

Civil Society

CAMPUS UPSURGE

How students have come together on issues



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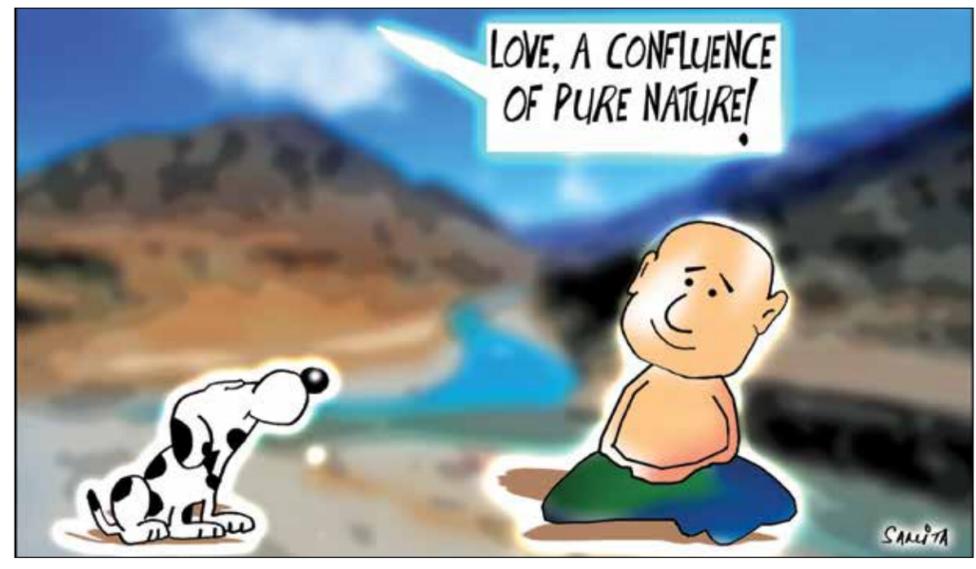


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Over the years, Himalaya has actively promoted the health and well-being of individuals across all age groups. Our campaign 'Healthy India, Happy India' focuses on healthcare by conducting comprehensive health camps in rural, semi-urban, and remote areas. Our recent camp in Mawphlang village, East Khasi Hills, in association with SYNJUK (Ka Synjuk Ki Hima Arliang Wah Umiam Mawphlang Welfare Society), gave the local community access to specialized healthcare services, such as Dental, Ophthalmology, Gynecology, Pediatrics, Orthopedics, and General screening. Awareness sessions were conducted on health and hygiene, and free medicines were distributed during the camp. Through this initiative, we reached out to over 1000 individuals. Similar camps have also been conducted in Rajasthan and in more than 40 government schools in Bengaluru.

IN THE LIGHT

SAMITA RATHOR



LETTERS



Student uprising

Thanks for your cover story, 'Rising anger.' Your article captures perfectly the anguish that the youth feel about the direction this country is taking. For a long time we were all silent, watching the minority community being harangued, hounded and even lynched. After the Delhi Police barged into Jamia and beat up students, it was the youth who finally broke that silence and inspired us all to fight for justice.

Prakash Sanghvi

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is now a law. The National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens are in the pipeline. It is up to the state governments to resist. People will now vote for regional leaders who can protect them from the Centre.

Shikha Rajput

Your cover story captured the mood.

I think many more people need to protest.

Vimala Ramachandran

With reference to the CAA, my view is that the BJP-led government at the Centre should immediately roll back this law because it is not a feasible one. The outsiders who are residing in our country illegally are putting an extra financial burden on the exchequer and indirectly shooting up public expenditure. They are also increasing our population. They are eating up all the jobs of India's deserving citizens. They should leave with immediate effect.

I fail to understand how these people entered India in the first place.

The Border Security Force needs to answer some tough questions. Bangladesh's offer to take back its citizens is indeed commendable. Other countries should also ask their citizens to return. No refugee from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh should be given citizenship because it places a huge burden on our resources.

Harminder

Data privacy

Thanks for your immensely informative interview with Apar Gupta, 'Bill on data gives too much to government.' This is a burning issue across the world and a topic ordinary citizens don't know much of. He has

demystified all the contours of this pending Bill for us.

Ananya Gupta

It's not easy to find a balance between data privacy and access to services online. Every time you use an app or a website you leave your data footprint behind. The government, of course, is the biggest violator of our privacy. Rein in the government first.

Shyam

Trails and hikes

Thanks for Ashwini Kamath's story, 'Goa's Walking Company'. I travelled with their team on their trails in Goa. They are a wonderful, hardworking bunch, offbeat in a likeable sort of way.

Kavita Shah

Jackfruit boom

I read Shree Padre's piece, 'Jack Hotspot: Thailand Pink blooms in Kerala village.' I wonder whether the state is becoming a jack of all trades in farming instead of maintaining its status of being a hotspot for spices. Hope Kerala's farming of fruit will lead to better outcomes for farmers.

Radhakrishnan P.K.

Saffron surge

I read Sanjaya Baru's article, 'New India and the West.' It was an interesting point of view which, I think, the BJP-led government has overlooked. The world has always admired our vibrant and secular democracy. It has been used as part of our soft power strategy for so long. But not so anymore.

Ravneet Singh

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COVER STORY

THE BIG CAMPUS UPSURGE

What is bringing young people out on the most unlikely of campuses? It is a wide range of concerns though the trigger has been the crushing of student protests at Jamia and JNU.

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Lurching along

JUST when India should be rapidly dealing with its many problems and coasting into a robust future, as it indeed has the capacity to do, the country seems to be in the grip of a sense of foreboding. The economy slipping into a coma is one big reason for everyone to be worried. But it goes beyond that.

If we listen carefully to the young we will find that they are concerned about the shrinking space for personal freedoms and expression. A great many of the young don't take to caste and religious divides. Young women making their way on to campuses want equality and access. You can't expect the young to settle for less in an age shaped by disaggregated technologies like the mobile phone and the Internet.

In the 20 plus years since reforms began, privatization has come to be much better understood for what it can deliver and what it cannot. When it comes to education, the young are clear that they want it to be affordable and inclusive. Giving educational institutions autonomy and jacking up fees does not go down well with them. At the same time there is distaste for the heavy hand of the State. The government the young want should be a facilitator, not a gruff arbiter.

