the Faculty Development Programme by motivating the participants towards the growing need of Digital and Technical Literacy in the present times.

Ms. Devishree Mohapatra, Lecturer, Gunupur College, Odisha, directed the workshop on *The Importance of a Digital Approach in Teaching*. Ms. Devishree Mohapatra promoted an in-depth discussion of instructional strategies and tools used in the teaching of language and literature. She emphasised the importance of poetry recitation by including audio clips into the online classroom.

According to her, language teachers could use technological tools as teaching aids, whether to capture students' attention or to make the session more engaging; it is worthwhile to invest time in learning how to use technology to create

successful lesson plans and content delivery. Several of the tools she suggested were slideshows, mind maps and video editors. She also emphasised the need for incorporating modifications into the classroom to aid student comprehension. Her mentimeter was a hit with the audience, receiving an enormous response.

Ms. Christi Peter, Assistant Professor, Adhiyamaan College of Arts and Science - Krishnagiri, delivered a lecture on the *Quintessence of Online Teaching* on Day 2 of the programme. Ms. Christi Peters discussed the many obstacles that instructors encounter when teaching online in light of the current pandemic crisis. She insisted on both instructors and pupils adhering to the 'netiquette' and discussed online learning methods and also addressed teaching models that would help teachers to increase their efficiency when teaching online.

Dr. Sheelpa Sweety, Assistant Professor, K.R. Mangalam University, Gurgaon, presided over Day 3 of the workshop, during which she discussed the *Challenges and Strategies for Online Language Teaching*. The Professor discussed the significant paradigm change in teaching and learning that academia is being compelled to make in response to the worldwide epidemic. She discussed different 'netiquette' rules that students and teachers should observe and emphasised the necessity of creating a personal teaching style. She provided invaluable insight into effective teaching approaches that take into account both the student's and teacher's psychological makeup. On Day 4, Ms. Madhurima Nargis, Assistant Professor and Head of the English Department at Pandaveswar College in West Bengal, presented her views on *Identifying Multimodal Strategies in Virtual Teaching*.

Ms. Madhurima discussed synchronous and asynchronous teaching tools, multimodal teaching, and the VARK model of teaching, emphasising the need for efficient methods of instruction. She discussed the VARK model's numerous facets of visual, auditory, reading, writing, and kinesthetic learning. She addressed how this model might be incorporated into online platforms that would enable effective learning in the face of this pandemic. Prof. Shivalingaswamy, Chairman and Professor, Department of Studies and Research in English, Tumkur University, Tumkur, presided over the workshop's last day. This final session of the FDP emphasised the idea that regardless of whether lessons are conducted online or offline, a teacher's objectives would remain the same.

Prof. Shivalingaswamy spoke extensively about how professors who have taught in the arts and humanities departments for an extended period of time must overcome their technophobia in ways that align with the next generation. He emphasised the importance of learning as a two-way street. While teachers exercise substantial influence over the learning process, students should also exercise some accountability during the process. He emphasised to the attendees that teaching is a 'performance' and that, while online technologies can serve as props, the actor and the delivery are more important in the process of teaching.

The five-day Faculty Development Programme concluded on 23 April with the vote of thanks by a faculty member on behalf of the Organising Committee and the Departments of English, Languages, School of Commerce, and School of Computer Science and Information Technology at Jain (Deemed-to-be University).

# In Pursuit of Naadamrutha

| APARNA SHIVAPURA

**V**IDWAT RANJANI S is a multi-faceted youth icon, paving the way in MUSICOLOGY and CLASSICAL CARNATIC MUSIC with innovation and passion.

It takes courage, passion and commitment to do what she does, with so much ease and effervescence. The roles are many, but they are integrated into her ecosystem, seamlessly, as she carves out a unique space in the world of Carnatic Classical Music.

I weave out a long thread, stringing pearls of achievement from Ranjani's experiences. These include a rare combination of being a civil engineer, a well-known and established professional anchor, a Classical Carnatic musician, a researcher pursuing Musicology and founder of the Saamadani Art Foundation, apart from being a daughter, wife and mother all rolled into one.

## Commitment to Excellence

Ranjani is committed to many projects in diverse fields, each demanding her dedication and time to the hilt. She is driving each one of them with passion, dedication and commitment to excellence. The desire to achieve substantial outcomes is high, even so that it makes the investment of time, quality and creativity seem natural and free from strains!

"From my younger days, I was naturally attracted to multiple fields of science and the arts. I pursued Engineering and Classical Music in parallel, in addition to learning the know-hows of professional anchoring. I do not remember thinking that I was multitasking in fact, I thought there was lots more to do and very little



time. This kept me going, of course with the support and encouragement of my family," she says.

## Music, Musician, Musical Notes

As a child, she learned Carnatic music from Rajamma Keshava Murthy and under the tutelage of Ganakalabhushna Shri R K Padmanabha, she found herself completely transformed. Her tutelage under the great Shri Padmanabha enabled her to build a more comprehensive outlook and develop innovative goals in the genre.

This gifted artiste is thankful for the deep-impacting role played by her musical mentor Shri R K Padmanabha. She says her musical horizons, knowledge of music, clarity in the genre and expertise has been completely chiselled by her guru.

An experience that covers diverse platforms, she has performed at various sabhas, concerts and events, over the last decade. She has performed at prestigious platforms like Karnataka Ganakala Parishat, B. V. Jagadish Youth Music Festival, Hampi Utsav, Dasara celebration at



BIAL, Kadambotsava, at various programs organised by the Kannada and Culture Department, Govt. of Karnataka.

Ranjani has also carved a niche as a Narrative Presenter of Musicology, thanks to her diverse experience in Musicology. She has presented lecture-demonstrations on various topics like Musical aspects of DVG, *Anthahpura Geethegalu*, Beauty of Natabhairavi Janya Raagas, elucidating Vivaadi Raagas through Dixithar's compositions, Evolution of Mela System and more, for Indian and International artists. This is an uncommon and unusual professional line to pursue, as it is academically challenging and there is a mandate to be technically sound, which, of course, she has aced with elan!

"Pursuing Musicology is as important as performing itself or perhaps, even more, because there is a great need for more people to learn, experience and be impacted by the values of Classical Music which is our heritage," she says.

### Public Persona

A popular and admired face on Chandana, the flagship Kannada television channel of Doordarshan, she believes television also played a significant role in giving her acceptance and recognition. She has donned many mantles as a successful news presenter, a renowned anchor and



RJ, while also being an established voice artist and a public anchor for live events. She has successfully tried her hand at music composition and creative writing.

Anchoring, presenting and leading public shows lend their own shade to nurturing personality, this multifaceted artist believes. Her ability to articulate complex concepts, in an endearing and attractive manner, her confidence in communicating to large anonymous and learned audiences significantly enhanced this public role. Today, she is an established public persona and there is no looking back!

### Continual Learning & Development

Ranjani strongly believes and advocates the process of continual learning. A research scholar at Jain (Deemed-to-be University) she feels completely transformed and challenged, after taking up research. She is grateful for the tremendous support and encouragement

from her mentors at Jain (Deemed-to-be University) and believes it is one of her best decisions, in furthering her education here. The research program she believes will build her technical expertise, enhance the depth of her knowledge and take her ahead in this endeavour.

### Building a Legacy

This versatile musician endorses the view that Classical music must reach a greater number of people, especially our youth. Just as students get mandatorily exposed to diverse subjects, in foundational years, they should be familiarized with our classical music heritage. Her vision surrounds this concept that music should be introduced in school as part of general learning.

This led Ranjani to conceptualise the SAAMADAANI ART FOUNDATION – a platform to nurture musicians and build music connoisseurs in future. SAAMADAANI aims to rejuvenate the cultural dissipation by introducing music across educational institutions. The focus is to introduce music as a common subject at schools, complementing the existing music curriculum. The foundation also partners and collaborates with artists of varied fields.

One interesting aspect of the Saamadani Program is to ensure every student has a base-level knowledge about the diverse musical forms of the country. "A strong sense of accountability rests in my heart, as it should, with artists like us. A sense of purpose guides me and I believe that we should create a viable platform for the next-generation to become qualitative musicians, performers, critics and audiences," says Ranjani.

Ranjani is carving out the future with single-minded devotion. "I am perhaps at the tip of the iceberg," she says with humility. Truly our country needs artists, scholars and youth icons like her, to make giant strides in their respective fields, while also building a legacy for the generations to come.







# Exploring The Contours Of Freedom

| SHWETHA H C

**W**e have a natural tendency to conceptualise independence as an emancipatory ideal—and with reason. However, what exactly does the term ‘independence’ entail? While we have different definitions for the word, including freedom, liberty, self-sufficiency, self-determination, individualism, neutrality among others, in reality the notions of freedom are infinite. While some parts of the globe allow for freedom of self-expression and freedom of speech and opinion, in some places such rights are restricted even to this day. When controlled and repressed, people rebel. This outcome, projected in various ways can be referred to as “freedom”. Throughout history, freedom has meant a great deal to humankind.

Independence signifies diverse things to diverse people, thus making it a multidimensional experience. While for a few, freedom may mean the right to publicly express their distinct views, for others it may mean the opportunity to vote for particular ideas or persons that best reflect their beliefs.

Independence might appear to many in India, even among its admirers, as a step into the unknown or might seem to be a far-off concept. There remain many unresolved questions which only add to its vibrancy. What does independence imply in today’s globalized world? What type of civilization has India developed into? How is it manifesting itself? It is fair to say that many such questions are either not yet satisfactorily addressed, or remain unanswered. To take a step further, freedom cannot be pigeonholed or handed down to the next generation in a prefabricated form. Each

generation must recreate freedom in light of its unique circumstances.

While Independence day undoubtedly evokes patriotic feelings, the interpretation of independence has been modified and nurtured over the years, which explains why we are confronted with our own flaws and the distance that we must travel in order to reach an ideal state of being, as defined by our Constitution.

For many individuals, Independence Day is just another holiday. We are appreciative of the holiday itself, rather than the event and its significance. And, regardless of how patriotic we profess to be, freedom is often simply a notion with some names, dates, locations struggles, and grainy black-and-white photos right out of the history textbooks. But it is essential to remember that Independence Day implies much more than the celebrations; it symbolises society’s constant fight to gain and retain independence, and the struggle does not stop today and forever.

India’s most important saffron, white and green, commemorates the signing of the official proclamation of Independence. While we gear up to celebrate the occasion of *Azaadi ka Amruth Mahotsav* (75 years of freedom), our notions of liberty and responsibility have been put to test like no other year in the past, with the arrival of the coronavirus epidemic.

***With that being said, let us reach out to individuals from all walks of life to unravel their perceptions of freedom and how their perceptions have been questioned, altered or reinforced.***



Throughout their lives, women and girls are trained to ignore, and submit to the masculine gaze. The stare of a man is highly distressing. I am constantly worried about how a random male might judge me for wearing a sleeveless dress - be it on the metro, bus, or even at my work-place. Being forced to dress in accordance with the expectations and desires of complete strangers is distressing and tiring. On a personal level, and desires freedom from male gaze and the ability to wear whatever and however I please. As a writer, I'm looking forward to reading, creating and seeing independent female characters in novels and films, who don't need to be saved by the male protagonist, or worse, who don't need to be 'told' by a man that she can save herself. A story's most independent female character ends up depending on the male character, even if just to 'help' her recognise she is more than enough. Male characters' 'saviour' complex must end, in literature, cinema and in reality.

**Ms. Meghana Sudhindra, Writer, Bengaluru**

People around us quickly become offended. Hundreds of citizen organisations are standing by to blacklist you for the joke you cracked. Prior to creating a joke, I must apply many layers of filters, anticipating the kind of criticism I may encounter with reference to religion, politics among others. At times, it seems as though we can only create humor about a table and a chair, and I'm always worrying whether that would insult a carpenter. This entire process of filtering out makes me feel like I'm losing touch with my inner artist. Last year, when my parody of Yash went viral, his fans were furious. As an actor, I have worked with Yash, and in fact, he spoke highly of my acting skills when we were shooting a film together. But fans weren't interested in all that. They threatened me with murder and subjected my wife to sexual harassment. This incident demoralized me and so I decided to retire from humor in Kannada. Now, I want to choose my audience, mainly, those who know how to take criticism with an open mind. It would be great if I didn't have to censor my jokes. Freedom of Expression is freedom to me.

**Mr. Sudarshan Rangaprasad, Standup comedian, Bengaluru**



I haven't embraced or sat close to my family members in over a year. Since the onset of COVID, life has been defined by layers of clothes and keeping distance. Doctors are the most susceptible to infection and I have been living separately. While technology enables us to connect with our loved ones, nothing can replace a warm embrace from your husband or children at the end of a long day. Numerous seminars conducted offline that helped us learn new scientific findings are no longer available to the doctor fraternity and thousands of medical students. Medical students, who were meant to venture out, have been locked up in COVID care hospitals for almost a year, performing the same tasks over and over again. Yes, the pandemic responsibility is critical, but what about the responsibilities I have as a mother, daughter and wife? Each time I deliver a baby in the maternity ward, I pray for a fresh world devoid of the pandemic.

**Dr. Smitha AR, OBGYN, Victoria Hospital, Bengaluru**



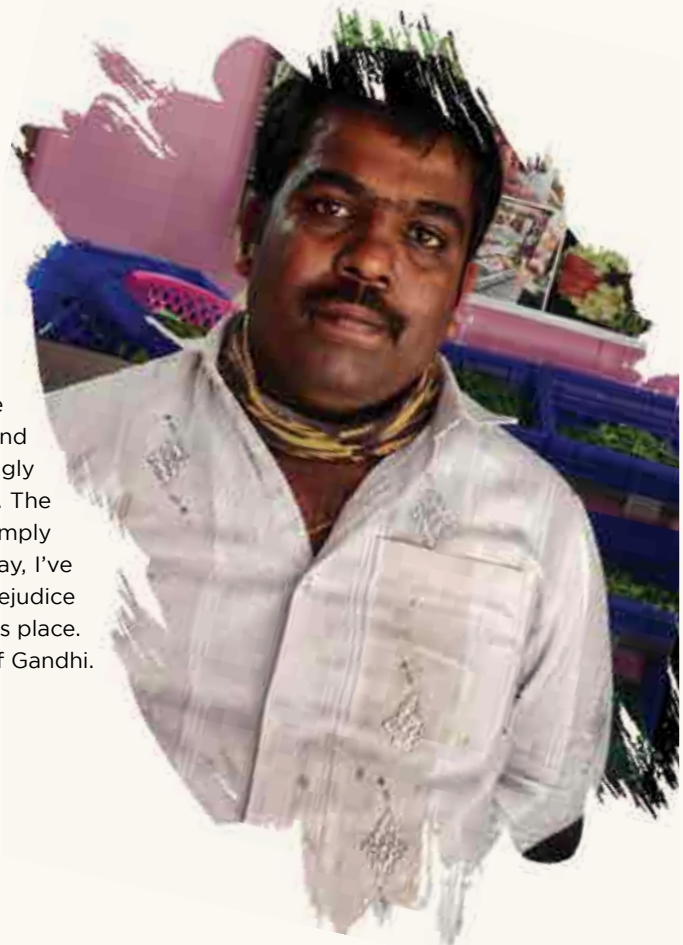


I was born legally blind. Simple tasks like reading the time of the day, from a watch or clock, using the washroom in an unfamiliar place, crossing the road needs me to rely on others. I went to the restroom all by myself for the first time only at the age of ten. There were times during my childhood when I had to delay urinating for hours because there was no one to take me to the restroom. I used to feel envious of people who could accomplish simple tasks like crossing the street on their own without assistance. As I grew older, I channeled my envy into self-empathy and began performing little household tasks on my own. Songs infused my mind with colour. And so I began singing. When people started paying me for my singing, I realised it could be my meal ticket. Today, I am able to make enough money to support myself and my blind husband by singing on the streets. We are always there for one another, but we have realised that self-reliance is the ultimate freedom, and it is only a chimera for people like us.

**Ms. Shanta, Blind woman, Bengaluru**

I migrated to Bengaluru from my native hamlet near Tumakuru 15 years ago to start a new life. As youngsters, we were frequently told that in big cities, we could always find a way to earn money. When I moved to Bengaluru, the city greeted me with open arms. With a little investment, I purchased a cart and began selling vegetables for a living. After a few months, I become increasingly aware of the social and economic discrimination I was being subjected to. The way some customers treat us and how we are constantly targeted by cops simply because we are from the lowest socioeconomic strata astounded me. Today, I've come to terms with it. True liberty is freeing oneself from the constraints of prejudice - both social and economic - and being able to construct a respectful life in its place. Consider all jobs equally. That is when MK will become a reality. Ramarajya of Gandhi.