The upsurge on campuses is unprecedented. But it has been in the making for a long time. CAA and NRC are inflexion points at which all the other concerns have come tumbling out. It is to be noted that there has been nationwide revulsion over the incidents at JNU and Jamia. There is a genuine fear that such incidents will be repeated in other institutions to crush dissent when the young dare to speak up.

Recent developments also underline the need to understand a parliamentary majority for what it is. It can't be confused with mass acceptance. Governments, therefore, have a responsibility to carry everyone along. Pushing through laws and policies without adequate consultation will have the consequences that we are now witnessing.

Our interview with Nandita Haksar is an attempt to explore the issues pertaining to identity, religion and culture. These shouldn't be decided in the streets. Governments have a responsibility in a country as diverse as ours to set the stage for harmonious solutions. Haksar has a distinguished record as a lawyer and champion of civil rights. She has worked for long with groups in the Northeast, where the Indian model of development has been a dismal failure precisely because it hasn't recognized local culture.

We also bring you a green map for Bengaluru so that the city knows what it once had and what it is rapidly losing. This is the third green map, the first two being on Delhi and Pune.

And from Goa we have a report on the concerns over a corridor for transporting coal to Karnataka. Will this project lead to pollution and ecological damage as many Goans are beginning to fear?

Publisher
Umesh Anand

Editor
Rita Anand

News Network
Shree Padre, Saibal Chatterjee, Jehangir Rashid, Susheela Nair, Kavita Charanji

Desk & Reporting
Rwit Ghosh
Sidika Sehgal

Photography
Shrey Gupta

Layout & Design
Virender Chauhan

Cartoonist
Samita Rathor

Write to Civil Society at:
A-16 (West Side), 1st Floor, South Extension Part 2, New Delhi - 110049.
Phone: 011-46033825, 9811787772

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Nandita Haksar: "We do not seem to realize that the cultural diversity of 220 communities in the Northeast is a resource for development"

'The Northeast's fears of being swamped are genuine'

Nandita Haksar on the problems of identity

Civil Society News
Panaji

A jumble of assertions has engulfed India over the passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and plans for a National Register of Citizens (NRC). Similarly, the normally harmless exercise of updating the National Population Register (NPR) has now become controversial.

A majoritarian government with a brute majority in Parliament seems to have plunged the country into social turmoil of a kind not witnessed in the past six decades. Students are up in arms on the most docile of campuses and middle-class folk have been holding protests in the streets.

Civil Society spoke to Nandita Haksar on what to make of these developments. A civil rights lawyer, activist and a close observer of life and politics in the Northeast, Haksar's is a clear and knowledgeable voice. Excerpts from a lengthy conversation at her home in Dona Paula in Goa where Haksar now lives with her husband, Sebastian M. Hongray, an author,

human rights activist and a Naga.

As a human rights activist who has worked extensively in the Northeast on people's rights, how do you see CAA-NRC-NPR?

As a human rights lawyer I have one major concern which goes beyond the current debates on the NRC in the Northeast or for the country as a whole.

The census has always been about collecting information for the purpose of governance and control over population. The old census was a part of data collection; the new kind of census using new technologies (mainly based on artificial intelligence) leads to the creation of metadata. Edward Snowden has shown us how metadata is being used for worldwide surveillance. And he has also demonstrated how dangerous it is for citizens because there is no legal framework in place for the protection of individuals (or nations) who are victims of breach in data security.

Coming to the Northeast, we have seen how the collection of data for the NRC led to

disfranchisement of thousands of men, women and children and illegal detentions, families torn apart and people living with fear, insecurity and uncertainty.

There is no legal framework for redress of the grievances of the magnitude that we have seen with the NRC in Assam. There is no remedy for the 1.9 million people left out of the NRC in Assam except to approach lawyers individually and, till their turn comes, endure endless pain, insecurity and humiliation.

Courts are equipped to deal with individual violations of fundamental rights, not with violations on this massive scale.

As far as the Northeast is concerned, I have three or four things to say.

I first went to the Northeast in 1982. I remember the first petition filed by someone in Manipur against Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). Half that petition was on the issue of Nepali migrants. It is true that India has a special agreement with regard to Nepali migrants but, from the

perspective of Northeast tribal communities whether it is Nepali Hindu, Bangladeshi Hindu or Muslim or Chakma Buddhists, all these migrants threaten the fragile ecology and diversity of cultures in the Northeast.

In India many people in civil society have refused to acknowledge the problem as the tribal peoples of the Northeast see it. The problem is simply this: many communities feel endangered by relentless migration from across the international border.

In 2011 my husband and I decided to drive across the Northeast for four months. We touched on all the borders. When we went to the Bangladesh border we could see people streaming in. While I feel deep empathy for migrants who are forced to leave their homes because of religious persecution, climate change, or economic deprivation, we also need to balance their interests with the interests of citizens. I see it as a conflict between human rights and humanitarian concerns.

However, the non-tribal communities living in the Northeast have other concerns. The Muslims living in the Northeast have faced discrimination and prejudice. They have also been targets of violence, the most well-known example is the Nellie massacre. But in Nagaland we saw how brutal and savage an attack on Muslims can be when Nagas lynched an alleged Bangladeshi and murdered him on suspicion of rape but did not so much as protest against a pastor from Kerala who had been involved in the rape and sexual assault of children under his care in Jaipur.

And that is what the anger is about among the people of the Northeast?

Yes. There is anger as well as insecurity. The tribal peoples of the Northeast, like the people in the rest of the country, have been very generous in welcoming refugees and migrants. For instance, in 1971, the erstwhile queen of Tripura opened her palace gates and welcomed Bangladeshi refugees, both Hindus and Muslims. As a result of that, the Tripuri became a minority. Tripura is an ancient kingdom with a long history.

Today, the queen's son, Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma, with great dignity, has asked the Supreme Court to implement an Assam-like NRC to stop illegal infiltration into the state. He wants to say that he belongs to a kingdom which did welcome refugees but nobody wants to become a minority in their own home — culturally and politically. So I would like to stress that the arrival of migrants into the Northeast is a genuine problem. The people of the Northeast are voicing a genuine concern.