**Mr. Naveen Kumar M V, Vegetable vendor, Bengaluru**



Is it possible to get rid of the suffocating traffic of Bengaluru? If yes, then that is what I am hoping for. We auto drivers are easy targets of jokes about how we disregard traffic signals and fill the tiniest 'traffic Tetris'. However, over the last few years, as the cost of gas and living has increased, our earnings have decreased substantially. We do not earn as much money as we did five years ago. The lockdown imposed by COVID-19 compelled my best buddy to flee the city and return to his native town. He is one of the hundreds of car drivers who have fled the city unable to pay rent or, worse, afford food. The greater the number of customers we serve, the more money we earn. However, if we are trapped in traffic for hours, how are we going to earn enough money to feed the hungry mouths waiting for us when we get home?

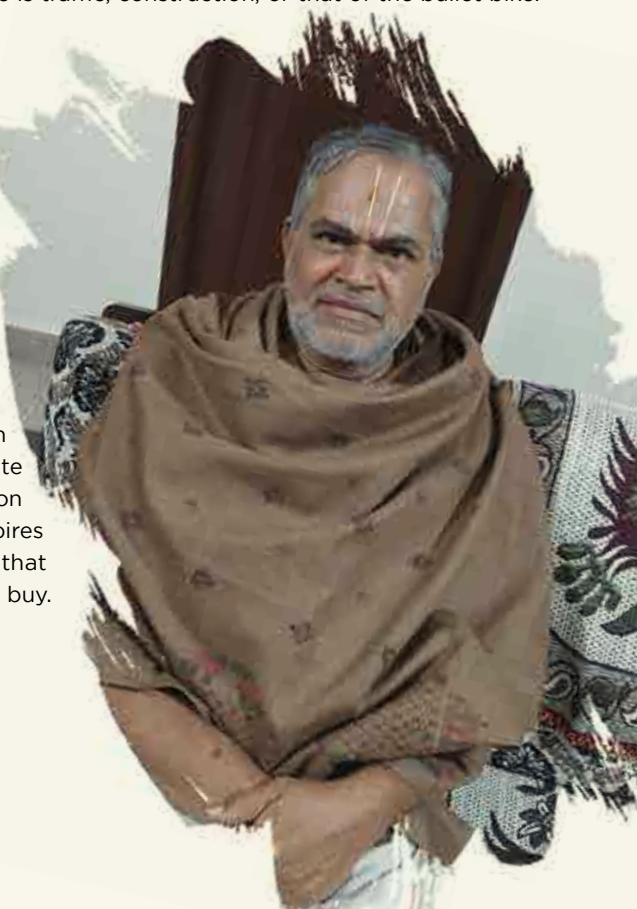
**Mr. Nagaraj KS, Auto-rickshaw driver, Bengaluru**






I came to Bengaluru in 2011 to pursue a Master's degree. That was my first experience of freedom -- streets free from gun-wielding jawans and gunshots, and youngsters gathered to party, rather than to hurl stones. The sole source of loud noise was from a construction site nearby. Initially, I used to stand near the building site, simply to get a sense of the mayhem at home. As a Kashmiri Muslim, you are an easy target for practically everything. I am stereotyped as a result of my opinions on Azadi. Even those who have had little contact with me have an opinion on my assessment of Azadi. At first, I attempted to disassociate myself from my name and identity. I'm now wearing it on my sleeves. Frequently mocked and teased by classmates, I, as someone who has lived in Kashmir for years under the AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act), along with my fellow Kashmiris, desire Azadi from being stigmatised for no reason. Many believe that young Kashmiris desire Kashmir's incorporation with Pakistan. To be honest, we are all aware that it is akin to slipping into one trap after another. I want Kashmir to be another Bengaluru, where people can stroll freely and the source of noise is traffic, construction, or that of the bullet bike.

**Mr. Tanveer, Kashmir**



As a priest, I interact with hundreds of individuals each day who come to the temple seeking solutions to trivial concerns. I remind them that the ultimate solution to all of life's challenges is to search deep within and find the solution independently. People have developed an insatiable appetite for materialism as a result of their attachment to a showy lifestyle. Freeing one's mind from such materialistic aspirations and learning to be content with little or nothing will liberate man from all chains. As Buddha states, desire is the source of all misery. A person who has one automobile desires to own two, and a man who owns two houses aspires to possess four. The epidemic serves as a reminder to all those who believe that money is the panacea for all problems, that there are things that money cannot buy.

**Mr. Govind Rajan, Priest, Mysore**



The ability to take a day off from work without having to worry about finances is what freedom is for me. I've worked for someone else my entire life and I'm also responsible for my own household chores. I've worked in several households for over eight years and have barely anything left in my savings account. The peanuts I earn are used to provide for my family, whose desires never seem to quench. And I don't hold it against them. Some of my little savings are used for my husband's alcohol. My family and I can only afford one or two new clothes a year, despite the fact that I work very hard. I am growing old and am unable to perform the same amount of work that I was able to, a few years ago. But I can't seem to stop myself. Money, in my opinion, represents freedom. To have so much money that I don't have to work for even a single day would be a dream come true.

**Ms. Basamma, a native of Gangavathi Taluk in Koppal District, who is working in Bengaluru as a housemaid**



We gained independence from the British Raj in 1947. However, many in the lower strata of society are yet to taste 'liberty.' And by freedom, I mean just existing alongside other members of society. From revenge rapes to getting beaten up for following a basic ritual like riding a horse during an upper-caste wedding ceremony, little has changed for Dalits. Casteism is sometimes portrayed as a problem of the lower caste, while it is, in reality, a fault of those who practise it. Even now, many people avoid touching and interacting with Dalits. The recent instance of a Dalit MLA being denied entry to a hamlet in Gollarahatti village exemplifies how some of us are still living in the pre-independence period. When so many people continue to suffer from slavery, prejudice and casteism, how can we ever claim to be independent?

**Mr. Hulikunte Murthy, Dalit activist, Hulikunte**

Freedom for me means 'freedom from fears'. The expression has a very specific connotation. Freedom from fear can have profound psychological impact. Without an appreciation for the value of freedom from fear, the fulfillment of several human rights is threatened. Fear is a by product of weakness, and also the cause of vulnerability in rare cases. And inequality, in all its manifestations, makes us feel increasingly vulnerable. In the society we live, people fear being treated differently everyday based on their caste identity, skin colour, beliefs, sexual orientation and also gender identity. In fact this fear poses a threat to the democratic principles we believe in as a country. The day when every citizen of my country is free from the fear of discrimination and inequality, is when I would like to believe that we have achieved freedom.

**Mr. Ravi D Channannavar, IPS Officer**



Born and brought up in Arunachal Pradesh, I have spent over 10 years in Bangalore.

Initially, even my closest friends used to address me by racist names and I used to take it all with a pinch of salt. Over the years, we all grew up and they realised how wrong that was. In fact, they taught me not to accept or encourage racism. They stood by me when random people called me names. One of my favourite moments of freedom was when they accepted me as one of them. I finally started feeling like I belong here. As a photographer, I get to travel to so many places. Meeting new people has helped me understand their cultures and their life experiences, which helps me realise that deep down we are all the same. If you ask me, co-existence is the ultimate key to freedom.

**Mr. Ashish Gupta, Photographer, Arunachal Pradesh**





The irony is that I don't have the time to think or talk about freedom, because of my hectic work schedule. We are indoctrinated to believe that money, progress and success can liberate us but in reality we become more and more entrenched into 'corporate slavery'. To make matters worse, we are conditioned to believe that at least a two-day vacation is the ultimate passport to freedom. I believe that the anticipation of that vacation is more enjoyable and liberating than the actual journey. Freedom does not imply lack of responsibilities; rather, it is the ability to structure one's life around them. Constraints, of course, are an inherent aspect of life for everyone. Some are obligated to their families while others, to their employment. The ability to accomplish your life's mission despite these restrictions is what freedom is all about.

**Mr. Vasuki Raghavan, I-T employee, Bengaluru**

Freedom brings with it, its own responsibility. For me freedom means time. Freedom it is - where to spend your time, how to spend your time and choosing who to spend your time with. Having liberty is about being clear about what you want to do with your time to create the bigger and better future you want for yourself. The great thing about being able to spend time freely is that it makes you more conscious of your time, helps you appreciate it and slow down and enjoy the complete life experience. You'll have the freedom to spend more time at work doing what you love, while also enjoying the time you have at home to do things you like, as well as spending time with the people you care about. As a homemaker and a budding entrepreneur, I've never been constrained by domestic rules or limits. I believe that no one could have forced this on me if I didn't choose it myself.

**Ms. Sahana Sreekant, Entrepreneur, Mangaluru**



On July 2, 2009, the Delhi High Court decriminalised LGBTQ and acknowledged us as the 'third gender' aka human beings. Personally, that feels like Independence Day. As a community, we have gone through a lot. But, all our struggles seemed worthwhile after the judgment. I believe that a society may claim to be free only when it is free from prejudice, violence and exploitation. For people like us, every day is a new struggle. We wake up and have a new issue in front of us. The day we can all wake up as 'socially inclusive' and realise we don't have to struggle anymore for basics is the day, I think, my community will finally be able to define freedom.

**Akkai Padmashali, Transgender activist, Bengaluru**





Freedom is an unadulterated emotion for me. Being in a space where I can enjoy any and every kind of emotion without fearing society defines my personal freedom. As human beings, we are subjected to a variety of emotions, and the human brain is constantly processing information – positive and negative. It is nearly impossible to let go of certain thoughts or emotions. My profession requires me to play a variety of characters in various states of emotional turmoil, and that takes a toll on my emotions more often than not. Liberating myself from negative emotions and letting go of pessimism that pervades our daily lives is freedom for me. Each day offers us the opportunity to be champions in our own lives: to reject negativity, respond positively to situations and control any circumstance, thereby gaining complete emotional independence. But all said and done, freedom in any sense that I can understand is a fleeting emotion. Therefore, let us abstain from attempting to capture or win it.

**Ms. Rachitha Ram, Actress, Bengaluru.**

I first experienced freedom when I moved from a restricted environment to a free city - from the place where only science and bureaucracy was respected to the place where I could finally pursue art without any pressure. Freedom in the true sense translates to letting individuals be who they are and letting them do what they want. For artists, freedom is experienced differently when it is pursued as a hobby and when taken up professionally. There aren't many restrictions for hobby artists. But professionals, sometimes, may have to abide by rules of commercial aspect. Some of my favourite works are the ones that I have created during auditions. That's the only time when there is no interference from anyone and you are allowed to showcase your creativity. I'm a firm believer in 'First rule of art is no rule'. Breaking rules can help us create a masterpiece, whereas interference restricts creativity.

**Mr. Vilas Nayak, renowned Indian speed painter, Bengaluru.**



In my opinion, absolute freedom is not good. To be free is to be in absolute accord with responsibilities. Freedom without responsibility is no freedom at all. Freedom and responsibility go together. Freedom without responsibility is akin to anarchy and progressively degrades the community-binding ideals that connect us as a civilised society. If you are to enjoy freedom, you will have to use it responsibly. As an individual, freedom for me is to be free from all illegal activity and to live within the framework of the legal system.

**Mr. Santosh Hegde, Former judge - Supreme Court, former Solicitor General and Lokayukta, Bengaluru**



# DIVING INTO THE HUES OF THE SEA

| SHUBHA SRIKANTH

**F**abrianoinAcquarello, the International Watercolour Convention held in the Italian city of Fabriano, attracts watercolour artists from across the world. The four-day annual event, set amidst the pristine Italian countryside, is the dream destination of every watercolour artist worth his salt.

The concluding day of the 2019 edition saw something unprecedented; the organising committee made an impromptu decision to offer a particular artist a spot on the stage to make a demonstration. This opportunity, reserved for master artists, is planned well ahead of the convention. Since the event was held atop a hill, the artist was given just enough time to run down to his cabin and

collect his paraphernalia. He performed on stage to the accompaniment of a live band, and with eight cameras streaming his performance live to countries all over the world. Thousands of aficionados, artists, art lovers and critics viewed the demo on large screens hoisted at the venue. The artist was applauded for his technique, speed and mastery.

Pune-based Prafull Hudekar is the artist in question who received this rare honour at Fabriano. "That was indeed a proud moment for me and an experience I will never forget," Prafull recalls fondly. Mind you this was only his second year at the convention. In a short span of three years, Prafull shot to fame in the global art scene and today he is considered



one of the finest in the genre and finds a steady flow of commissioned work from art galleries, curators and collectors. However, for Prafull the joy from this immersive, meditative experience, far outweighs the commercial dimension. Prafull discovered the Fabriano Convention in 2018 by chance because it is not a widely advertised event outside of Europe. Knowing very well the exceptionally high judging standards, Prafull submitted his painting and was selected by the jury. However, It wasn't easy to get an official invitation (from the organisers to participate in the festival) for

VISA processing. "The Italian organisers of the festival are not very forthcoming with foreign artists. But I managed to get the invitation after some coaxing and following up," explains Prafull. The next year, not only was he voluntarily invited by the organisers, but when he reached the venue, he was already well-known and recognised by his work.

"Held in the hilly countryside, close to Fabriano city, the workshop is a unique experience. Artists from around the world are invited to paint, learn and network. We lived in wooden cabins. The Italian countryside is beautiful. Amidst nature

and silence, creativity is at its best. I received a lot of appreciation for my work," says Prafull.

Owing to the pandemic, the 2021 edition, was held online and Prafull was invited as a master artist, even as thousands of artists from all over the world watched him paint. It's intriguing and fascinating to watch a painter in action. Prafull painted a turbulent seascape with ease and elan. The blank sheet enlivened as the artist worked his magic with deft strokes, blending in colours to achieve the perfect shade, depth and effect.

## Master Mariner Master Artist

Prafull has been sailing around the world the last 24 years as a Master Mariner with Anglo Eastern Ship Management. He joined the Government Merchant Navy College and as a young student he submitted a painting of a dove for a water colour competition themed 'Peace', and won the first prize. Since then he has been dabbling with water colours especially on his long voyages.

During his 'Master Mariner' course in Aberdeen, Scotland, he visited a local museum and was fascinated by the display of watercolour artworks. The sketches with their multi-layered shades and delicate strokes captured his fancy. He bought a few Daler-Rowney paints but his attempts to paint went in vain. He was convinced that without technique, he would never make any progress.

It was in 2007 that he dived a notch deeper into watercolour painting and trained under celebrated Indian artist Milind Mulick. He spent the next decade perfecting his art, when he successfully developed a few techniques of his own and then decided to go professional. He finds the works of Sanjay Desai, Praveen Karmarkar, Rajat Subhra Bandopadhyay inspirational. His work is also influenced by international artists like Alvaro Castagnet and Roberto Zangarelli.

Breaking into the highly competitive and nebulous art world is no mean task. It has come rather easily for Prafull, owing to his creativity and technical expertise. Watercolour as a medium is considered more difficult to learn and master than acrylic and oil, for two reasons: its fluidity makes it difficult to control and predict; and, its transparency makes it difficult to correct and cover up mistakes. His ease with and intuitive knowledge of the medium has carved him a niche in the highly competitive and coterised international art arena.

In all, the aesthetic experience offered by Prafull's art is a feast for the eyes. At times you take in the totality of the composition, for instance the flowers, that in a whiff makes your heart leap in sheer joy; at times your eyes rest on and move about, appreciating the many 'parts' that harmonise into a 'whole'; sometimes the sheer exuberant interplay of colour emerging powerfully capturing a palpable atmosphere; and at times it is form, the neat lines, depth and texture.





## Seascapes in Watercolour

Being a seafarer the facets of the sea are intriguing and fascinating at once for Prafull. It is a world brimming with unique vistas rarely seen by the common man. "Unless one sails deep into the oceans, one does not have the privilege of inuring oneself with those characteristics of the sea. The colours are mesmerising. The shoreline and the beach area are the only aspects of the sea that one gets to see, even in paintings. As a mariner I am privy to the textures, colours, moods and atmosphere of the sea in the far deep. That is what I have captured in my paintings and that is what I want to show the world, these secrets of the sea. I try to be as accurate as possible. Every sea around the world has its own character, beginning with its colour. For instance, the South China sea is gray water, Mediterranean is greenish-blue, while the Atlantic is dark blue/indigo and I try to achieve these nuances," he explains.

The seascapes that Prafull has captured are magnetic the deep colours and shades, the calm and turbulence, the variety of vessels that ply, the sunrise and sunset the moon shine and the play of light and colour on the waters at different times of the day. A seafarer's life is anything but monotonous, says Prafull. Capturing these subtle ties and complexities, in the watercolor medium that few would venture, gives him his unique identity.



*Prafull Hedrick*



## Awards

- Horizon 2020 at Fabriano in Acquarello, Italy (2021)
- Artwork selected for permanent exhibition at Fabriano, Italy
- Painting selected at Shanghai Watercolour Society (2020)
- Painting selected for Exhibition at Malaysia Online Juried Competition (2019, 2022)
- Painting selected for Exhibition at IWS Malaysia, 1st international Watercolour Biennale, 2018.
- Malaysia International Art Competition
- Malaysia International Water Colour Biennial
- Award for Watercolour painting from Director General of Shipping, India (2020)
- International Online Miniature Art Contest 2019, Dhaka, Bangladesh - Among the top 32.

## Walls and Lanes Houses and Towns

Seascapes may form the bulk of his oeuvre but his palette is not restricted to them. "I would not like to be branded a seascape artist. I am mostly drawn to subjects with which I make an instant emotional connection. However, I have chosen not to do portraiture," he says.

Walls and streets, houses and mansions, and nature are common preoccupations. "I am fascinated by the texture of walls. The physicality is prominent. Every wall evokes a certain atmosphere and tells a different story," he points out.

Cityscapes are another of his favourites. He captures the atmosphere of city streets and lanes from across countries. The sunrays seeping through the thick foliage on to a green trail evokes the crisp morning pregnant with possibilities, the slumbering noon of a quiet street, the busy business hours of a commercial street are captured vividly in his paintings. Interestingly, people are not the protagonists of his works, they are only another component of the environment.

"The sheer aesthetics of the European countryside fascinates me. Neat little wooden houses tucked amidst luxurious greenery and a colour burst of flowers, have always inspired me," shares Prafull. He is also fascinated by the old traditional living spaces in India like the wadas of Maharashtra and the Kerala nalukettu. He is currently planning a series on south Indian temples. "The design and architecture of these temples, the manner in which it allows sunrays to seep in, in magical ways creating fantastic light-dark, shadow, depth effects I am eager to capture these elements inside temple spaces," he says.

# ROGAN ART STANDS THE TEST OF TIME

| SHWETHA H C

Once restricted to a small village in Gujarat, the art, brought to India by the Persians, is now making waves across the Globe. For centuries to come, the White House will carry a part of India with it. Nope! We aren't talking about Kamala Harris. A wall in the White House is adorned with an art piece from India that not many know about - The Rogan Art.





**A**ges ago, during a trade-travel across the Arabian Sea, the Persians brought with them this beautiful folk art of fabric printing, which has become a part of the Indian heritage for over 300 years. The art form, which was on the verge of extinction, was suddenly put under global spotlight in 2014 - thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former US President Barak Obama, for it was the former who gifted Obama the “Tree of Life” Rogan Art piece as a representation of the country’s rich heritage and culture during his first visit to the United States of America.

Currently headed by the seventh and eighth generation members of the Khatri family in Nirona village, about 40 kms from Bhuj, Gujarat, Padma Shri Abdul Gafur Khatri and his kin are the only surviving torchbearers of the art form in India.

In the early years of their practice as Rogan artists, the Khatri, the surviving custodians of the artwork - had to struggle to

make ends meet. During the late 80s and 90s, just like many other traditional art forms, this too was hit by the onset of factories and mass production. However, they continued to dedicate their time to keep the dying art alive. The lack of knowledge and interest regarding the exquisiteness of the art and the unique creative skill of the artist, hampered the sales of products featuring Rogan art, and the kids of the family were forced to drop out of school to make ends meet. But fully conscious of the responsibility entrusted to them by their ancestors to keep the art alive, they waited patiently despite limited means for survival. Back then, the sales almost hit rock-bottom and Gujarat wasn’t even a popular tourist destination in India. However, when the Gujarat government announced its plans to provide them certain projects, the situation changed for the better.

The 2001 Gujarat earthquake changed fortunes for the state. The restoration process led to the betterment of the infrastructure and newly laid-out roads welcomed

thousands of travelers especially foreigners to give them a glimpse of the state that rose from the ashes. One such road led to Nirona village, which is mostly flocked by curious tourists eager to learn Rogan Art.

“The Gujarat government has been very encouraging. Many pieces of our art have been presented to several people, but the Tree of Life presented to Obama hit the bull’s eye. I personally created and signed the piece and it also remains patented under my signature. I feel humbled that now people recognise me by my name,” says Abdul Gafur Khatri, who was awarded Padma Shri in 2019 for his attempt to keep the art alive.

The ‘Tree of Life’ changed equations for Khatri and Rogan Art. The art became popular overnight and he was under the spotlight. It also put Nirona village on the global map, which soon became a must-visit tourist attraction of Gujarat. Sustainability of the art is largely dependent on tourists and workshops, and travellers from



across the globe who visit Nirona village to experience the creation of the art form firsthand. As part of the revival, Gafur says that they have been trying to include other art forms like Patola, hand embroidery and bead work into their art form. They are also working on creating *bandhani* patterns to attract more customers.

“There are plenty of cheaper alternatives that use stencils and print patterns to recreate Rogan art. However, these prints fade with time; the original Rogan print never fades and stays intact for as long as the cloth is intact,” says Khatri. The sales during the Rannotsav of Kutch, and festive season of Gujarat- between September and March - is what keeps the artists going. However, the art form still lacks the recognition it deserves.

“Occasional orders on online portals and recognition through media has definitely piqued people’s interest in the art form, but this is just the beginning and we still have a long way to go to achieve what we have envisioned. We hope that the government will step in and help us export our art to countries far and wide. Export laws should be made easier for handloom artists like us and that will increase the opportunities for us by many folds. We understand that to make a large-scale impact, we will need to market it on a large scale. But we cannot keep up with the competition and smaller handloom industries do not have the kind of finance for global scale marketing. The

government should help us to increase our reach and help the art find a larger international market,” adds Gafur.

Like everything else that was affected during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sales of Rogan art, mostly dependent on tourism in Gujarat and Kutch, was also affected. “We are still trying to recover,” Gafur sighs. Though online seems alluring, he believes that not many will be able to understand the creativity, skill and effort behind the art to justify the price tag. “When they come here, we give them a demo, and only then many are able to understand what it takes to sustain the art.”

Folks involved in this art have tried to keep it alive by incorporating the designs on masks. Though the concept has been welcomed on e-commerce platforms, the sales are yet to see the light of the day. “Our biggest sales were during festive seasons. But this year, because of the pandemic, the money was almost nil and there were only enquiries during the lockdown. But we are glad that people still remember the art. We are also hopeful that they would come back here to attend workshops once the situation becomes better,” he adds.

The walls of Khatri’s house are adorned with numerous awards given to them by both government and private entities. However, behind the shiny awards lie the

efforts of hundreds of unrecognised faces who fought for survival for ages. In a country as diverse as India, there are hundreds of art forms that are either hidden or dying. By encouraging local talent, we can breathe life into such art forms.

### Dedication and Skill

Rogan in Persian means oil-based. The designs used in the paintings are inspired from nature and traditionally, the art was used to embellish bridal trousseau. Though the art work looks simple, a lot of effort, ingenuity and patience goes into creating these canvases. The entire painting is done using a thin iron rod or a needle.

To make the rogan or paint, castor seeds sourced from local farmers are hand-pounded to extract oil, which is later heated and cooled. Colour pigments are mixed with the base brown colour obtained from heating the castor seed oil. Artists start the painting by taking a tiny amount of the desired colour of rogan from the needle (*kalam*) to the palm and mix it till thread-like consistency is achieved. The density of the mix plays a vital role in the finish of the piece. The artists then sit with the piece of fabric they plan to work on with its edges tucked into a table frame. The coloured rogan taken on the needle is then moved like a thread on the cloth, while the other hand under the cloth guides the paint. The interesting part is that the *kalam* never comes in contact with the fabric. For creating symmetrical prints, the artists fold the cloth into half and create impressions. It takes a minimum of ten days and a maximum of three months to finish a single piece of work. Most of these artists work without any sketch or plan. They simply start working on a piece with free-form design that creatively evolves in their mind.

### Pocket-friendly options

While a small painting costs anywhere between Rs 1000 and 5000, a silk saree with Rogan art motifs can cost anywhere between 20 thousand to 1.5 lakhs. From wall hangings to kurtis, sarees, dupattas, cushion covers and bed spreads, skirts, curtains, tablecloths and now masks, the family has tried to blend the traditional art with a contemporary drop to attract buyers. They also create exclusive customised designs on demand for many customers. They welcome suggestions on motifs they can use, so they can keep up with the trends and stay relevant to the crowds.

### Women empowerment

Undoubtedly, Rogan painting has seen a resurgence due to Khatri's efforts. He, who learnt the art from his father and grandfather, started training girls and women in the art, which was previously limited to and practiced only by men and surprisingly, there were many takers. They have trained over 200 women for free, and some of them still work with the family.

### Workshops for Revival

The Khatri household has been working for over 40 years on this art form. Through training workshops and customisation, the family has tried to keep up the legacy that has been passed on for over seven generations. To create awareness about the art form, he trains people in the village and also is planning to hold seminars at different educational institutes to spread knowledge about the art form. This strategy will ensure that the art and the method can reach a larger audience, allowing the craft to persist. Family takes on the role of host regardless of the guest.



# Elusiveness of Excellence

## Perplexing Paradoxes of Higher Learning in India

Dr. Payel Sen & Dr. Raj Singh

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**“Excellence is not a gift, but a skill that takes practice. We do not act ‘rightly’ because we are excellent, in fact we achieve excellence by acting ‘rightly’” - Plato**

“...any truism about India can be contradicted with another truism.”- Indian Higher Education (HE) sways to the rhythm of Shashi Tharoor’s provocative intellectual outpouring. As the country is aspiring high to resurrect in her celebrated image as Incredible India, all hopes seem to rest on the expanse, vibrancy and resilience of HE system for making the laudable dream come alive. The sustainability of higher growth trajectory of the Indian economy hinges on its ability to impart high quality education in its colleges and universities. In a vibrant country with huge population like ours, if minds are adequately informed and educated dividends multiply and possibilities shower endlessly. It is, however, lamentable that our crises-ridden tertiary education ecosystem-carrying a least reformed and tightly controlled self-image- continues to be an abode of contrasts and contradictions. Dilemmas and dissonances abound making the HE sector a scarcely navigable terrain of odds.

Indian HE represents a vast and variegated landscape of neglect. Since the turn of the millennium the terrain has witnessed phenomenal expansion both in terms of size and spread. Interestingly, the country’s steadily rising student population is found

to surpass the total demographic size of many countries in the world. Its proliferating network of institutions elevates the Indian system to the status of second largest HE system in the world next only to China. Paradoxically, however, HE continues to occupy a low priority in public expenditure. Also, on questions of equity and access the improvements may at best be called modest as the quantum leap is unable to tap more than one-fourth of our youth population. For India to scale new and sustainable heights in its economic growth trajectory our enrolment rates must shoot up to forty percent. Despite inclusion of economically weaker sections, women and first generation learners within the student community, stark exclusionary trends still persist as a result of striking regional, rural-urban and rich/poor divides with respect to educational access and attainment. Perpetuation of educational inequalities poses serious threat as in the evolving knowledge-driven economy this may accentuate income inequalities to extreme proportions. Bridging the gaps between the pace-setting elite and mass institutions is as decisive as having a rich blend of both.



While distinction and excellence hold the key to building a robust HE system, in the realm of academics the notion of excellence often appears as an ambiguous, value-laden and multi-dimensional category. The contextually contingent concept is impinged upon heavily by such factors as teaching effectiveness, resource provisioning, potentialities and performance of learners. Germinating in the minds of diverse set of key stakeholders, therefore, the seed of excellence is variously nurtured in their felt perceptions, experiences and expectations. The poet, the painter, musician, the scientist, the philosopher and the entrepreneur may talk in different dialects, yet speak a common language of excellence. The ocean of excellence casts itself in the mould of every pitcher dipping into the waters and holds enough to fill each to its capacity.

India's progress in the field of HE has been accompanied by progressive dilution of its quality. At a critical hour when the twin aspects of quality and excellence have emerged as mantra for educational institutions to compete, succeed and sustain, Indian HE finds itself stranded at tricky crossroads grappling with sharp imbalances between excellence and inclusion. Visibly starved of resource commitment, basic infrastructural support (physical and intellectual),

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professional outlook  
and research culture  
our universities  
stand crippled,  
disengaged and bereft  
of global presence  
and competitive  
pressures. Bureaucratic  
dictums and political  
manipulation have  
gone to the extent  
of reducing the high-

end refined cerebral spaces into rugged sites of political recruitment, expanding patronage and opportunism. Robbed of the identity of an independent professional community our universities have been rendered essentially incapable of arming the vast bulk of learners with

either knowledge or relevant skills. The research share of handful of premier institutions which exist as small islands of virtuosity fails to make any substantive impact on the rest of the system. Sharply falling quality standards sees adverse manifestations in the forms of yawning skill gaps, graduate unemployment and dominance of mediocrity. Revolving regimes lacking in imagination and experience have emerged as chief architects of the destiny of programmes and courses. Rampant political control of appointments, promotions, transfers and admissions relegate merit to the periphery. Fiscal constraints, weak governance structures and faulty personnel practices contribute further

to the crises of academic standards. Consequent to the steep quality decline in public institutions and their resultant disconnect with the labour market, competitive tests and entrance exams have virtually replaced performance at the

university level as a passport to further education or jobs. University degrees currently serve no more than formal minimal requirements. Even doctorates are required to take another qualifying test in the form of NET/SLET to look eligible for teaching at public university. With little learning happening within the formal classrooms, there seems to be heightened dependency on private tuitions which excessively adds to the cost of quality education. A parallel educational system has flourished with coaching centers reigning supreme. Besides, the trickle-down effect of declining academic standards of HE on declining quality of teachers at the elementary levels has also been alarming. After all a castle standing on fumbling foundation cannot marvel at its high-rising towers!

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**Entrapped in an inherent ideological ambivalence Indian State safely refrained from mobilizing the vast pool of private resources available for higher education.**”

With the ushering in of the era of economic reforms and liberalization when the whole world has moved away from top-down control to self-regulation, Indian HE sector has, for decades uninterrupted, continued its tread along forsaken lanes by way of flaunting an insulated persona and inward looking face. In the absence of a single point regulatory authority there has been multiplicity of stifling control-based regulations (for instance, AICTE for management education, MCI for medical education, and so on) fraught frequently with mindless omissions and overlaps. Moreover, education being a concurrent subject, it a fertile breeding ground of conflicting interests and chaos.

Conferment of statutory powers to AICTE and its ascendance as an overarching licensing authority set new trends towards merciless trampling of academic autonomy. Subjected to dual control of UGC and AICTE

the prestigious IIMs, universities and their constituent colleges imparting technical education and the regional engineering colleges began to gasp for breath. Even for nominal increase in number of seats in an engineering college anywhere in the country institutions had to woo the AICTE for approval. Empire building efforts of AICTE and grant disbursing role of UGC detracted the HE oversight bodies from their true mission of acting as an effective screening and coordinating mechanism to set/enforce standards of HE, control fraud or abuse. Late nineteen eighties onward saw unplanned mushrooming of substandard colleges offering engineering, MBA and MCA courses. Southern states (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) and Maharashtra eventually gave birth to hundreds of private

engineering colleges with lakhs of seats. There was a steep jump in the number of private engineering colleges. Arbitrariness and rent-seeking behavior led to unbridled corrupt practices as a result of which the ritualistic inspections became a farce. Thereafter, all through the nineties the jurisdiction and powers of the AICTE triggered series of fierce debates, controversies and litigations. In one of its highhanded moves to grab more power the AICTE unsuccessfully went to the extent of expanding its administrative and financial control over the technical and management institutions of the central government by way of amending the bye-laws. Regulation by NCTE fared no better.

On the question of private HE there has been enormous official shyness to acknowledge the commercial value of education in treating it as profit-seeking industry or business enterprise. Entrapped in an inherent ideological ambivalence Indian State safely refrained from mobilising the vast pool of private resources available for higher education. Absence of a coherent policy approach created room for frequent judicial interventions. From 'overt suspicion' of private enterprise in education to 'grudging acceptance' of its existence- the series of judicial pronouncements habitually reflect shifting and contradictory perspectives. Although private supplies currently exceeds seventy percent of the Indian HE, the dominance has, for long, been poorly regulated and left mostly unaccountable, in the process, considerably tarnishing the public good character of education. Its narrow scope is unduly confined to select few professional streams such as engineering, medicine, business and law. With the bulk of HE in Humanities, Arts and traditional Sciences remaining virtually untouched and underprivileged, the skewed expansion has constricted the much desired creative exchanges and competitive advantages



that privatization could potentially unleash.