Against this background, the idea of extending the NRC to the rest of India or even the CAA and the NPR is disconcerting. The experience of the NRC, the building of detention centres and so many people incarcerated in the Northeast expose the fact that all these laws are not being made in the interest of the people, Northeast or otherwise, but for some other agenda.

The prime minister has said the people of the Northeast would be protected by Inner Line Permits and so on, but again the Inner Line Permit so far does not apply to states with a border with Bangladesh, that is, Tripura and Meghalaya.

So the Northeast leaders are asking either for National Registers as a way to document the illegal migrants or asking for Inner Line restrictions as a

means to protect themselves from migrants and outsiders (which includes Indian citizens). But when they demand an NRC they seem to be in conflict with those who are protesting against an NRC on the ground that it is a tool for discrimination against Muslims. We have often seen bitter conflicts between tribal communities such as the Bodos and Muslims. And in the Northeast each community is backed by armed insurgents so the conflict becomes deadly.

For instance, in Manipur there are more than 20 armed groups representing Nagas, Kukis (mostly Christian), Meitei (representing Vaishnav and Sanamahi) and Meitei Muslim or Pangals (Muslims of Manipur).

What do you do then?

As members of civil society we can only try and understand the problem, disseminate information and when necessary protest on the streets as so many people, mainly students, have done. Besides students, Muslim organizations such as the Popular Front of India have also mobilized Muslims to join the protests.

'The experience of the NRC, the building of detention centres and so many people incarcerated in the Northeast expose the fact that these laws are not being made in the interest of the people, Northeast or otherwise.'

We need conversations on the nature of citizenship in an era of globalization. We also need a law for the protection of refugees taking asylum in our country, which is transparent and non-discriminatory. There is also need for a policy for the protection of migrants, both within the country and from outside.

None of these policies will work unless the government at the centre is committed to democratic values and promotion of human rights.

Do you think this phase is damaging our prospects of building a modern state?

I think part of the problem is global. We adopted the capitalist model of development, which creates wide gaps between the rich and poor, rural and urban. It leads to concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Some of the injustice and inequity of a capitalist model was mitigated by the idea of a welfare state. But there has been a roll-back of the welfare state and now development does not serve the interests of the people. The vulnerable sections of society like the communities of the Northeast suffer the most.

In this model it is still possible to see the Northeast's enormous cultural and ecological diversity as an economic resource but that has not happened. In these circumstances, identity movements are the response to the threat of extinguishment.

But even before the present crisis I don't think the Northeast was very much part of the Indian vision. Part of my work was to try and include the people and communities living in the Northeast in our vision of India.

And to some extent we have succeeded, haven't we? After all, so many people from the Northeast now work all over India.

I do not think it is a mark of success if young people, with little or no education, are forced to leave their homes in search of a job. Villages in the Northeast do not have young people and old people have no one to take care of them, to fetch water, chop wood or give comfort.

I documented the lives of some of these migrant workers in my book called *The Exodus is Not Over: Migrations from the Ruptured Homelands of Northeast India* (2016). One of the people I wrote about was a young woman, Atim, who worked as a waitress and after she read her own story she said: "I did not realize our lives are so sad."

But if there is any success it is that a generation of young people from all over the Northeast has got a good education and they have become teachers in our universities. They have voiced the concern of the Northeast people and they have become visible in the intellectual landscape of our country.

But these are also people who are the force behind

the growth of regionalism which can be destructive of a pan-Indian nationalism.

But if every state in the Northeast is going to ask for an NRC, aren't we going to witness turmoil? The NRC in Assam was a failure. It was a botched exercise.

Not all people in the Northeast are asking for an NRC; the Muslims are demanding that it be scrapped. This has led to a potentially explosive situation.

We see today in the Northeast that the tribal communities and Hindus of the Northeast want the NRC while Muslims see it as a tool to disenfranchise them and are protesting against it.

The all-India protests against the plan to have an NRC have focused on one dimension: the discriminatory nature of implementation, the special protection for non-Muslim refugees and some people have said it is part of a plan to make India a homeland for Hindus much as Israel was conceptualized by Zionists as a homeland for the Jewish people.

For those of us who visualize India as a homeland for all religions and communities, as a living example of unity in diversity, the idea of India as a homeland for one community is abhorrent.

But even for those committed to the idea of India as unity in diversity we have to find a way of making all communities feel at home; the people of the Northeast do not feel they belong fully. The diversity they represent is seen as an obstacle for development. We do not seem to recognize that the cultural diversity that 220 communities living in the Northeast have, could be a resource for development,

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

not to be preserved but to be allowed to flourish.

We need to understand that this is cultural wealth and intellectual property, which needs to be developed. Then we will not look at the Northeast as a backward economic area but as a culturally rich resource, which is part of (India's) economic development.

This is something even the people of the Northeast don't realize. None of the movements, the Assam movement or the movements in Mizoram or Nagaland, has looked at culture as a resource.

So you are saying that we may be missing an opportunity in not recognizing the value of culture in the Northeast and integrating it into development?

Precisely. If the tribal communities of the Northeast had not felt alienated from the rest of the country, they might not today be asking for Inner Line protection, which was, in fact, a method the British colonial rulers used to isolate them.

But, currently, the slogan against "outsiders" is a rallying cry which helps mobilize people without any further thinking of solutions to the problem of development and a vision for the future.

The alienation leads to anger and the anger is directed against migrants, the most vulnerable section of society.

The problem is made more complex by the fact that the Northeast region is the most politically sensitive part of the country with international borders with Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and just 22 km of land — the Siliguri Corridor or the Chicken's Neck — linking it to the rest of the country.

Added to this is that this is an ecologically fragile area where the impact of climate change is having very serious consequences for the people.

How do you assure people their identity and their control over land will be retained without affecting migrants?

I do not think the people in the Northeast have much control over their natural resources, their lands, forests, mineral wealth, rivers. The number of people displaced by development projects has increased. Walter Fernandes has documented the extension of displacement in the Northeast.

One of the first cases I took up was about the negative impact of the cement factory set up by the Northeast Council in Ukhrul district of Manipur. Here the best paddy fields of the Tangkhul Nagas were affected and cultivators became landless and they joined the factory as workers just to have cash so they could afford to buy a pair of shoes.

The gap between the rich and poor is widening. The number of landless tribal people are being transformed into the migrant workers whom we see all over India. These people are the disenfranchised citizens of our country — they have voters' cards but cannot afford to go to their constituency on election day.

So, the youth find their culture and society being swamped by the outsider and they themselves are forced to live like outsiders in other parts of the country and abroad where they are often targets of prejudice.

I think the present Government of India has not only divided the country and polarized it along communal lines, it has made us less human. ■

Three projects and a massive coal corridor worry Goa

Ashwini Kamat
Panaji

THE Goa State Board for Wildlife (GSBW), comprising 29 members, witnessed sharp exchanges over the proposal to fell 80,000 indigenous trees in the protected forests of the Western Ghats, when it convened on December 2 after a gap of two years.

At the centre of the storm were three infrastructure projects — doubling of railway lines, conversion of a road into a four-lane highway and erection of a power transmission line. The objective of these projects is to create the infrastructure for a coal transportation corridor cutting across the state, say environmentalists.

"The main motive of the three projects is to create a coal transportation corridor from Mormugao Port Trust (MPT) across Goa and towards industries in Hubli, Dharwad, Hospet and Bellary in Karnataka," said Abhijeet Prabhudesai, an environmental activist and secretary of Federation of Rainbow Warriors. Goa, he pointed out, will only serve as a path of connectivity to the port.

The proposed corridor will cut through protected areas like the Mollem National Park and the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary. It will destroy hoary trees and wildlife in its path and impact Goa's water resources. It will also leave a trail of coal behind, causing air pollution.

The agenda of the meeting was shared with board members at the last minute.

The first project proposed is the doubling of the railway line from Castle Rock to Kulem and a stretch of the South Western Railway line from Kalay to Margao. In connection with this, a total of 54,860 trees have been marked for felling, affecting 136,4827 ha of protected forests in Mollem National Park and Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary.

The second proposal is the four-laning of the existing NH-4A in Anmod-Mollem region adjoining the Goa and Karnataka border. A total of 32,085 ha of forest land has been earmarked for use after felling 12,000 trees.

The last project proposed in this region is the laying of a 400 KV transmission line in the village of Xeldem. The line will run from Dharwad in

Karnataka to Goa and will affect 48.30 ha of forest area and result in felling of another 15,777 trees.

Several members of the GSBW voiced apprehensions about the manner in which these proposals were presented and pushed forward hurriedly, without any supporting data. Members were also not given any species-wise classification of the trees marked for felling and trees were categorised on the basis of height. The only assurance offered at the meeting by the chairman of the Board, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, was that the three projects are "a must for Goa" and that "care will be taken to ensure minimum destruction of the forests".

Explaining the proceedings of the meeting, Rajendra Kerkar, a prominent environmentalist of Goa and a member of the GSBW, said, "We were informed that the main aim is to benefit industries. But nothing was discussed or informed to the members about the type of industries that would be supported."

Kerkar, who has worked tirelessly as the secretary of the Mhadei Bachao Andolan, pointed out that the trees marked for felling are located in areas protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. He said, "Before being labelled as eco-sensitive zones, these areas were granted the highest status of protection as national parks. In fact, some years ago inhabitants of Nandran village located in Mollem Wildlife Sanctuary were rehabilitated to reduce anthropogenic pressure here."

With wildlife and even tiger corridors passing through Mollem National Park and Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerkar warned that roadkills would shoot up exponentially. "When railways and roads pass through any area, the deep vibrations created by these engines are bound to hamper the natural habitat of wild animals," he said, adding that the frequency of landslides will also increase, affecting tribal communities like the Dhangars and Velip Gaonkars, who reside in these hinterlands.

Kerkar said that most of the trees marked for felling are likely to be indigenous species such as *Terminalia elliptica*, *Terminalia paniculata*, *jambul*, *Terminalia bellerica*, and *Terminalia chebula*.

Terminalia elliptica or the Indian laurel, known as *matti* in Konkani, is the state tree of Goa. It is among

Most of the trees marked for felling are likely to be local species and include *Terminalia elliptica* or the Indian laurel, the state tree of Goa.



The Mollem National Park. About 80,000 indigenous trees will be cut to facilitate transportation of coal



The famed Dudhsagar falls will be affected

the indigenous trees that are home to wildlife species such as the Malabar giant squirrel, which is the state animal of Maharashtra.

Kerkar also worries that this singular decision will eventually threaten the water security of Goa. "Hydrological parameters will shake to a great extent following this massive tree-cutting. Goa's Khandepar river originates in Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve and it provides a large quantum of water to North Goa. The famed Dudhsagar waterfall is a part of this river," he explained.

In a written representation submitted by some members to the GSBW, concerns have been raised about the inadequate data on which this decision is based. Secondly, the absence of a plan for 'compensatory afforestation' was noted with discomfort because Goa lacks the land resource needed for replanting such a large number of trees.

According to the India State of Forests Report 2019, the total forest cover in Goa is 2,237.49 sq km which is 60.44 percent of its total geographical area. It comprises moist mixed deciduous, tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen trees. As per the state government's records, the Recorded Forest Area (RFA) is 1,225 sq km of which 253 sq km constitutes reserved forest.

Apart from this, members have questioned the passing of a high-voltage electricity line through protected forests and have also demanded to know whether the overpasses and underpasses provided for by South Western Railways in its plan are located

in known animal crossing zones so as to prevent roadkills.

Environmentalist Parag Rangnekar was among the members of the GSBW who signed the representation. "As per our request, the Forest Department has agreed to meet and discuss these concerns and develop a mitigation plan with us. We hope that the department will play a proactive role in this matter," Rangnekar said.

"But despite our concerns, the projects appear to be moving ahead at full speed without debating any peripheral and immediate fallout. These three linear projects are going through a singular protected region. We are viewing them individually but they will have a cumulative impact, which needs to be understood clearly," he stated.

Among these three projects, the larger plan of four-laning NH-4 is already being executed and only a stretch of 12 to 13 km which passes through protected forests is awaiting permissions.