The foregoing analyses reveal that India's advances in the field of HE have been chequered. Beneath our heightened sense of information is concealed a deeply confused understanding of knowledge. Sole emphasis on leveling has impeded the blossoming of our HE system into an arena of distinction. Bureaucratization of intellect mars academic resonance of our academic institutions. 'The universities as makers of the future cannot persist in old patterns, however valid they may have been in their own day', once reflected the innocuous Radhakrishnan Committee Report on University Education (1950). It is, therefore, high time that our HE system wakes up to the reminiscences of the yesteryears, the realities of today and a vision of new possibilities for tomorrow. A university is known by the dynamism it lives by and the exclusivity it swears on. While excellence represents the voyage as also the destination, competency is the indispensable first step. The new age necessitates dismantling of conventional vertical command structures and their subsequent replacement by a new regulatory regime having horizontal accountability mechanisms,

one that allows for playfulness and experimentation. Quest for an alternative makes it imperative for governments, universities and regulatory bodies to synergize their efforts in harnessing the energies of a whole range of actors inclusive of the society, market and state. In a fiercely complex, competitive and fast shrinking world-space enhanced freedom and flexibility alone can help redeem our universities. As carrier of excellence, quality-benchmarking must caution against myopic stereotyping wherein quality is mistook for product alone and creativity fades into productivity. In the land of bewildering diversities the wiser choice may be to re-invent criterion-referenced perception of excellence to make it more equitable and accommodative of the wide-ranging modalities relating to typology of institutions, their differentiated contexts, purposes and missions. However, simply exalting excellence parameters would bear little value without actual democratization of education. Our invaluable civilizational endowments offer India the necessary wherewithal to outthink the west in remodeling excellence with pluralism, ethics and aesthetics as its core. When minds collide and ideas embattle, out of the struggle of differences is born real

excellence. Can Indian memories disown scholastic brilliance(s) naturally radiating from divergent and eccentric minds of Tagore, Bose, Raman and Ramanujam?

Hard times of crises often recede into sleepless moments for meditative rethinking. For the world of creativity to revive in splendour academic experience in the twenty first century must prove to be elevating, empowering and emancipating. What we need immediately is opening up academic avenues to reclaim the lost dialogical tradition of knowledge reciprocity through dialogue of civilizations. Unless boundaries diffuse and hierarchies crumble down our academe cannot be rescued from bureaucratic and political onslaughts. To the floundering sea-borne ship of Indian HE the new National Education Policy (2020) signals itself as a light house exuding faith and hope. At a distance though, the reform document, seeks to enkindle the spirit of holistic and liberal learner-centric learning besides expressing fervor to convert campuses into intellectually vibrant learning and research environments. It comes with the promise of graded autonomy to boost healthy competition among HE institutions besides empowering the better performing ones with freedom to innovate and evolve. The resolve to adopt a balanced approach towards fostering the inter-connected strands of equity, expansion and excellence indeed reads bold, futuristic and aspirational.

ALLOUD IS THE CALLING OF THE PIED PIPER'S FLUTE...IT'S TIME TO TRUDGE OUR MILES ALONG!!!

This article is authored by Dr. Payel Sen, Assistant Professor, Coordinator Training, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) with inputs from Dr. Raj Singh, Vice Chancellor, Jain (Deemed-to-be University)







# Trailblazer Woman

| SHUBHA SRIKANTH



If India, today, is a far cleaner country, with a scientific plan for solid waste management, then it is due to the untiring efforts of one woman. If the Gir Lions' habitat is now secure, she has played a role. If the Ulsoor Lake in Bengaluru is a thriving ecosystem, it is again due to her efforts. These are but the tip of the iceberg. Mind you, she is no armchair activist or critic flinging far-fetched solutions and criticism, or a power-monger waxing eloquent on the microphone, nor your next-door

cynic perpetually ruing about the sorry state of affairs. Fathom this -- she has visited 214 municipal dump yards till date across every State in the country to study and understand solid waste management at the ground-level to draw up a plan for the country.

If you were to research her contributions to the country and its people, you will be dumbfounded. How much can an individual accomplish? Well, Almitra Patel's life is bountiful. It is impossible for me to do justice to her contributions to society and achievements in this article.



## Cleaner, Healthier India

It was in 1972, that she moved from Bombay to a pristine area on the outskirts of Bengaluru. In the late eighties, when the city began trashing the lovely country roads that led to her house, that's when her sincere engagement with the looming problem of garbage storage, collection and disposal began. Until the turn of the century, there was barely any awareness or streamlined practice regarding appropriate garbage disposal; let alone in towns and villages, not even in cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, Delhi or Chennai. Open dumping was rampant. Flinging garbage into vacant sites, at street corners, on footpaths and even on streets was a common practice and sight. Stink and stench emanating from these dumps at the most forced passers by to cover their nose or take detours.

Civic authorities were clueless about waste management. The monsoon worsened the situation with waste decomposing rapidly giving rise to deadly diseases and epidemics. "The Surat plague of 1994 was the turning point. Led by Capt. J S Velu from EXNORA, Chennai, we launched the Clean India Campaign by road from Bangalore to Delhi and back and undertook to visit and enlighten 30 cities in 30 days," says Almitra Patel. The biggest learning for the team was that none of the city municipal commissioners had any inkling of how to solve the garbage problem and clean up their cities. Besides, there were no allotted sites for dumping, and composting solid waste on a large scale. That is when Almitra stepped in and took it upon herself to find reprieve for the entire country.

She filed a PIL in the Supreme Court, WP (C) 888 of 1996 to stop open dumping of garbage. A court-appointed committee of which she was part, presented a blueprint

for garbage disposal in the country, leading to the creation of the Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules in 2000, nearly two decades before the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. "I soon realised that if there has to be a scientific plan for this problem, it has to start at the policy-level. A top-down approach was needed. If a policy exists as a road map for all, then it can be enforced at the state, city, town and village level and the authorities as well as the citizens in the chain can be held accountable," she says.

If solid waste management is to be successful, it has to start with the citizens, says Almitra emphatically. Segregation of wet and dry waste at the house-hold level is the key. If citizens fail to discharge this simple duty, the management of mixed solid waste becomes an extremely difficult task as it moves up the chain, and finally reaches dumpyards.

Almitra Patel has been actively involved in trying to clean and save several water bodies across the country -- the Ganga, Ulsoor and Bellandur lakes in Bengaluru to name a few. Remembering the utopian times, she says, "There was a time, when your parents and grandparents could swim in local ponds and lakes. That is no longer possible." These water bodies are polluted by the inflow of sewage and high-phosphorus synthetic detergents which promote excessive growth of aquatic weeds that die, rot and deplete oxygen in the water. This eutrophication kills fish and aquatic life". She has been actively fighting to lower the phosphorus content in detergents which the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has now approved but the industry still resists. She has tirelessly lobbied for multinational detergent manufacturers to comply in India as they do in the USA and Europe, where the same companies have reduced the percentage of phosphorus since 1973.

## Scientific Temper and Ground Realities

Born into a Parsi family in Bombay, 85 year-old Almitra Patel had it all -- a loving joint family, a swadeshi-industrialist father, a postgraduate degree and a great career prospect. Even as a youngster, she veered from the beaten-path to become the first female student in her school to take the science stream (offered only to boys) instead of housecraft (the elective offered to girls) in the 1940s and the first Indian woman engineer to graduate from MIT. She could have led a luxurious and carefree life. Yet she chose to travel to the nooks and corners of India, to the largest stinky, nauseating garbage dump yards and dedicated her life to finding viable solutions to the overwhelming challenge of solid waste management. She is happy that the bioremediation and clearing of these dumps is slowly becoming mainstream in her lifetime.

"My father believed that girls were as good as boys and could perform just as well. It was largely his desire that guided me to study engineering from a premier institution, take on professions and espouse causes that were predominantly the domain of men. There weren't many women in the technical field of any engineering stream at the time. My mother, of course, was also an environmental activist. Their guidance and influence has been crucial in shaping my calling in life," she elaborates.

When Almitra and her husband moved to Bengaluru, they took up a large house with a sprawling garden quite far away from the city limits. They interacted closely with the village community and became part of it. For all practical purposes, the village folk depended on them for any emergency, because they had a car, and more importantly a helping

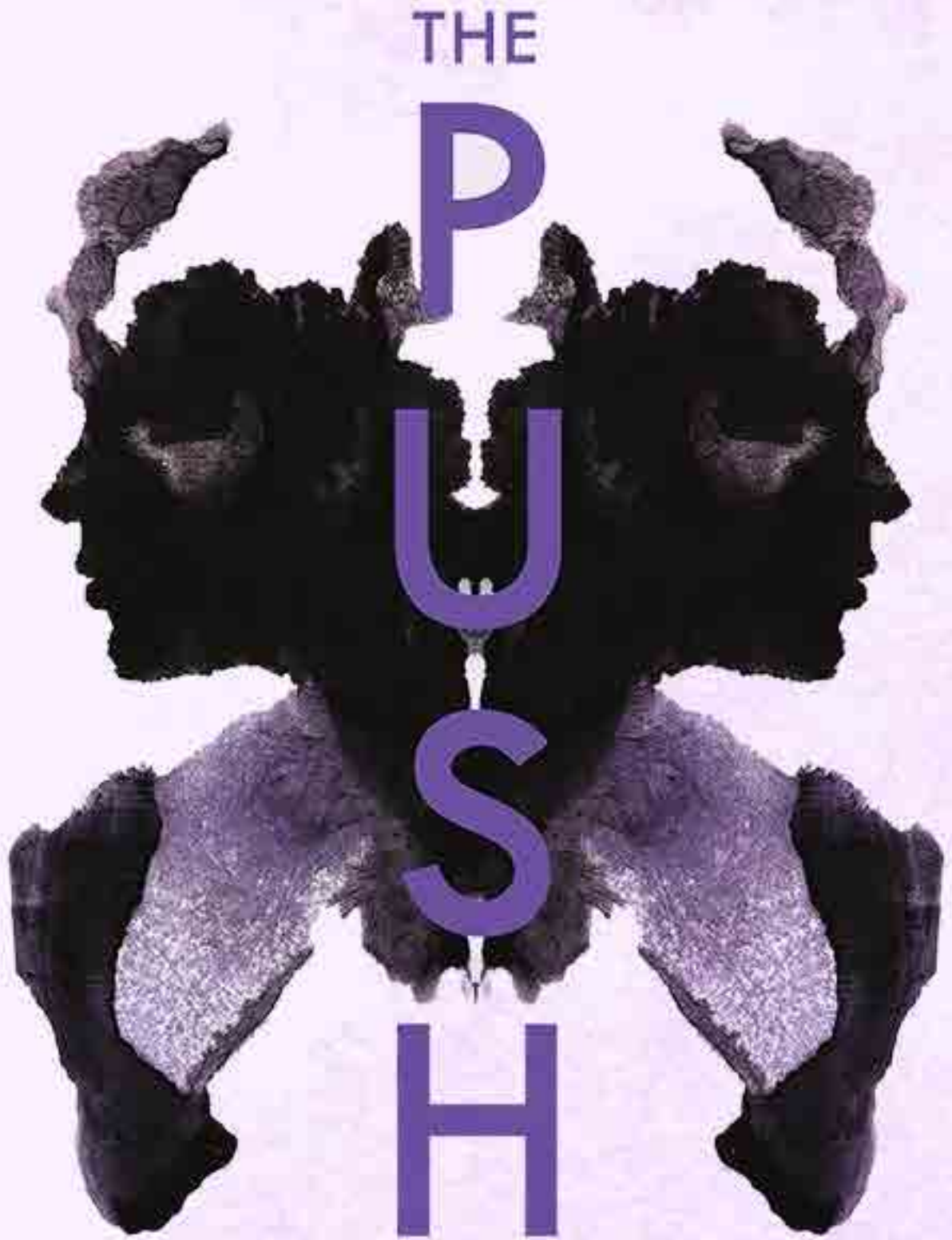
hand and heart, always forthcoming. "I can easily befriend local people and gain their trust. That's very essential to understand the ecosystem in which they live and the problems they face, from their perspective. This, along with my technical expertise and scientific temper, have contributed to the success of all the ecological projects I've undertaken," says Almitra.

She also believes that solutions can be customised. The basic principles are the same, but each town, each water body and each forest is unique and likewise, the waste generated is also different. "I had to study each site, talk to the local officials who are working at the grassroots and the people who are living there. It is only then that you gain a holistic perspective of the problem. This collaboration between scientific principles and ground reality is very essential," she says.

The incineration facilities and the technology in India according to her are highly unscientific and polluting. She had raised the red flag against such waste-to-energy projects proposed by the government. Burning poorly segregated waste results in emissions of dangerous gases into the atmosphere posing a serious threat to human and animal life in the surrounding area.

Looking back on her life, the National Expert of the Swachh Bharat Mission and Member of Supreme Court Committee for SWM, says, "I am happy to have lived my mother's dream of leaving the world a better place than I found it." As her name suggests, she is a noble soul, who has served selflessly for the betterment of her country. A true soldier at that! India today is producing women engineers by the dozen. There's no novelty in that. But how many like Almitra, have been altruistic in thought and deed?





ASHLEY AUDRAIN

| NEHA BUDHGAVI

**A**udrain's debut novel, *The Push*, is a psychological drama about mothers and daughters and the shattering of the beautiful illusion of perfect parenthood. The story centers around a young woman named Blythe Connor, a mother to whom perhaps motherhood is neither an inherited gift nor an acquired skill. Yet as time passes and unusual events begin to unfold, she begins to wonder if there is yet another possibility for her inability to bond with her baby girl...

"Our cellular life as an egg begins in the womb of our grandmother. Each of us spent five months in our grandmother's womb and she in turn formed within the womb of her grandmother". This line from the opening is a fitting introduction to what is, among other things, an exploration of generational curses. Grandmother, mother, young woman, and her daughter – all struggling with light and darkness within them.

The story takes us to Blythe and Fox, a seemingly perfect couple, at the birth of their first child, Violet. Blythe worries whether she will be an adequate parent, given her own troubled history, and it is these worries that colour her early experiences with her daughter. She desperately wants to have a warm and nurturing relationship with Violet but there has been a niggling doubt that all is not well with her, ever since the early days of her birth.

Being a new mother is perhaps one of the most isolating experiences in a woman's life, not always picture perfect as media messaging would want us to believe but full of long, sleepless nights, endless fretting, physical and emotional overload, and all this is enough to cloud a person's judgement.

Not only is Blythe unable to bond with her daughter, but she also suspects a dangerous truth about her. Her worries come to a crescendo when a small boy mysteriously falls to his death on a playground swing set, with Violet standing mere inches away. Are her suspicions true? Or is she just sleep-deprived and paranoid, as her husband suggests each time she brings up Violet's less-than-ideal

behavior? How does her lineage play into this? How can she bond so instinctively, intuitively, with her beautiful baby boy Sam, but not her daughter? These are the questions that we see Blythe struggle with.

At the beginning of the story, we see that Blythe is in immense awe of the normalcy of Fox's family and the warmth they extend to her, which is in sharp contrast to her own family. "The women in this family, we're different" says her mother Cecilia to a preadolescent Blythe. Finding the drone of her suburban life too taxing, she simply vanishes one day without warning, apparently in search of a more charmed life. Her grandmother Etta also struggled to maintain a façade of normalcy and stability, both before the outside world, and in front of her own daughter, towards whom she was unnaturally cruel.

The book hangs heavy with the weight of unspoken words. Psychopath. Gaslighting. Trauma. Words, if spoken, would have prevented grief, and introduced clarity much earlier to this family.

Psychopath – what Blythe obviously believes Violet is. Though brilliant, she is cold towards her mother right from the start, unwilling to bond or show affection to anyone but her father. She displays clear intention and ability to hurt people she doesn't like. Would things be different if this was freely admitted by her parents who then could have gotten her the help she needed? Could their son Sam have still been alive?

Gaslighting – what Fox seems to be doing to Blythe. The real horror of the story is the omnipresent burden of having a partner, a teammate, who constantly invalidates your observations and struggles.

Trauma – the flashbacks into Blythe's childhood and glimpses into her mother's and grandmother's lives are cleverly interspersed with Blythe's present to give us an understanding of what drives her, knowingly or unknowingly.