In addition to this, several environmental activists have also opposed the proposals. Ramesh Gauns, former member of the GSBW and an environmental activist, said, "This is a suicidal move. The driving forces behind this reckless decision are not in public interest. A unilateral, opaque mode of decision-making is adopted to protect the vested interests of a few industrialists whose business depends heavily on coal."

Gauns warned that the repercussions of such an insensitive move will be felt overnight as the



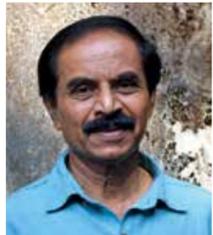
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Parag Rangnekar



Rajendra Kerkar



Ramesh Gauns

distance between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats is a mere 50 to 60 km.

Referring to the Twelfth Five Year Plan which has a recommendation on moving hazardous cargo such as coal away from populated areas, Prabhudesai said, "The upper limit for handling coal in a populated area is 50 MT. If this is going to be implemented at all, then these three projects are pointless as MPT is surrounded by residential areas."

He argued that an alternative port on the eastern coast of India was rejected as it would cost these private bodies an extra ₹30 per tonne.

"These are 80,000 full-grown forest trees. The amount of carbon they soak cannot be overlooked merely to enhance the profits of private corporations. To save them some money, we stand to lose our forest cover. This move will spell complete disaster," he maintained.

Kerkar confirmed the alleged link between the felling of 80,000 forest trees and coal transportation. "I don't understand why the central government is insistent on transporting materials such as coal through a small and ecologically fragile state at the cost of such environmental destruction," he said while urging the centre to reconsider its decision.

Kerkar demanded to know why Maharashtra and Karnataka with their longer coastline and more ports couldn't handle coal transport for their own industries. "Unnecessarily bringing coal into MPT and transporting it through railways and roads may benefit certain parties financially but why risk the health of Goans and our environment for it?" he questioned.

The timing of this decision couldn't have been worse considering the severe effects of climate change Goa experienced last year. In 2019, pre-monsoon showers in Goa were delayed by almost two weeks. Wells ran dry in villages. When the monsoon finally hit Goa, it lashed out in fury. The season was marked by floods, heavy agricultural losses and was followed immediately by two consecutive cyclones in the Arabian Sea.

Yet, the state government continues to pursue its plan to fell 80,000 full-grown indigenous forest trees in the Western Ghats protected area. India spent about \$22 billion on importing coal. Not only is this depleting the government's coffers, it is also destroying India's ecology. ■

Can Bengaluru get back its lost green heritage?

Geeta Wahi Dua
New Delhi

EVERY summer, Bengaluru, India's IT hub, faces an acute shortage of water. Water tankers criss-cross the city as residents wait patiently. Over the years, the city's lakes have become cesspools or have been encroached upon. Open wells, which once recharged Bengaluru's groundwater, have vanished. The city's lone source of water is now the Cauvery river which can't meet the demands made on it by so many consumers – industry, farmers, citizens and the nearby state of Tamil Nadu.

Ironically, Bengaluru is not short of rainfall. The early city, founded 500 years ago, was designed to be water-rich. It had a series of connected tanks and lakes. The region's natural topography with hills, plateaux, valleys and small streams, supported an ingenious water system. The city also had natural forests with lush biodiversity and fecund agricultural fields yielding a variety of crops.

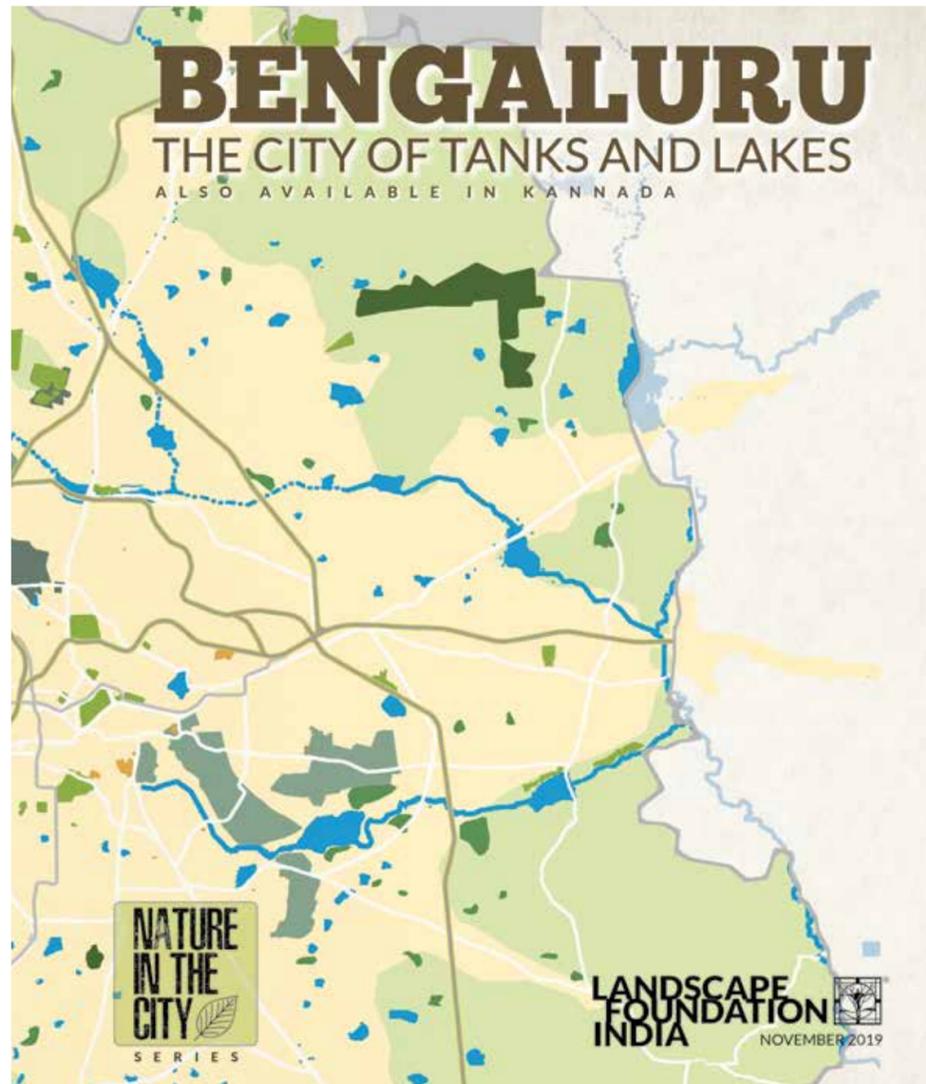
In the 1990s, Bengaluru became an IT hub, aka India's Silicon Valley, attracting global companies, BPOs, start-ups and multinationals. World-class commercial hubs comprising global brands came up to cater to a prosperous middle class. The Garden City, as it was once known, turned into India's third largest city, a throbbing concrete jungle expanding recklessly into its hinterland, swallowing forests, farms and water bodies.