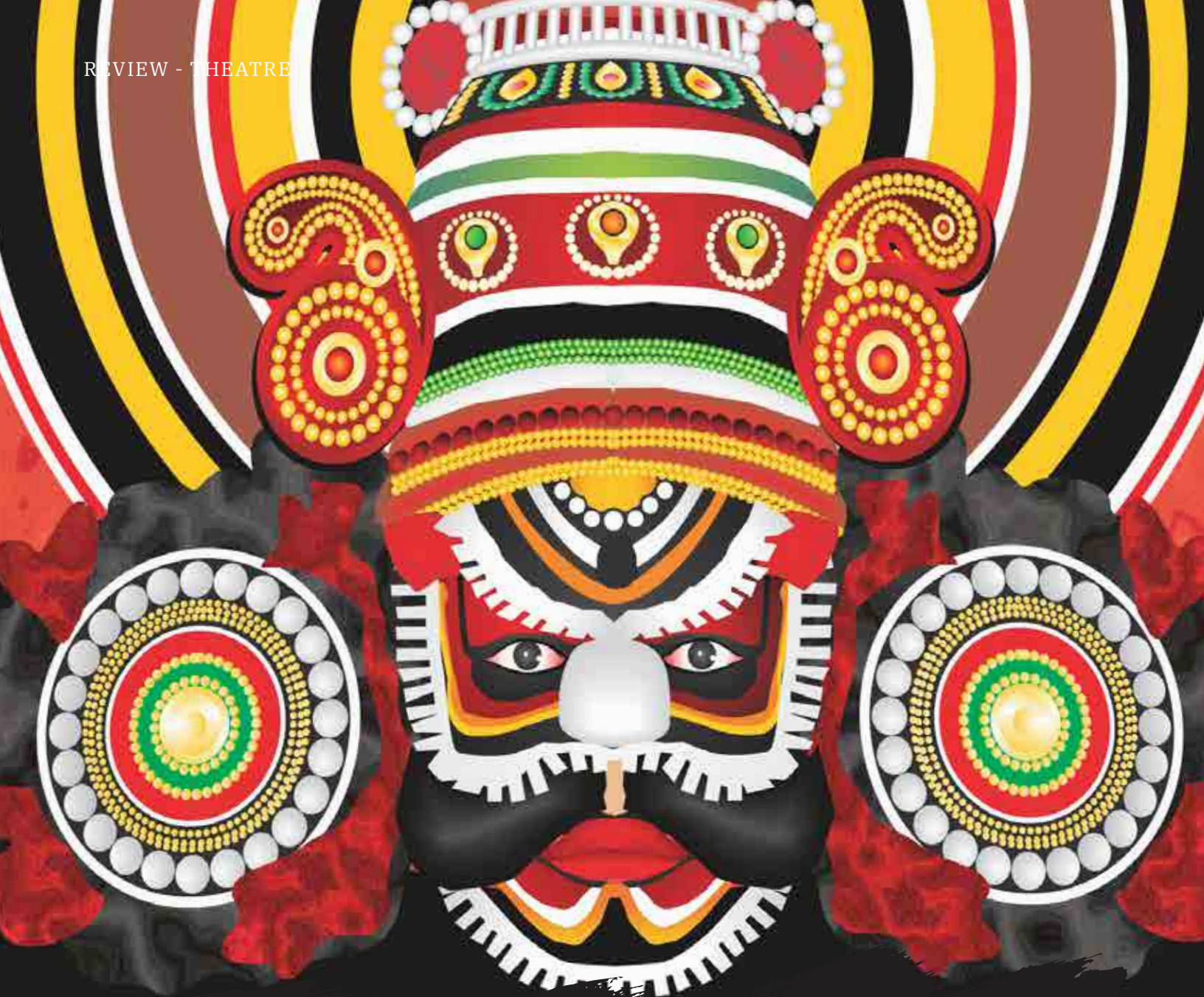
Desperation – carelessly discarded her husband and replaced with a younger, shinier version of herself, Blythe borders on the insane as she concocts a fake

identity and befriends her ex-husband's current partner, all in the hopes of getting to know their baby boy, who reminds her so much of their lost Same.

The book is marketed as a psychological thriller, and frequent readers of the genre may disagree with this categorization. It is similar to recent books in that a woman and her raw emotional experience take center stage. However, I believe we have gotten too accustomed to a single type of suspense novel – one with a clever setup and a "grand reveal" ending. To me, it was obvious from the get-go that Violet displayed psychopathic tendencies. *The Push*, instead, takes us through the mental machinations of a victim (?), the agony, and the futile hope that she is wrong. And the thrill is in the predictability of it all -- the helplessness of knowing what's what and being denied the acknowledgement of it by the other characters. Without giving away too much, the real twist in the plot is -- even as Violet is painted as the obvious bad guy -- the cascading effects of the (not-so-innocent) bystander's refusal to believe her or act in response to the unfolding situation on their entire family. As the pages turn, we are left to wonder, exactly how many lives can willful neglect, however well-meaning, ruin?

I thoroughly enjoyed immersing myself in Blythe's journey for a few hours and giving in to the uncertainty that she so cleverly weaves in the mind of the reader despite the facts being so plainly obvious. Interestingly, one wouldn't expect such a novel to offer social commentary, yet many women reading it would relate to the feeling of being patronized (and blamed, rather than supported) in a largely male dominated environment, be it a conventional family set-up, workplace or academic institution. It is not an easy read but definitely a gratifying one, sure to stir up many questions and strong emotions.

Audrain beautifully explains the painful and usually unspoken doubts that all mothers have entertained at some point in their maternal journey – not only about their own adequacy, the less magical than advertised experience of motherhood, and finally, the most dreaded aspect – is my child normal?



# Yakshagana

| C. N. RAMACHANDRAN

**Y**akshagana, also called *Kelike*, *Bayalata*, and *Dashavatara*, partly belongs to folk theatre and it grew primarily in coastal Karnataka. It is an astounding blend of music, dance, gestures, dialogue and distinctive costume. The famous Kannada novelist (Jnyanapith awardee), Shivarama Karantha, argues that the name Yakshagana is the refined form of the old word Ekkalagana, which denoted a 'style of singing' different from both Hindustani and Karnataka styles of singing. However, many other scholars differ from him on this issue. Though it is difficult to trace the precise origin of Yakshagana as a performance, it is believed that, influenced by the Bhakti movement, Narahariritha (a disciple of Madhwacharya, the founder-philosopher of Madhwa sect), organised the first Yakshagana performance at Udupi, in coastal Karnataka. It prospered during the heyday of Vijayanagara empire. We find the first written evidence of this form in an inscription, dated 1556 A. D., in Lakshminarayana temple in Kurugodu, Bellari district. Later, many palm-leaf inscriptions also mention this theatrical form. With its regional variations (as *Tenkutittu/Badagatittu*), it is still vibrant and well-known throughout India and abroad.

A Yakshagana performance, generally, commences late at night and goes on till dawn. It consists of two groups of performers, *Himmela* and *Mummela*. *Himmela* (group at the back of the stage) includes a Bhagawata and musicians playing on *Chende* (a loud drum), *Maddale* (hand drum), and harmonium. The Bhagawata is the singer-narrator who controls the entire performance; he sings verses that describe the story in set ragas (musical scales) and the actors in front of the stage (*mummela*) enact the content of the verses through dance and gestures. Except the written verses, all other components of the performance such as dialogue, dance and music are improvised. It is this aspect that makes each performance unique.

In a Yakshagana performance, what attracts every one is its dazzling and distinct costume. In fact, one of the great American scholars of Yakshagana, Dr. Martha Ashton Sikora, states in an interview that first she was attracted to Yakshagana by the glittering costumes of the artists. It consists of

a high headgear (*Kirita*), armour or coat (*kavacha*), armlets (*bhujakirti*), and belts (*daabu*), all made of light wood and covered with golden foil which sparkles at night, with only wooden torches for light. Again, costumes are role-specific in Yakshagana; and the eye-catching costumes are worn not by good characters but by evil or wicked characters, and is called *bannada vasha*. Even dancing is typical: each player moves and dances with long strides, heavily.

The stories of Yakshagana performances are chosen, primarily, from ancient classics such as *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, and *The Bhagawata*. What is interesting is that in all the stories chosen, it is the 'villain' (Ravana, Kichaka, Kamsa, Hiranyakashipu) who is the central figure of the performance in both his specific costume and the space given him by the narrator.

Consequently, in the Yakshagana-world, emphasis is on the marvellous, the terrible and the heroic (*adbhuta, raudra, vira*) sentiments; and the sentiments of amour, pathos and devotion (*shrungara, karuna, bhakti*) get marginalised.

One major variation of Yakshagana is *Tala Maddale*. It is Yakshagana without costumes, music and dance, and performed indoor; artists sit on a platform and talk according to the roles they are assigned. Consequently, in this form, dialogue takes centre-stage and artists use their scholarship and logic to build up their arguments, at length. Performances of *Tala Maddale* take place during the rainy season when outdoor performances are not possible, and they are highly popular in coastal Karnataka.





According to scholars, many features of Yakshagana are common to folk-performances in other languages: *Jatra* (Bengal), *Chau* (Bihar and Bengal), *Veedhi Natakam* (Andhra Pradesh), *Terekutu Bhagawata Mela* (Tamil Nadu) and *Kathakkali* (Kerala). However, with its resplendent costume, gorgeous make-up, and distinctive singing, Yakshagana stands apart and unique among different types of folk-drama.

In the last century, many Yakshagana stalwarts such as Balipa Narayana Bhagawata and Kuriya Ganapathi Shastry, Malpe Shankaranarayana Samaga and Kadakota Manjunatha Bhagawata, in fact too many to be listed, greatly enriched Yakshagana. In the post-independence period, new writers and artists entered the field and gave new dimensions to the ancient form. There is also a 'Yakshagana Training Centre', housed in M. G. M. College, Udupi; and the centre has a rich library of books and audio-visual records related to Yakshagana. Recently, Mangalore University has established an independent Yakshagana Study Centre at Konaje.

Today, Yakshagana is an international art; and there are Yakshagana troupes in many countries: the Yakshaloka amateur troupe in Boston and California, USA; Yakshamitra

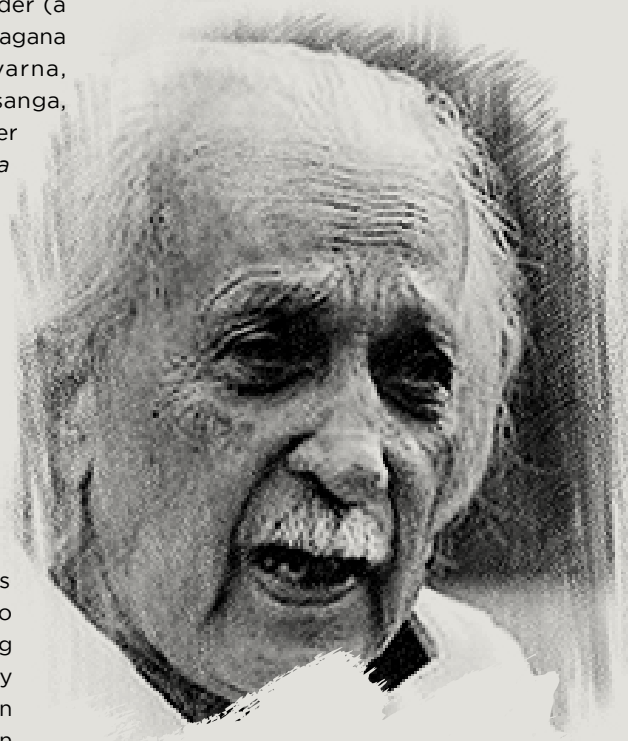
troupe in Toronto, Canada; etc. Many international scholars have come to Karnataka and have made serious study of the different aspects of Yakshagana.

To mention only a few: Dr. Martha Ashton Sikora (American scholar, who studied Yakshagana systematically from Hiriyadka Gopala Rao, wrote her doctoral dissertation on Yakshagana, and published a critical work with Bruce Christie, *Yakshagana: A Dance Drama of India*, in 1977), Dr. Katrin Binder (a German scholar, who learnt Yakshagana from Bannanje Sanjeeva Suvarna, translated into German the *Prasanga*, *Abhimanyu Kalaga*, and wrote her doctoral dissertation, *Yakshagana Rangabhumi*), and Prof. Sumiyō Morijiri (a Japanese scholar, who studied and carried out, extensive fieldwork on Yakshagana and Bhutaradhane, later setting up a museum of Tenkutittu Yakshagana art-works in Waseda University, Japan, and has authored a critical work in Japanese, on Yakshagana).

No form of art can remain literally the same through centuries together; it has to adapt itself to new conditions of life and changing audience-taste. And, indeed, many changes, major and minor, have taken place in this art-form also. Wooden torches and gas lights have been

replaced by electric bulbs, heavy headgear has become lighter, and dialogue has got highly sophisticated. Besides Kannada Yakshaganas, in the post-independence period, the 'texts' of Yakshagana came to be written in Tulu (a major spoken language of coastal Karnataka), and as an experiment in English also. Very soon, Tulu performances became highly popular.

Dr. Shivarama Karanth, who passionately loved Yakshagana, undertook certain major changes in its form—he used light cork-wood for the headgear which made it easy for the dancer; he came up with 'traditional ragas' to be used by the singer; he cut down the songs assigned to the singer-narrator from 400 to 100; and he added the violin, saxophone and clarinet to the repertoire of Yakshagana instruments. More importantly, he completely did away with dialogue. Consequently, the duration of a performance came down from eight hours to three hours, and in this form, *Yakshagana* came close to Western ballet. Karanth called this form *Yaksharanga*. Today, both the forms are popular.





Another major change in Yakshagana performance is the entry of women into this field. For centuries together, Yakshagana was totally a 'male domain.' But today, there are a few 'all-women Yakshagana' troupes. To the best of my knowledge, Akkani Amma from Udupi was the first to establish an all-women Yakshagana troupe, called *Mahila Yakshagana Kalamitra Mandali*, in 1979, though the first 'all-women-performance' took place only in 1989, organized by Poornima Rai. Leelavati Bypadittaaya was the pioneer to don the role of Bhagawata in Yakshagana performances, followed by Kavyashri Nayak, Amruta Adiga, and Bhavyashri.

In course of time, many other women artists have learnt and performed Yakshagana. Still, overall, Yakshagana remains a 'male' bastion.

Even the subjects of Prasangas (performance texts of Yakshagana) have changed, to some extent. Once Tulu was used in the place of Kannada as the language of Yakshagana, the Tuluva cultural-heroes replaced classical gods

and demons; and such Prasangas as Koti Chennaya (the cultural twin heroes of Billavas), Kordabbu Baraga, Abbarada Bobbarye (both Kordabbu and Bobbarye are the daivas) became very popular in Tulunadu. Also, social themes were taken by Yakshagana writers. Prof. Amruta Someshwar, the leading Yakshagana-poet on new subjects, states that "it is the social responsibility of Yakshagana to respond to modern miseries." Consequently, many writers in the second half of the 20 Century either interpreted old legendary themes to suggest modern ideas (Amruta Someshwar, Maarishaa Kalyana, which, allegorically, propounds environmental concern), or wrote on historical themes, old and recent (Chanakya-Chandragupta, Aliya Ramaraya, Swatantrya Vijaya, etc.) Arguably, it is this adaptability of Yakshagana that has kept the form dynamic, and popular through centuries. I am happy to end this note, registering a

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welcome trend in the younger generation, to be found in the last two decades. There was a time when young men and women turned away from Yakshagana, ignoring it as a folk performance. But this attitude seems to

have changed, and we find a considerable number of young men and women, who are college or university students, studying Yakshagana (as well as other folk forms such as folk epics like Male Madeshwara), and practicing it as a hobby. One can be sure that they, the younger generations of today, will keep this ancient form living and meaningful.

**C N Ramachandran is a retired professor of English from Mangaluru University. He is an established critic-translator and writer in Kannada and English.**





# Making Movies out of Moments

## Malayalam Cinema

| GITA PRADEEP

**Gone are the days when a movie needed an elaborate story plot. Youngsters today are making movies out of everyday moments and the audiences just love them.**

**C**inema is a great medium for entertainment, one of the most popular among people across the globe. Movie-making used to be a very complex process till recently. A good cinema is the result of many elements -- a gripping storyline, a great script, an enticing storyboard, gifted artists and technicians working together for weeks, if not months at a stretch. Thanks to technology, movie-making has become simplified and streamlined. Beyond that, the very basics of how cinema is made and perceived have undergone tremendous change! A transformation that has made the content of cinema more realistic and the art and commerce of cinema-making open to a wider community.

Elaborate plots, complex storylines have become passe. Today's cinema, especially Malayalam cinema, is finding new strategies to reach out, with simpler plots that capture some interesting 'moments'. *Traffic* was the game-changer; written by the popular duo Bobby & Sanjay and directed by the late Rajesh Pillai, the movie was released as early as in 2011. Inspired by an actual event, *Traffic* revolves around a horrific accident and how the entire state of Kerala comes together for a cause. *Traffic* set off the emergence of new-gen Malayalam cinema.

### Talents Galore

A fresh lot of young script-writers and directors have started exploring the possibilities of breaking away from the conventional structured story-telling, thus changing the way cinema lovers, the world over, perceive Malayalam cinema. From cult classic movies of M T Vasudevan Nair, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Hariharan, Padmarajan and Bharathan that often stood apart, sometimes beyond what ordinary people could relate with, Malayalam movies now found a fresh streak of meaningful connection among the masses.