But what is the ecological wealth the city has lost? Landscape Foundation, a non-profit private trust, has brought out a green map of Bengaluru, which identifies the city's cultural and ecologically significant sites and pinpoints its main environmental concerns. The map's research explores the city's historic past and how its relationship with nature has evolved over the years.

The upside is that Bengaluru's traditional water system and ecology can be reinvented. There are groups of citizens trying to revive lakes and wells. A coordinated effort by all can bolster Bengaluru's ecology. This map and the research on which it is based serve as a guideline for what has gone, what remains and what can come back.

TANKS AND GARDENS: Bengaluru's natural topography allowed settlements to develop an indigenous system of interconnected tanks (manmade lakes, *keres*) for their water needs. These tanks recharged shallow aquifers that were linked to massive open wells. Various settlements emerged around these tanks and, subsequently, temples and other religious structures were also built.

Tanks gave an impetus to agriculture and encouraged the design of gardens, fruit orchards and tree plantation in the new town. These tanks were ecological and cultural assets, recharging groundwater, harvesting water, creating biodiversity habitats, controlling floods and acting as growth nodes around which new settlements got established. While tanks were constructed under the patronage of various rulers, they were also



The Bengaluru Nature Map is available from the Landscape Foundation India

taken care of by local communities.

The tradition of gardens, nurtured by rulers, patrons and people, is another important natural heritage of the city. With a conducive tropical climate and abundance of water, agricultural belts, orchards, gardens and parks, tree-lined avenues, home gardens and, lately, institutional greens, are all part of the city's incredible ecological legacy.

Lalbagh, a garden complex in the city, was designed during the rule of Hyder Ali, commander-in-chief of the Wodeyar kingdom with its capital in Mysore. Lalbagh's design was similar to the Mughal gardens with a geometrical layout and intricate irrigation systems. It became the Botanical Garden of Mysore State, a first in the country. The garden, which now covers over 200 acres, continues to be a working laboratory for many international designers, botanists and horticulturists.

During the colonial era, the British developed a series of public parks, tree-lined roads and outdoor

recreational areas, especially for the European population. The attempt was to replicate a very European image of nature. The new ways of engaging with nature were based on the concept of exclusiveness and formality, culturally different from the past. The old city on the west, where the natives lived, was primarily used as an agricultural belt, with produce of millets, coconuts and fruit.

Cubbon Park, spread over 100 hectares, is a picturesque English landscape garden with winding paths, tailored water bodies and undulating meadows. It is an example of an urban public landscape based on the European notion of preserving nature. Over time, the belt between the old city and the Cantonment became the city's biggest green lung. Many new neighbourhoods for the European population were designed with tree-lined avenues, vistas and parks.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Krishnaraja Wodeyar, maharaja of Mysore, appointed Gustav



The Ulsoor Lake



Cubbon Park

Hermann Krumbiegel, German horticulturist and city planner, as the superintendent of government gardens. During his tenure of 20 years till 1932, Krumbiegel changed the character of the city, by introducing nature in the design of streets, roads, government complexes, institutional greens and other public spaces.

In the early 1950s, continuing the tradition of the Garden City, many farms, nurseries, gardens and parks were laid out and expanded. In the following decades, many urban forestry programmes in the city, which included the cultivation of mixed plantations of Indian and non-native flowering trees, were launched. With its numerous water bodies, ponds, lakes, expansive city parks, wide tree-lined avenues and home gardens, the city exuded a unique green character.

THE IT BOOM: In the 1990s when Bengaluru became India's IT hub, its population expanded



The Lalbagh Flower Show

The city's water structures are a habitat for over 300 species of flora and fauna, aquifauna amphibians, insects.

rapidly, placing enormous pressure on resources. There was large-scale acquisition of farmland, infringement on public spaces to build parks and many old water bodies were converted into residential colonies or public amenities. According to a study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Science, the city's vegetation cover has reduced from 68.27 percent to less than 15 percent (1973–2013). Moreover, community open spaces, orchards, neighbourhood gardens and groves have given way to manicured privately owned green spaces.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: Although the city's traditional water infrastructure thrived for more than three centuries, by the end of the 19th century, it became inadequate for the growing city. The municipality began exploring other water sources. Water was now brought from rivers located elsewhere, stored in reservoirs, treated and supplied to the city. Simultaneously, more tanks were built to

meet the growing demand for water.

After the introduction of piped water in the late 19th century, the once community-managed and thriving system of lakes and wells gradually fell into disuse. Within a few decades, these water networks began shrinking and became fragmented. Many such structures were filled and reclaimed for urbanization in the city's subsequent growth plans. As a result, by the beginning of the 21st century, the entire catchment was transformed. At present, surrounded by encroachments and unregulated development and as sites of garbage disposal, these tanks (now defunct ecological structures) have become a health and security threat for the population of the city.

For the past five decades, water for the city is entirely drawn from the Cauvery river, more than 100 km from the city and at a lower elevation.

REIMAGINING WATER SYSTEMS: For a growing metropolis, a sustainable water source is a must. The city must take urgent steps for natural resource conservation — by reimagining the regional systems of tanks and integrating them into its current water infrastructure.