Alphonse Puthran's *Neram* (Time) was one such movie that created many stars out of the blue. Even though a remixed version of the older Jagathi Sreekumar song helped the movie gain popularity, the youth instantly connected with the movie's fast-paced, tight script that portrays how a momentary event can change the course of life forever. In the movie, an accident and a few incidents that happen around the same time change people's destiny. The content of the films started coming closer to reality, thus endearing audiences who were disenchanted by larger than life characters and events. As the plots became simpler and more focused on characterisation and/or the script, the need for a huge star cast, ostentatious sets and multi-crore budgets also vanished.

Dileesh Pothan's 2017 thriller *Thondimuthalum Driksakshiyum* (Evidence and the Eyewitness) is a brilliant portrayal of a theft in a local bus and the police interrogation of the suspect. The bulk of the movie is shot

in a police station and focused on the police questioning Fahad Fasil who plays the thief who has stolen a gold chain. Two other significant characters in the movie are the husband played by Suraj Venjaramoodu, and the wife played by Nimisha Sajayan whose golden sacred chain has been swiped. The movie won critical acclaim for the script and performance of the three main actors. Remarkably, it also was a commercial success. Such movies are breaking the long-prevailing myth that realistic movies, without the frills of crude humour and mindless action and gore, cannot

attain commercial success. New-gen scriptwriters and directors are more adept at telling simpler stories in the most realistic manner. Though technical brilliance has rarely been Malayalam cinema's forte, this films like *Jallikattu* and *Pulimurugan* in which VFX has played a definitive role are carving out a new path.

Actor-director Lijo Jose Pellissery made a mark in 2019, taking his 7th movie *Jallikattu* (a bull-taming sport) to the Oscar, as the Indian entry for the best international feature film. Even though *Jallikattu* got no Oscar nominations, it won many other international awards. The movie is about a bull that escapes the slaughterhouse and the havoc it creates overnight in the village. Lijo's first movie *City of God* is another new-generation movie in a hyperlink cinema format that revolves around a freak accident and the characters involved.

### Realistic Approach

What makes Malayalam cinema stand

out from the rest of Indian cinema is its realistic approach. **Everything, from the theme to characters, is often inspired by real life.** The industry has produced some of the finest artists, who are top-class actors, unaffected by their image and stardom; artists who can portray the deepest turmoil without histrionics and melodrama. The younger lot of script-writers and directors make no compromise when it comes to realising their dreams and they never shy away from casting newcomers if the script demands. What's even more commendable is that we often see them collaborating and acting in each

other's movies and promoting one another wholeheartedly. They only seem to compete with themselves to better themselves, which is a healthy way of promoting good cinema.

A strong script that's close to reality, some talented actors, brilliant cinematography and excellent direction, tight editing have made these movies box-office hits and earn rave reviews as well. The Malayalam movie industry has always been known for its low-budget production and dedicated resources who often work without remuneration if it holds unusual artistic value. This unconditional love for cinema has made many movies possible, despite all odds. The industry also has seen many actors such as Mohanlal, Mammooty, Prithviraj Sukumaran, Dileep, Jayasurya among others have turned producers for their love of cinema.

The industry still respects and values legendary movie-makers who, once in a while, come up with exotic movies that need an elaborate star cast and an astonishingly large budget. Such movies have become a rarity over the years, though. As long as stars remain stars and fans remain loyal, they will wait patiently and accept

such movies also whole-heartedly. But the Malayalam movie buffs have long grown out of clapping and hooting for misogynistic heroes. Macho alpha men beating up dozen-odd villains single-handedly are a trend that has lost all steam in Malayalam cinema. The movies are closer to reality and such unrealistic situations have little space in Malayalam movies.

### **Impact of Changing Audience Behaviour**

Another reason for this change is that the younger generations of audiences are more critical and responsive on social media. Movie reviews are available online within hours of release. In fact, movie-makers conduct special previews for review-writers as part of their PR exercise and promotions! Social media has become a powerful tool and can make or mar a film's destiny. Movies are

often discussed in detail on social media communities which also give movie-makers access to first-hand response of their audiences. Even the slightest mistakes are instantly spotted and highlighted! Trolls and memes by fan brigades add an extra dimension to reviewing movies and artists, which can range from being insensitive and vicious to lighthearted humour. With an intelligent crowd sharing their views on movies, sometimes, even the minutest details get highlighted, as it happened in the case of *Kumbalangi Nights*, *Maheshinte Prathikaaram* and *Dhrishyam*.

It's a new era, an awakening that has changed Malayalam cinema, resulting in some of the most realistic movies that have won box-office and hearts equally. Yet, there are clichés! Humour and drama still reign Malayalam cinema. Technical excellence is yet to become a norm in

this industry. In God's Own Country, this new wave of Malayalam cinema has been welcomed wholeheartedly by all generations. Movies like *Helen*, *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*, *Maheshinte Prathikaaram*, *North 24 Kaatham*, *Action Hero Biju*, *Kala*, *Ishq*, *Varathan*, *Up & Down - Mukalil Oraalund*, *C U Soon* and *Wolf* belong to this new generation of movies.

Despite enjoying the OTT experience, the audiences are eagerly awaiting to hit back to the movie halls to watch their favourite stars on the big screen again. Some of Malayalam cinema's most awaited big-budget movies are also awaiting release. That said, we love Malayalam movies for the closer-to-life content. When in a simpler and more relatable format, movies get more interesting to watch and recommend.

# INDIAN FINTECH TRAJECTORY

| BHUSHAN PATIL

**T**oday, in India, about 1 billion people (which is over 80 per cent of the population), hold a bank account, of which 900 million hold a debit card. Notwithstanding, we are still one of the lowest credit or insurance covered countries; and this offers a massive digital opportunity to build new and larger fintech ecosystems.

Fintech (technology that enables the banking/financial sector) has seen explosive growth in the last five years in India, as it stands in the third position for the number of new fintech startups. This phenomenal growth has been catalysed by all stakeholders -- people, companies, government, and even regulators -- who have adopted technology to automise financial transactions. At the administrative level, the government has initiated key changes such as easier

identities (moving away from long numeric account numbers to simple IDs like mobile phone numbers, UPI IDs etc), cheaper payment pipes, banking for all, and data for the bulk of the population.

India has pioneered the building of national systems like the Unified Payment Interface (UPI), the digital payment interface, verifiable unique identity system like the Aadhar, integrated bill payment system like the Bharath Bill Payment System (BBPS) among others, which have transformed into growth engines for the fintech revolution in India and some of these (Example - UPI, BBPS) will also be taken globally.

To gain a perspective of the massive system which India has in place, consider this: today, UPI by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI, an initiative of RBI and UBI) is managing 2.6 billion

transactions a month across 100s of millions of consumers, which is shortly expected to peak to 5 to 10 K transactions per second (tps), and this is already nearing or possibly growing bigger than the VISA network globally which claims to handle 2000 tps. Moreover, the systems in India were built, and they matured too within a span of just a few years.

Despite all these developments, the Indian fintech ecosystem is far from open. We are still a crowded market in some sub-sectors like payments, simple and direct forms of lending, taxation/audit, digital gold, etc. We are yet to see variety in innovation across verticals like Insuretech, Wealthtech, Credit tech, Social Finance, Regtech, Rails, Pipe Banking, BFSI in a box, Embedded finance, and such others.

Indian Fintech Evolution				
	2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015   2015-2020 2020-2022	2022-2025
<b>Banks</b>	Webification of services	Banking digitization	API banking Focus on transaction digitization	Digital Currency
<b>Consumers</b>	Card-Era	Card-Era Cash still Prime	Online Banking Card-Era Cash still prime  App based banking Wallets, UPI Cash still leading  Neo-bank experiences, embedded finance	Social credit, sachetisation and appifying services, super apps
<b>Businesses</b>	Online banking	POS - Era	POS-Era QR Codes  QR Code  Neo Bank experiences Embedded Banking,	Credit democratization, data linked finance
<b>Businesses</b>	Confined to policy making	Wallet licenses offered	Open to create rails UPI, AADHAR inceptions  UPI Scaling Extending rails play to other sub-sectors wealth, insurance, credit, etc. Demonetization, GST reforms, AADHAR maturity catalysed consumer digitization  Incremental UPI opening and allowed parallel plays, other rails development like OCEN	May open digital currency and Crypto

Universal Payment Interface (UPI) by NPCI is another move which encouraged people to link their bank accounts to mobile or simpler UPI IDs and allowed people to move money from bank to bank using this new identity. The API infrastructure and digital first thinking of regulators of UPI also made private players and start-ups innovate quickly and easily compared to earlier rails. But this technology has impacted wallet plays, making them redundant, as the customer no longer has to load or unload money into wallets for digital transactions.

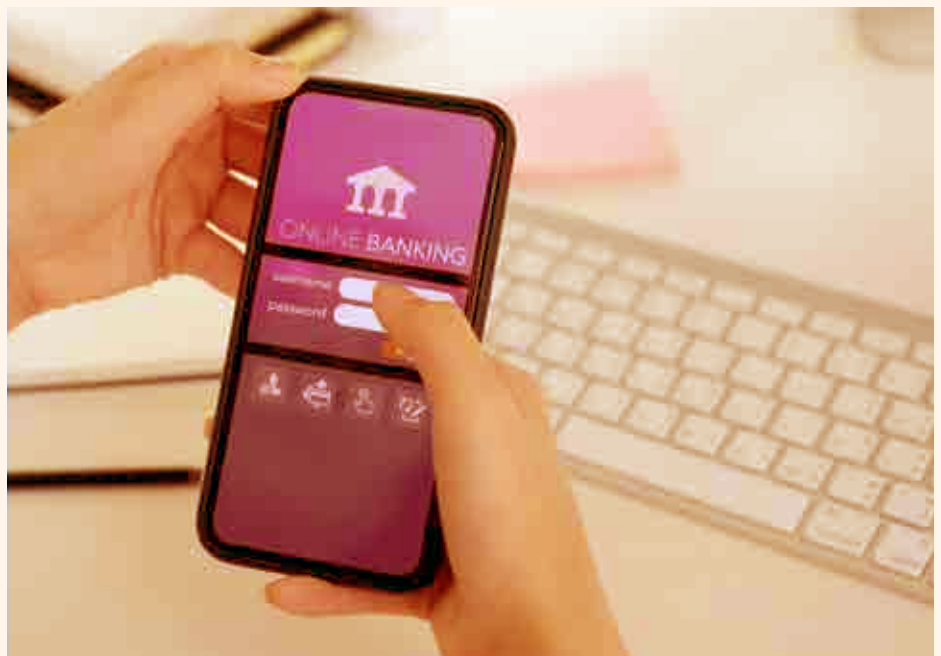
Paytm went further and introduced Paper Point Of Sale (POS) QR Codes and localized it for Indian needs. This innovation became a critical turning point for the Indian financial industry, which made merchants, vendors, and almost anyone set up a digital-POS at low cost, without the need for internet and electricity. Paytm pushed the need for internet, power, phone and costs to the consumer and created the first ever push-money system. This made all bulky payment processes, and any other form of receiving money at merchant-end redundant.

## Fintech Revolution Tipping Points

One of the earliest moves by the government to give a forward thrust to fintech was to issue Wallet License, which in turn was leveraged by mobile payment and commerce platform players like Paytm. Wallet License permitted companies to allow consumers to hold money in digital form with a simple identity, namely their mobile phone numbers. This system allowed micro transactions to be conducted online. Over the next 7-8 years, companies like Paytm leveraged this technology to massively digitise transactions for the masses. Prior to this, many mandates were created for banks and businesses to manage money digitally or file taxes or maintain books in digital forms.

The Demonetization effected in 2016 gave an unprecedented push to inclusion of masses into the digital finance ecosystem. Consumers wanted an easy way to transact; and small kiranas and vendors

wanted a simpler mechanism to accept money which they got by leveraging QR codes or simple P2P transfers. This move possibly caused a large population to digitise their spends.



Government initiatives like the additional rails IMPS, BBPS (Bharat Billpay System), AADHAR, Udyog AADHAR, and common GST also made financial inclusion easier for the change makers in the fintech space. India stack (project of creating a unified software platform to bring India's population into the digital age) is another system which may prove powerful for digital players to build innovations.

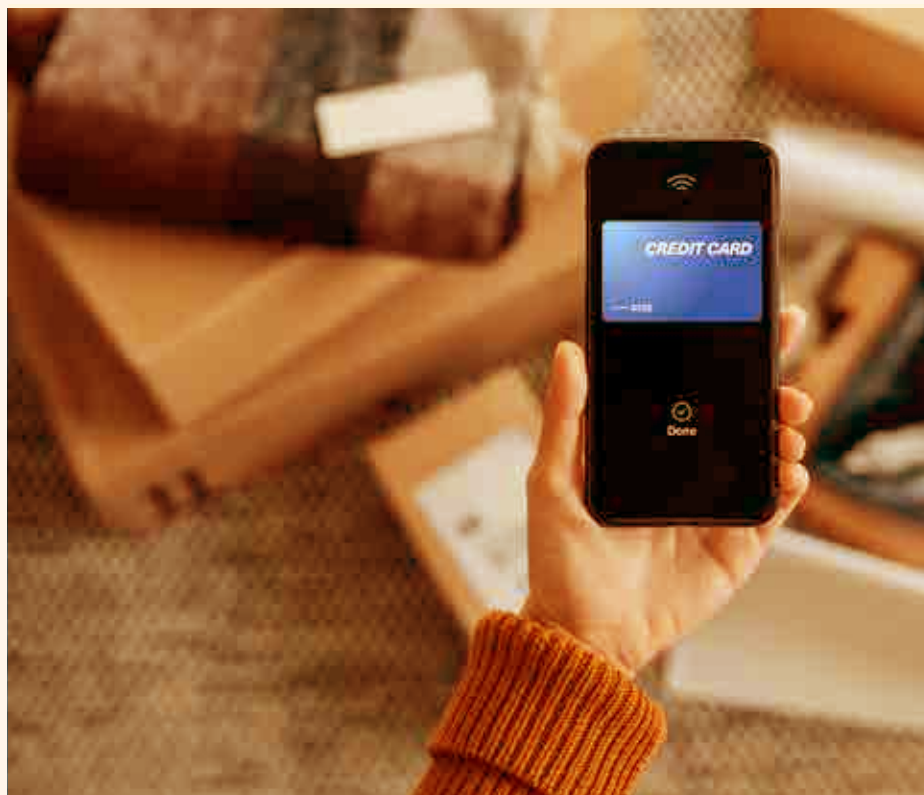
Between 2015 and 2020, the banked population doubled due to banking-for-all initiatives like Jan-Dhan.

While so far Personal ID and payment rails have evolved, the next big thing for India is to digitise credit allowing people to leverage credit which they have earned by being in the system. Open Credit Enabled Network (OCEN) may democratise credit by offering credit for all and build it beyond taxation and earnings of people. We may also see some startups catalysing this space with other forms of credit like social credit, transaction linked credit, and behavioural credit.

## Era of Mythical Digitization in India

Almost all efforts we have seen between the years 2000-2010 were to help and push banks to adopt digital systems. However, the banking system did not achieve the expected results. What did happen was only a transient card-era. During this time, consumers, instead of visiting the bank, only visited ATMs. Thus while the banks could claim that 85 per cent of their transactions were digitised, consumer or transaction digitization never took off. Almost 80 per cent of digital transactions which banks recorded were only a result of card usage in ATMs where consumers just used the card to withdraw cash. We can simply term this as Banking digitization and not consumer or transaction digitization

India has managed to digitise the banking system, but the consumer is yet to be digitized. Debit cards are used largely to withdraw money from ATMs and return to cash transactions.



So this First Digital Wave could only help banks and regulators garner banking data in digital formats, but were unable to track or trace the consumer's spends. While the latter is more important for larger inclusion, credit building and overall ecosystem growth.

## Extended Areas of Innovation

In the future, greater development is expected in the following areas of fintech.

### Gamified Financing

While purchasing online, you may have come across offers like cashback on Nth transaction, Save the change, Rounding off to save extra - instead of paying Rs. 20.50 pay Rs. 20 and save the extra .50 paise on your transactions. These goal-based financing, open financial systems built on gamification models will enable larger financial inclusion and vibrancy in this space.

### Digital Currency

While demonetization helped, digital currency makes the money more transparent by keeping a trace of each money movement. This will help not only in tracking the money better but also recording transactions made by each piece of money across the holders.

### Crypto World

We may be far but not away from this. I think India will adopt this in the next three to five years in certain pockets of consumer and financial systems. While regulators are worried about the volatility, and elasticity of this currency, it offers certain advantages too. India may have to adopt crypto currency to make cross-border transactions smoother and cheaper.

With increased financial literacy, larger inclusions, and consumers adopting digitisation we may also see the rise of virtual currency systems in day-to-day transactions of mass consumers. Today, some of these systems are confined to games where kids are using these as



gratifications but soon this can become mainstream in retail, travel and hospitality industries, where loyalty or micro-gratifications are important drivers of consumer engagement.

These areas will further add vibrancy, inclusion, financial literacy, invisible/gamified finance and parallel currency models. Interestingly, some of these will also be built on distributed data clouds, blockchains, gamification platforms vs traditional BFSI systems, further opening this sector to innovation.

### Way Forward

#### Democratising Financial Services

To conclude, India will see the emergence of consumer-friendly digital-first, banking and financial ecosystems and most of these will be interconnected not just to help consumers save, transact and earn but also build credit to offer additional



money leverage to the masses. Increased transparency and data will be a new driver democratising most of the financial, insurance and banking products and make them available to masses, which today are confined only to a mere 2-5 per cent of top tier banking consumers.

Most people born after the year 2000 may see banks only via mobile, and may not even enter a bank, possibly, in their lifetime, unlike others.

The growth in India will be catalysed by the resonance of the whole ecosystem thriving to build, adopt and scale. India is sitting on digitally-aware Government, Regulators, BFSI plays, start-ups and most importantly the consumers, all at the same time. Besides, Global innovations and pace will also add pressure to the market to always be on top to stay relevant and competitive.

The author is Founder at Multiply Ventures. Formerly, he was President at Paytm and Director of Alibaba.com

TRISHA HEGDE

BAD  
MIN  
TON  
STAR



## | USHA PRASAD

She was hardly seven when her tender hands held the badminton racquet. Now, all of 19, with an All India ranking of 32, she is dreaming of winning gold at the Olympics for India.

We are talking about Trisha Hegde, who is proving to be a promising shuttler on the Indian sports horizon. What started as a hobby, turned into a passion. Trisha started enjoying the sport so much that as a young enthusiast she gave her all to perform at small tournaments and carved a niche for herself in badminton.

On the face of it, this soft-spoken lass comes across as any other 19-year-old, especially when she confides about how she adores Tennis legend Rafael Nadal, footballer Lionel Messi and American actress Zendaya. A voracious reader, Trisha loves listening to music as well.

Trisha, who looks up to Spanish Badminton player Carolina Marin and our very own P V Sindhu as her idols, is currently training at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) in Yelahanka, Bengaluru under head coach U Vimal Kumar, a former Olympian and National champion.

Trisha proved her mettle when she was just 12 by winning seven titles in a week in the Under-14 and Under-16 categories and she holds a National Record for that at the school level.

Trisha is currently pursuing her second year BA in Optional English, Psychology & Journalism at Jain University, Bengaluru. Trisha's parents have been very supportive in grooming her sporting career.



“Badminton to me is equal to life. The badminton court is like a second home.”

As a young girl, Trisha watched her elder brother Tanush Hegde play the State and District tournaments at the school level, and decided to follow in his footsteps. She started training under coach M D Murali at the Indiranagar Club. Seeing her grit, speed, and game style at the age of eight, Trisha was encouraged to participate in club tournaments and she emerged a winner in all of them.

“On the way back from my swimming classes, my mom and I would go to pick up my brother from his badminton classes at the Indiranagar Club. We would reach 30 to 45 minutes early. Till such time my brother finished

training, I would also casually get to play. I owe it to Murali Sir for trusting me and my capabilities. He taught me the basics and gave good tips about the game. It is he who encouraged me to take part in the tournaments,” reminisces Trisha.

Trisha was nine years old when she won her first trophy at a state tournament held at the Canara Union Club in Bengaluru. While children of her age enjoyed their time playing with friends back from school, Trisha took Badminton seriously and attended her training sessions from 4 PM to 7 PM. Initially, Trisha trained well at the Indiranagar Club for four years to participate in inter-school and interstate

tournaments. At the Under-10 State Tournaments, she stunned many coaches with her performance including none other than the All England Champion Prakash Padukone. He soon absorbed her into PPBA in the Karnataka Badminton Association, Bengaluru in 2013.

“Coaches from the PPBA would come to such tournaments and search for players who performed well and had the potential to make it big. They saw my performance and selected me to get trained at their Academy. One of the coaches called my mother to inform her that I had been selected for the Academy,” says Trisha

who was 13 years old then. It's been seven years since Trisha is training at the Academy.

Since then there has been no looking back for Trisha. She gradually started giving entries to the National Circuit Tournaments. She won a lot of laurels and accolades winning inter-school tournaments for five years on the trot since 2010. She was State No.1 Player winning Championship title in Under-13, Under-15, Under-17, and Under-19 categories.

While her brother stopped playing after 10th standard, Trisha took the sport seriously encouraged by her parents and coaches to be where she is today.

“After the first win, I set small goals for myself. I enjoyed playing the sport and aimed at getting a good ranking at the All India level. The main goal however is to play at the Olympics and get a medal for the country,” quips Trisha.

Trisha's day begins at 4.45 in the morning to get to the fitness track by 5.15. She trains for two hours and then practices at the court from 9.30 to 1. In the evening, she hits the gym at 4 followed by Yoga class at 6.30. Her training comprises three to four sessions every day from Monday to Saturday. On weekends, she goes for extra coaching on a one-to-one basis for four hours.

Sports is in her genes as her mother and grandmother were sportspersons too. Trisha's grandmother was a volleyball player while her mother was a district-level throwball player in school



There's no shortcut to hard work. You have to give your 100 per cent every day. That's when you will start seeing the difference. If you want to be someone and be different from the rest of them, you need to work differently. ”



and has also been playing Badminton for the last 16 years at the Indiranagar Club and has taken part in several inter-club tournaments.

Trisha's mother Shaan has played a major role in Trisha's sporting career. She even quit her job as an officer at the HR department of the UB Group to support young Trisha juggle between her studies and practice sessions. She would drive Trisha to her training sessions daily and accompanied her to all the tournaments. Trisha, who is in awe of Prakash Padukone, says, "It feels good to listen to inspiring stories of his times from Prakash Sir where they had to deal with getting trained without much support and facilities like we enjoy today. He always tells us to take advantage of the facilities available and get trained well."

Recalling the challenges she faced during the Under-13 and Under-15 tournaments where she won seven titles in a week, Trisha says, "In fact, it was very tiring. I lived my life in the car during that time moving from one place to the other. I would eat and change in the car. My mom would drive me around and be with me full time. My achievements

are a result of her immense sacrifice and immeasurable support," adds Trisha.

A die-hard fan of Rafael Nadal, Trisha spotted Nadal's autobiography, 'Rafa: My Story' at a book shop while on an outing with her family just a week before she won the seven titles in a week. "When I browsed the book, I was drawn to pictures of young Nadal. I picked it up merely for the pictures. But once I started reading it, it gripped me and I completed the whole book, around 200 pages, within a week," says Trisha, who was hardly 12 years then. The book did help Trisha to get into good form and play well. "In his autobiography, Nadal explains what goes through his mind before a match point, how he prepares to face the opponent, etc. I started implementing and incorporating some of those techniques before my matches. I tried thinking the

same way he did before his match. That did make some kind of a difference," adds the vivacious player.

Getting nostalgic about her training days as a school student, Trisha says, "During my high school, I had to undergo extensive training with two to three sessions in a day. But I had the support of my teachers who encouraged me to do my best."

Trisha excels in academics as well scoring above 80 per cent in both 10th and 12th Board exams. "I used to carry my books to tournaments whenever I traveled out of the city. I would make use of the time between various sessions to study," says Trisha. She also credits her success to JAIN for the support and encouragement she has received. Trisha got to play internationally for the World Junior Championship in Russia in 2019 and the All

India Champion of the Under 19 category in Girls Singles as well as Girls Doubles.

Trisha moved on from Under 19 to the senior category in 2020 and has started playing internationally. Right now she wants to work on her ranking and is looking forward to playing at bigger tournaments. "It is from last year that I really started training for the Olympics," she adds.

Recalling the most memorable event in her career thus far, Trisha says, "While playing for Under-13 category, I won a title. That was the first time I'd seen Prakash Sir, and he surprised me by lifting me and putting me on his lap to pose for a picture during the reward ceremony. I felt like a kid and still vividly remember that moment." Five years from now Trisha aims to become one of the top players in the country and be among the Top 50 in the world.

Trisha had won sponsorships from Air India, which took care of the expenses of her travel and stay, along with a monthly stipend, and a scholarship from the Airports Authority of India (AAI).





# FAD DIET

A MAGIC PILL  
THAT WON'T  
HELP SHED  
KILOS

| SHWETHA H C



**L**ockdowns have led to immense stress and anxiety among many. Different people have dealt with this in different ways. While some have resorted to fitness, others have sought solace in food, binge eating or munching incessantly at their desks. For the latter, fad diets sure come as the magic pill that seem to temporarily fix the sudden weight-gain problem. However, one must recognise that this is a quick fix that carries psychological baggage and often does not provide a long-term solution.

Manasa, a thirty-year-old software engineer, was very grateful to COVID-19 since the work-from-home arrangement allowed her to work in her pyjamas while reclining on the sofa. But six-months later, the sofa-dwelling had cost her peace of mind as she couldn't fit into her work clothes anymore.

And, like the majority of us, she promptly knocked on Google's door, picked up the current fad diet, and adhered to it religiously, which enabled her to lose eight kilos in a month. However, after she resumed eating normal food, she experienced hormone imbalance, rapid weight gain, and significant mood swings. Most of us have been a Manasa at some point or the other, especially during

this pandemic. Lack of movement and unhealthy snacking has resulted in the weighing scale pointing upwards with each passing month.

While we seek for a swift approach to reduce weight, a quick search on the web presents us with several 'fad diets'. While these 'diets' may produce short-term effects, they are difficult to maintain and eventually deprive a healthy body of crucial nutrients that only balanced nutrition can deliver. Fad diets are more of a bane than boon, says dietician Sahana Gowda, a private practitioner. "Fad diets confuse your body. Often, you lose water weight and muscle mass during the fad-diet period, which leaves you exhausted, weak, and ill, eventually compromising your immunity and leaving your body susceptible to infections. This is the polar opposite of what we desire during COVID-19," she adds

Keto and Paleo being the frontrunners of the diet fad are often suggested and marketed by celebrities like Britney Spears, the Kardashians and Halley Berry. Keto tops the list of fads that many celebrities swear by, but truth be told, Keto diet was developed to help people with epilepsy.

## 1 KETO DIET

The keto diet demands you to consume an exceptionally low-carb, high-fat diet, which induces a metabolic condition known as ketosis, which increases your body's efficiency at burning fat. "Keto flu is the first and most noticeable adverse effect of the Keto diet. Initially, the body must adjust to using ketones for energy rather than glucose. This process takes time and frequently leads to severe mood swings. During this point, the majority of individuals give up. However, the symptoms subside after a few days," says Dr. Sharmila Raghu, who practices at a private clinic in Malleshwaram.

"When you begin the keto diet your body switches from sugar to stored fat as a source of energy. The body creates ketones during this process, which is subsequently eliminated through frequent urination resulting in dehydration, weariness, disorientation, irritability, nausea, and muscular pain. Dehydration may further cause dizziness, renal damage, or kidney stones," she continues. "Very often this may be accompanied by foul breath, lethargy, constipation, irregular menstruation periods, and decreased bone density, as well as disrupting your sleep pattern."

## 2 PALEO DIET

A Paleolithic diet fondly called the Paleo diet is a dietary plan based on foods that were likely consumed during the Paleolithic era, from 2.5 million to 10,000 years ago, and were obtained by hunting and gathering, which required little or no processing to consume – meat, poultry, seafood for the meat lovers and fruits, vegetable and nuts for the non-meat lovers. Fortunately, one does not need to hunt or collect to follow this diet in the 21 Century.

This diet is often difficult to maintain, due to the high meat consumption, which results in gastro-intestinal disturbances such as diarrhoea and other health concerns such as joint aches. When patients were evaluated, they were found to have high cholesterol and uric acid levels (gout).

"The diet prohibits dairy, grain and legume consumption. The earliest visible negative effects of the diet include low blood sugar or hypoglycemia, as well as changes in bowel motions. A typical paleo diet puts the majority of individuals at risk of calcium and vitamin D deficiency, which are crucial for bone health. Simultaneously, saturated fat and protein intake can be significantly higher than advised, which in turn would increase the risk of renal and heart problems, as well as some malignancies," Dr. Sharmila says.

## 3 GM DIET

Another one on the fad list being the seven-day weight-loss miracle, the GM diet or General Motors diet guarantees weight loss of up to seven kilos a week. For seven days, individuals are instructed to select and consume foods from a certain food category. For example, on the first day, individuals are permitted to consume just fruits; on the second day, they are permitted to consume only vegetables; and so on.

Diet followers need to understand the fact that any low-calorie diet is more likely to result in muscle loss, as it restricts protein intake and may decrease metabolism, making it more difficult to lose weight in the future. "A person who follows a GM diet may experience extreme fatigue and weakness as a result of the abrupt decrease in calorie consumption. Occasionally, this triggers

binge eating after having quit the diet, causing to gain twice the weight lost. Additionally, headaches and hair loss are possible adverse effects of this diet. A GM diet is not advised for the long term due to its nutritional deficiency. One of the most significant disadvantages of this diet is that once the normal eating habit is resumed, one can nearly instantly regain all of the lost weight," says nutritionist Dr. Mythreyi Ram.

## 4 VEGAN DIET

Pop culture has long promoted skinny and fair as the ideal appearance for women. For years, size-zero and the fashion statements linked with it have snowballed, duping women into believing there is no such thing as being 'too thin,' despite the fact that they resemble skeletons hanging out of couture. Several celebrities have defied these physical norms and Adele, the British singer, is one of them. During the zenith of her fame, she was often criticised for her weight.

She silenced the naysayers with a





single remark: 'I compose music for ears, not sight.' However, something changed last year, as the singer appeared on the red carpet following a massive weight loss of 100 pounds 45 kilos. According to those close to her, the transformation was facilitated by her gym workouts and vegan diet. Veganism is only for the wealthy, chuckles nutritionist Dr. Raghuram. The diet foregoes all food sources from animals and their byproducts. There is no dairy and no meat. As a result, one is frequently on the lookout for replacements. Additionally, if you are already vegetarian, the transition is much easier. However, Raghuram argues, it is not all sunshine and rainbows for non-vegetarians contemplating a vegan lifestyle.

"AS a vegan, one must abstain from milk and substitute it with soy or almond milk. Almond milk costs more than Rs 300 a litre, while soy milk can disrupt hormones, resulting in skin discoloration, acne outbreaks, and even an irregular menstrual cycle. The 'replacements' are almost certain to burn a hole in the pocket, and are most emphatically not worth it," he argues.

Vegans and vegetarians alike



are at risk of Vitamin B12 deficiency, which is why a supplement tablet becomes necessary. Inadequate ingestion of fish or fish oil results in a deficiency of Omega 3 fatty acids and the alternative algae-based Omega 3 source is prohibitively expensive and difficult to get. Excessive ingestion of plant-based proteins may result in a condition called as leaky gut, as many of them include anti-nutrients. As a result, Raghuram advocates adopting a vegan diet only if you can 'afford' plant-based supplements.

## INTERMITTENT FASTING

Recommendation by YouTubers with several celebrities promoting it, Intermittent Fasting is slowly finding its way to the top of fad diets. There is a 16:8 plan, in which you eat for eight hours and fast for sixteen, and a 5:2 plan, in which you eat for five days and fast for two. Occasionally, some people like to combine the two in order to lose weight rapidly. "Some individuals refer to Intermittent Fasting as a way of life, quoting our forefathers and explaining how they did so in order to live a healthy lifestyle. While it is partly accurate, before embarking on this diet, consider if it is a sustainable approach once you return to work from office. Can you maintain a 16-hour fast in light of your job stress and travelling to office? Intermittent fasting, like any other diet, loses its effectiveness once it is discontinued. The ponch begins to appear, and you will soon find yourself precisely where you were. Though the diet is quite successful and has little adverse effects, if you cannot envision yourself making this a way of life, this is also a waste of time," advises Advaita Hegde, a dietician.

"Now is not the time to undertake lifestyle or nutritional modifications, particularly those

associated with fad diets. Concentrate on fueling your body with nutritious foods, getting adequate rest, and being active. If you believe your weight increase is out of control, get expert assistance. Self-medication is always risky, and bear in mind that food is a medicine that helps maintain the body healthy and active," Advaita adds.

The essential point to remember is that when all of this is over and you finally get to meet your friends and family, they will be grateful to see you. Therefore, rather than focusing on short cures, an attempt at understanding the body is necessary. Internet should be utilized to determine the right kind of meals that naturally promote weight reduction while also making the body feel energized. Fad diets that excessively limit food types or nutrients may also deprive you of the beneficial health benefits associated with a balanced eating plan.

While carbohydrates provide energy for the body, protein aids in muscular growth, and healthy fats protect our organs. Therefore, our dietary intake must be a healthy balance of all three.