Bengaluru's sewage system needs to take into account the ecological significance of these water structures, which took care of its water requirement for many centuries. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) judgment of 2016 suggested conservation of important water structures, including water bodies and wetlands. It said for lakes, 75 metres from the periphery of the water body should be maintained as a green belt and buffer zone; 50 metres from the edge of the primary *rajkulawas* (stormwater drains); 35 metres from the edge for secondary *rajkulawas* and 25 metres for tertiary *rajkulawas*. This buffer/ green zone will be treated as a no-construction zone for all intent and purposes, said the NGT.

Bengaluru's water structures are a habitat for more than 300 species of flora and fauna. Flora includes a unique mix of floating, submerged and emergent vegetation that harbours varied aquifauna, amphibians and insects. There are storks, egrets, moorhens, herons, kingfishers, cormorants, a variety of ducks, frogs, toads, snakes, rats, mongoose, snails, worms and water insects. For biodiversity to thrive, the ecological health of these tanks needs to be maintained.

CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY: Old institutional campuses, academic complexes, government offices, cantonment area, graveyards and cemeteries, tree-lined avenues and urban public greens are other hotspots of biodiversity in the city. Extensive tree plantations created in the early 20th century to provide shade, greenery and visual relief with species of local and exotic trees flowering in different seasons provide a large green envelope to the city throughout the year.

The city's aquatic ecosystem of grasses and shrubs encourages a large bird population. Home gardens are a repository of plant species planted for medicinal and religious use and at times include jackfruit, mango, drumstick, papaya, banana, coriander and basil. ■

Landscape Foundation India is a non-profit trust founded by Geeta Wahi Dua and Brijender S. Dua. With a background in landscape architecture and architecture, they also conceptualise diverse landscape research works. They can be contacted at 011-41584375 and 9810600754. Email: landscapefoundationindia@gmail.com. Website: www.landscapefoundation.in

Hema Ananth loves farming, her veggies make people happy

Shree Padre
Hassan

EVERY morning and evening, a tiny shop opens in Kuvempu Nagar, a residential locality a short walk from Hassan Railway Station in Karnataka.

Farm-fresh organic fruits and vegetables are placed on a table. There are eggs too. A board displays prices of the produce. Customers buy what they want and place the money in a cash box. The shop doesn't have a salesperson, a supervisor or even a CCTV.

"My daily sales target is ₹1,000," says 56-year-old Hema Ananth, owner of the unmanned shop and an exemplary farmer.

Although Hassan is a vegetable growing district, farmers don't make much money. Most of it goes into the pockets of traders. So Ananth figured it was better to sell directly to consumers.

"We don't get more than 25 percent of the price charged to consumers. This way I make some money and the consumer gets farm-fresh produce at a very reasonable price," she explains.

Milk costs ₹40 per litre and vegetables are priced between ₹20 and 40 per kg. No premium is charged for the produce being organic.

"My children are so accustomed to the milk I take from here that they don't like the milk sold in packets," says H.K. Ramakrishna, a regular customer. "Hema offers us very healthy organic produce. I can't help her on her farm. So sometimes I volunteer to arrange her vegetables on the table."

Ananth has about 70 regular customers. She says direct selling saves her time and enables her to sell small quantities. "Going to the market to sell five or 10 kg isn't feasible," she says.

Not once has a customer failed to pay. For some doctors she keeps vegetables, fruits and milk aside. They come at odd hours and prefer to pay her a flat rate of ₹5,000 at the end of the month.

For the past four years she has replicated this model in the monthly organic market held in Hassan. "Everybody knows it's my stall. If I am not manning it, people just put the money in the cash box."

Ananth says the idea came to her after she began giving people fresh vegetables and found it made them happy. After yoga classes at Ananth's home, trainees were delighted to receive fresh

vegetables. They insisted on paying. So, she started her tabletop shop.

Ananth has received many awards for being a commendable farmer. She received the Dr M.H. Mari Gowda Award for Best Woman Farmer in 2008-09 from the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bengaluru. In 2017-18 she was awarded the Best Horticulture Farmer Award by Bagalkot Horticulture University.

ADDING VALUE: Ananth has a 30-acre farm, 11 km away in Gowripura village. Coconut trees grow on 20 acres. The farm has two bore wells, eight farm ponds and earthen tanks. A small dairy farm with 18 cows yields 60 litres of milk per day. The cows graze on a five-acre plot during the day. In the evening they are stall-fed.

"If you see this farm on Google Earth, it looks like a forest," says Ananth who has been a farmer for 20 years. Her farm has lots of agroforestry trees. Every year she sells 500 trees and earns around ₹3-4 lakh. She replants 2,000 trees.

Ananth drives to her farm at 5 am to supervise things. She returns with milk at 7.30 am. By 9 am she is back on her farm, joining her staff in doing manual work. At 5 pm she returns home with freshly harvested fruits and vegetables which she places on her table for sale. Then she attends to her household chores.

Ananth has 1,500 rain-fed coconut trees out of which 1,000 yield coconuts. One tree yields 200 coconuts. Water isn't an issue. The farm is on sloping land. Run-off from 50 acres on the higher side is directed to a big pond below. If water dries up in this pond, water from tanks lower down is pumped up. There are also contour bunds to capture rainwater. All these measures have increased the sub-soil moisture.

Ananth's farm isn't a high-tech one. Organic fertilisers are used. Vegetables, especially mint and fenugreek, are grown through the year. Drip irrigation is used for irrigating vegetables.

What is remarkable is how Ananth has successfully converted farm produce into value-added products. She found that she earned very little from selling coconuts. Twenty-two years ago, the price of a coconut was ₹10. It is almost the same today. So she decided to convert her pile of coconuts into virgin coconut oil.

Ananth travelled to Sri Lanka and learnt how to make coconut oil through direct micro expelling, a method by which roasted coconut gratings are pressed into a machine to extract oil.



Hema Ananth working on her farm



Ananth's little shop doesn't have a salesperson or even a CCTV

Her father, Krishnappa, gave her ₹10 lakh to start a virgin coconut oil unit. Working 12 hours a day, her three-member team uses 200 to 250 coconuts a day to produce 20-25 litres of oil. One litre is sold for ₹510.