### Plan B for long-term sustainable weight loss.

- Eat as healthy as possible. Switch chips and unhealthy snacks with crunchy vegetables like carrot and cucumber.
- Try to squeeze-in at least one hour a day for workout for 4 days a week. In fact, YouTube has several videos about how you can burn calories by simply doing the basic household-chores every day.
- Drink plenty of water. If you are one of those people who finds water boring, add fruits to it and enhance the taste experience.
- Consistency is the key. Even if you had to break the pattern for a day or two, always bounce back to attain maximum benefits.



| ALAHAM ANIL KUMAR

# BALI

## THE MORNING OF THE WORLD

I travelled in time to 1941 to a land that is right next to paradise. I visited Bali, the 'Island of Gods' just before the pandemic hit us, in November 2019. Confused? Let me explain. The year 2019 in the Georgian calendar is 1941 in the Balinese calendar. In fact, the Balinese follow not one, but two indigenous calendars: The *Pawukon*, a 210-day calendar that has its origins in the Hindu religion; it consists of different concurrent weeks of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 days. The first day of the year is the first day of all the ten weeks. The other is The Balinese *Suka* calendar and unlike the Pawukon calendar, it is based on the phases of the moon and is approximately the same length as the Gregorian calendar.

Bali province is among the 17,508 islands that dot the Indonesian archipelago. A nine-hour flight from India, this tropical getaway is a pocket-friendly international option. While Java and Sumatra are the largest islands by population, and Jakarta is rated among the largest cities in the world, it is Bali that attracts throngs of tourists from across the world.

This south-east Asian destination offers a two-fold attraction: the topography -- helmed by a mountain chain that divides the province, sporting a couple of active volcanoes and several dry ones, white sandy beaches and lakes. The mountain peaks offer a panoramic view of Bali; and the unique Balinese culture -- Bali is home to a Hindu-majority population in an otherwise Muslim dominated country. I must say, Balinese Hinduism adds character to the province.

## CULTURAL MAGNIFICENCE

Hinduism was embraced as early as the 7th Century and co-exists with the animistic tradition. The trinity of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu are worshipped and the natural elements like earth, fire, water, mountains, rice and plantations are represented by their own local god.

The most fascinating aspect of the Balinese culture is their closeness to this religion, even to this day; it is a way of life; the spiritual and philosophical elements of the religion are lived experiences of the people unlike in the land of its birth, India. In India, largely, Hinduism is a precept tucked away inside religious scriptures and books. Westernisation and commercialisation have eroded the intrinsic values of Hinduism, and it has entrenched itself in the politics of the country.

Every nook and corner of Bali has open air temples and shrines enclosed within walls and ornate gates and the daily routine of the people, especially women, is punctuated by ceremonial practices and offerings to gods and fellow human beings.

## UBUD - SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL HUB

Ubud, a two-hour drive from Bali, particularly, abounds with these practices and offerings. Ubud is Bali's cultural and spiritual center. In every street of Ubud you are bound to see women dressed in traditional attire (a white shirt, a long skirt called *songket kamber*) carrying fruit, flower and rice offerings in baskets on their head to the temples; these offerings are made to people as well. You may be pleasantly surprised to find such an offering outside your accommodation. Offerings are also kept at shop fronts on commercial streets.

The streets of Bali and Ubud, in the evenings, are enlivened by performances of scenes from the Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha, which are not for touristy reasons but purely as part of

the Balinese lifestyle. The younger generations grow up absorbing the values disseminated by this lifestyle; a fine blend of the spiritual and the worldly. Balinese world-view while it shares its belief of karma and reincarnation with the Indian, the social structure is not hierarchised on caste lines, as in India. The Balinese Hindu spirituality is externalised in ceremonies, rituals and beliefs and most importantly in the virtues of compassion, peace and openness towards all things living.



## CULMINATION OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

For an art buff, Ubud is a haven alright! You will stumble upon many famous art galleries across the length and breadth of Ubud. Leisure visits to Balinese Art Galleries is my favourite pastime. The Balinese have created a society for artists that control the pricing so artists can concentrate on their creative expression, free from commercial and survival concerns. I did pick up a work by the great Bagus Suteja from the society run by the Bali Art Community. I am convinced that every Balinese is an artist, specially gifted by the gods. Every child grows up with a keen sense of dance, art or crafts of some kind and it is no wonder that many take to the arts easily and make it their profession.

My first ever visit to the Bali province was to attend the world famous Ubud Writers and Readers Festival. If you are a literary buff, I suggest you plan your trip in early October so you can attend the iit fest. It's simply one of the world's best; and, rightfully, The Harper Magazine calls it, 'one of the best literary shows in the world'. The 5-day festival is held in early October annually and attracts the greatest writers from around the world. The festival is organised by Janet DeNeefe who also runs Casa Luna and Indus restaurants in Ubud. At Casa Luna, you can add to your culinary skills in a well-curated cookery class for Balinese dishes and its heritage. In the initial years, the festival was my primary destination. But gradually, I was charmed by Bali enough to make several holiday visits. The last time around, I travelled in November. Though I missed the festival, I visited for the first time the famous GWK Cultural Park that houses the world's largest statue of a Hindu deity, Vishnu that stands at a height of 122 meters and the park attracts a whopping half a million tourists every year. It's amazing how a Hindu statue is celebrated in a country that is Islamic.

Since Ubud is also pretty much the geographical center of the Island, you can make it your home base. It's a great place to explore by foot. You can even hitch-hike with a random stranger on his bike when your feet get tired!

Bike tours are a good way to explore the Balinese country-side. And that is exactly what I did while in Ubud. I rented a motorbike and rode amidst green swathes of paddy fields and planted rice terraces. Harvesters beating grains off the stalks, duck shepherds walking their flocks to the fields, and water buffaloes turning over the empty fields were common sights. This lush, tropical island is full of visual delights, like the red-flowering banana plants or white-petaled trees.

## TRIVIA

Home to the most expensive coffee in the world called **Kopi Luwak or Cat Poop Coffee** (brewed from partially digested beans eaten by a civet) beans. While some vouch by its scintillating aroma and not so bitter taste others call it a tourist trap. Decide for yourself.

## DANCING ON THE HILL - TOPS

On a balmy day, I landed atop the Ulawatu hill, an hour's drive by taxi from Ubud. Overlooking the magnificent Indian Ocean, this hilltop is perfect for a day outing. A quaint temple, dedicated to a Balanese manifestation of lord Rudra, stands perched on a cliff lashed incessantly by frothing waves. The surroundings of the temple is infested with monkeys so beware of your belongings.

An open air auditorium nearby hosts the world famous fire Kecak dance. The dance is performed every evening during and after sunset. Watching the traditional Kecak dance atop the hill is an experience in itself. It is performed not to music but to the rhythmic chanting of 'chak' by the 'monkey' chorus comprising a hundred-odd men in white and black checkered lungi-like attire. Seated, they sway from side to side, making hand gestures and amidst them the 3 or 4 main characters, dressed in traditional attire and headgear perform scenes from the Hindu epic. A traditional lamp remains lit at the centre. Under the expanse of the blue skies to the sound of waves beneath, Kecak is a fascinating performance to watch. The dominance of male performers for over a century since its origin, was broken in 2006 with the performance of the first women's troupe.

Tourists are expected to wear the traditional *sarong* on the hilltop. The *sarong* is worn especially during prayer offerings in local temples. However it has become a comfort-wear and people dress in just the *sarong* as they go about their daily activities.

## PRISTINE BEACHES

From Ubud you can catch buses that shuttle to several beaches, or avail inexpensive but efficient boat services to nearby Gilli Islands. Considered one of the most beautiful islands, it is three and a half hours away from Ubud. Comprising



Trawangan, Meno and Air islands it is perfect to relax and commune with the calming beachside waves lapping your feet. A visit to this island is certainly worth a visit for the beautiful coral reefs and splendid marine life. It is also a destination for snorkelling, rafting, surfing and other water sport. If you spend the day time engaged thus, you may look forward to a vibrant nightlife with great bars and restaurants offering delectable seafood.

Alternatively, you can take a boat to Nusa Lembongan, which is still part of Bali and Hindu, whereas the Gilli's are more associated with neighboring Lombok province. Nusa is gaining visibility for its pristine white sand beaches and sport activity. You can also sight turtles in these isles.

Gilli or Nusa; One of them is definitely on the itinerary of a tourist. If you do not wish

## TRAVEL

to stay overnight, you can opt for luxury cruises, inclusive of sightseeing, lunch, dinner and snorkelling in the kitty.

## WELLNESS DESTINATION

The 2010, Julia Robert starrer, *Eat, Love, Pray*, over the next decade, transformed Bali into a hotspot for women solo travellers. In the movie, Julia Roberts visits Bali, as part of her soul-searching journey. Many women followed suit and Bali lent itself as the ideal destination, pristine, safe, culturally rich. Traveling alone is not a paradox as some would like to believe. Bali gives you the space and atmosphere to commune — with yourself, with the good-natured, amiable people, with nature and the larger unseen forces of the universe. There's no better place to augur this experience than Bali; the pace and quality of life, goads you to slow down and find your bearings, especially when one feels a little lost.

No wonder then that Bali has attracted spiritualists, yogis and healers from around the world to establish wellness centres to guide tourists on the path to self-discovery. Bali's tropical environment, steeped in the rich and a slow-pace life of simplicity has elevated it to a destination for wellness and rejuvenation. Bali offers endless options for yoga classes and retreats. The biggest and brightest, however, is the Yoga Barn, known as one of the largest retreat centers in Southeast Asia. Sessions from traditional Ashtanga, Vinyasa, and Hatha Yoga, to newer offerings like Thai Yoga Massage, Yin Yoga, and Acro Yoga (a combination of acrobatics and yoga) are offered. Many of these luxury retreats have cafes, five-star accommodations, expert holistic healers, restaurants offering vegetarian and vegan buffet and even movie nights and h other entertainment events.





## FOR THE PALATE

If you are one for chic and sophisticated diners, Semenyak gives you plenty of options. It is quite likely that you will bump into a Hollywood star at these hip places. I once happened to be dining at the beach-facing open air restaurant in Oberoi, Semenyak and the waiter said I occupied the same table that was just vacated by Kevin Costner. Noticing my incredulity, he showed me a selfie with Costner as proof. I asked him how he felt having met a star, to which he said, "I am a bigger star because it's people like me who have made him a star!"

If you are a hippy and prefer easy-going, rudimentary spaces, then head straight to Kuta and Nusa Dua and the roadside eateries that play Rastafarian music inspired by Bob Marley that's sure to get you into the groove.

Like me, If it is seafood that you are after, then you must visit Jimbaran Bay, which serves up the best seafood delicacies by the beach. You can enjoy the sun set and have a great dinner by the beach in a very informal setting as the cool breeze hits your face from the sea.

However, If you want a taste of their simple authentic staples, then, Mie goreng, or stir fried noodles, is what you must try. It is flavourful and wholesome. Likewise rice is

also consumed regularly along with meat and vegetables. The Nasi Jinggo, literally, fried rice, is dished out in every nook and corner, wrapped in banana leaves. Yellow porridge is another breakfast staple, simple but nutritious and a sumptuous start for the day. The Nasi Jinggo is also served as part of ceremonial rituals as it represents gratitude.

I fell in love with Lontong Sayur - rice cakes served with coconut milk based curry with raw papaya cubes, soy-braised tofu, and hard-boiled eggs. You can find this dish across the archipelago. The beauty of this dish is that each province is marked by its own signature recipe. Having visited several Indonesian islands, the variety baffles me and each variety exceeds the other in taste and nutrition-value.

## BALINESE HOSPITALITY

Balinese culture emphasises community consciousness and hence families typically live together in compounds as little communities. Every community has one or more home temples. For larger public gatherings involving ceremonies of greater import, the Balinese go to one of the many public temples. If you want to experience the Balinese hospitality, you can choose to be hosted by a Balinese family.

Staying with a family gives you the added advantage of living their life hands-on - helping on their farm, participating in prayers and rituals, cooking with them, trying their fresh, home-made flavours, learning a smattering of Balinese and above all, forging lasting relationships and memories.

If you are planning a holiday, I recommend Bali, that Jawaharlal Nehru once famously described as "the morning of the world". Bali is truly a special land and rare is the traveller who returns home untouched by its magic, especially the pervasive spirituality and compelling human bonds that the Balinese exhibit.

The Balinese people are known for their kindness, tolerance, and hospitality. Expect to feel welcomed to the island like you are an old friend returning home. Wherever you stay, the staff will learn your name, bringing another level of comfort to your travel. They live a life that is easy and laid back, and attached to the spirit, unlike metropolitan cultures caught in the rat race. They live a happy and contented life relatively free from stress but seasoned by the sweat of laborious work in the rice fields.

**I**T'S 5 AM ON A WEDNESDAY MORNING. I'm barely able to open my eyes. I wake up to a blurred vision of undulating mountain peaks across the horizon and a beautiful landscape covered in hues of blue and green. Rubbing my eyes, I stretch my arms only to realise that there are four more sleepyheads in the car; my besties who are as crazy as I am and they looked awful at the moment. Assuming I looked as terrible as them, I glanced at the rearview mirror and I couldn't have been more right. We looked spent and disheveled after two hours of street wandering and six hours of driving to this unplanned destination.

Yet again, clearly, a reasonably suave new year's eve that started with a meet-up at a new diner had eventually spiraled into a rebellious affair and an impulsive travel plan that had landed us where we are right now.

Carefree night-outs like this one were a huge part of my life before COVID-19 social gatherings, late night dinners with friends, impromptu journeys capped with brunch, and further sprees with another set of friends-all in one day. Staying at home during my day offs or on weekends never appealed to me. Weekdays were usually spent at work amidst meetings, chasing deadlines and banter with colleagues and after-work-hours were spent mostly in endless conversations on Whatsapp calls or chats with friends who lived far off, until I dozed off; sometimes even between conversations. January 1st, 2020, 12 AM, wishes poured in from all around the world. While I danced my way to new beginnings, little did I or anybody else have any idea that 2020 and the few years to follow, would just not be like the several years we had spent till now. A couple of months into 2020 and the fear gripped the world. 2021 has not been better either.

My worst nightmare had come true... LOCKDOWN.

Along with the announcement of lockdown arrived my solitude. Though the declaration of lockdown stirred some witticisms

initially, I was truly plagued by the gloom of being alone – the experience of being isolated was like a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which would make breathing difficult – the very basic for a human to be alive.

Me amidst the four walls of my flat, and my life fell flat!! For the first time in ages, my mind and I were left to ourselves and we couldn't wander aimlessly. I wasn't good with alone-time and had been forced to open the doors of self-talk. I have never liked me-time, because I am an over-thinker. I would rehash my thoughts and obsess over all the minutiae, details, conversations and incidents that had occurred months or even years ago, and keep them running through my mind in an infinite loop. Basically, I had curated a busy life for myself to escape from boredom and seclusion and nobody ever told me that it was a problem. I had wired myself to believe that I could enjoy only in the company of other people. Amidst the dalgona coffee and videos of self-proclaimed chefs presenting virtual delicacies through photos and videos the pace and character of my life had changed.

So, what had changed? A lot and a lot more.

There was no noise, it was silence all over. There was no need to rush to office, there wasn't the pressure to join

the pandemonium around. With new socialising norms, I could truly bond with a couple of neighbours turned friends with whom I crossed paths during my evening walks around the society building, without the possibility of mere meet ups extending to long hours of partying or short jaunts. I always felt I needed social life to complete me and not having one would make me feel miserable and lonely; but with the new socialising restrictions, I realigned my notions and embraced private time. Gradually, I realised that it was more about finding out who I was on my own terms; not the collective identity constructed by those around me.

In my blissful silence, I was convinced I had all insecurities removed, without the pressure to look good or sound interesting always. Solitude was wonderful to discover. It broadened the reach of my experiences and enriched my life. When I was around people regularly, I failed to recognise the constant flow of mental noise that deferred me from finding happiness within. As I placed more emphasis on receiving validation and happiness from others, I had lost the ability to find strength from within, the pursuit of which for me, was possible in seclusion. But my isolation time has helped me erect protective barriers, and I no longer crave for that constant contact with the world. So, does this mean I wouldn't re-join the world when the norms of isolation are removed? Does this mean I fear socialising now?

NO!! It only means that from here on I wouldn't seek external validation for my mental well-being. I would re-join the world in all its uproar, but wouldn't allow it to affect my internal harmony.

I now seek to be a socially balanced butterfly rather than a social butterfly. I am not closed to social gatherings, but now I know I need not give into obligations. I wouldn't jump into an automated voice note of saying a 'yes' to impulsive decisions to party all night or travel aimlessly. Isolation or the lockdown has taught me to coexist with the world, while enjoying my own company too.

# Welcoming the Socially Balanced LIFE

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