Though many farmers in Hassan grow coconut, not one was using oil extracted from their coconuts. Instead they bought oil from the market. Ananth says she did try to encourage them to switch to coconut oil, without success. Now some of them bring their coconuts to her unit to get the oil extracted. She charges them a nominal ₹60 per litre. She also transports their coconuts to her unit at Gowripura free of cost. Farmers can collect their oil from her shop and place the money in the cash box.

Eighteen years ago, she grew turmeric on a large scale. But there were no buyers. Instead of getting upset, Ananth went to Erode to learn how to dry turmeric. She came back and converted all her turmeric into powder in batches and eventually

PICTURES BY SHREE PADRE



Ananth with her team.

Ananth has about 70 regular customers. She says selling directly saves her time and enables her to sell small amounts of organic produce.

earned ₹3.5 lakh. That lesson gave her a lot of self-confidence.

She doesn't sell raw ginger anymore. Instead it is converted into mouth freshener. Juices, pickles, jams are also made whenever her farm yields more than what the market can absorb.

Some years ago she planted thousands of grafted orange plants. Unfortunately, the plants yielded citron lime which is very sour. The advice she got was to cut off all her orange plants. But Ananth refused. Soon the plants blessed her with a good crop of citron lime which she uses to make pickle.

In her part of Hassan she is also known as Red Rose Hemakka because she was the first to cultivate roses in the district. In 1998 the Ananths constructed a house for themselves which they named Red Rose. Her father, Krishnappa, said, "Now that you have named your home rose, why don't you start cultivating roses?"

Ananth knew nothing of rose cultivation. She travelled to rose-growing areas of the state and booked a few thousand plants. In 2005, her five-acre rose garden was ready. No one else was growing roses and the town's daily demand was around

25,000 to 50,000 roses which were bought from far away. Merchants were happy to pay her ₹1 per stalk. Ananth says on some days she earned ₹10,000 to ₹12,000 for roses. Soon other farmers began growing roses, sending prices tumbling. So Ananth wound up her rose garden. But the moniker, Red Rose Hemakka, remained.

EARLY DAYS: Ananth was born in a farming family in Ooty. Her father, Krishnappa, encouraged her to become a farmer and employ other people. Her grandfather's land was lying unused in Gowripura and he suggested she begin farming there. "The land will teach you," he told her.

Fortunately, Ananth befriended two old and wise women, Manjamma, who is now over 70, and the 102-year-old Puttamma. Both were well-versed in farming and now live on the farm. With their help Ananth converted her grandfather's barren land into a verdant farm. She works alongside her team of 17 farm hands. Her Gowripura farm is a popular study tour centre now. At least 20 student and farmer groups visit every year. ■

Contact Hema Ananth at 94824 44406 (7-8 pm).

Samita's World

by SAMITA RATHOR





SHREY GUPTA
Coordinators of the Main Bhi Dilli campaign: Shalaka Chauhan, Malavika Narayan, Harshal Gajjar, Rashee Mehra

Getting everyone into Delhi's master plan

Sidika Sehgal
New Delhi

CITY planning is invariably decided by faceless government agencies. But in Delhi a coalition of organizations and individuals, called Main Bhi Dilli, is determined to change that. They have drawn up their own recommendations for the city's master plan after talking to all stakeholders, especially people in the informal sector.

Main Bhi Dilli's objective is to make the city inclusive. The coalition came together in April 2018, when the Indo Global Social Service Society organised a workshop on city planning. After the workshop, many felt that citizens' voices needed to be part of city planning.

"Planning in Delhi is a top-down process," says Malavika Narayan, one of the four coordinators of the coalition. "It's only the DDA (Delhi Development Authority) which really knows what's happening. We are given just a small window of opportunity after the whole plan is made when they invite comments from the public. We felt that this is not the way planning for a city should be done. Citizens' voices should be heard before the plan is drafted." The other coordinators are Shalaka Chauhan, Harshal Gajjar and Rashee Mehra.

Delhi faces many issues. Nearly 40 percent of the city's population lives in informal settlements. The city has a very low percentage of female workers. Its landfills are overflowing. Nearly 400,000 street vendors in the city live in constant fear of eviction.

How can the Master Plan Delhi (MPD) change these realities? The DDA, which is drawing up MPD 2041, is helped by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA). The MPD determines how land will be used in the city and how much supporting infrastructure each area will have.

Over the course of a year, member organizations

of Main Bhi Dilli like SEWA, Safetipin, Basti Suraksha Manch, Yuva Foundation and individuals associated with the campaign held sector-wise meetings to identify issues and find solutions. They spoke to activists, researchers and organizations who work on housing, livelihood and gender.

In March 2019, their first set of demands was ready. Campaigners then met street vendor groups and people in resettlement colonies to find out their aspirations. The demands have been categorised sectorwise — livelihood, housing, gender and the area near the Yamuna.

Main Bhi Dilli is a coalition of groups and individuals whose objective is to include the needs of the informal sector in the Delhi Master Plan.

The campaign's livelihood demands focus on the informal sector. Nearly 85 percent of Delhi's population works in the informal sector. "So when you talk about economic activities, you cannot just talk about the industrial parks or about the bigger markets," says Narayan.

The collective took up issues faced by waste-pickers, street vendors, home-based workers and construction workers. They suggest that every neighbourhood should allocate space for waste-pickers to segregate waste as well as space for wet waste composting. This model of decentralized waste management will not only reduce pressure on

landfills but will also reduce the quantity of waste that is incinerated.

Vending space should be reserved for street vendors in commercial areas where footfalls are high. Following the model in London, Singapore and California's cities, they can be allocated space in Metro stations, parking lots and under flyovers. Land should be reserved for the nearly 400,000 street vendors in the city — a 6 ft by 4 ft space for stationary vendors and a 4 ft by 4 ft space for mobile ones.

"You'll see a lot of overlap between housing demands and livelihood demands," said Narayan. According to their data, Delhi has about 300,000 to 400,000 home-based workers, who are mostly women. Many home-based workers live in *jhuggi jhopdi* (JJ) clusters. Current land use norms restrict any kind of commercial activity in these *bastis* and home-based workers get penalised due to such rigid zoning regulations. The master plan should allow for mixed land use in these *bastis*, says Narayan.

Main Bhi Dilli suggests low-cost housing for construction workers along the lines of Bhavanam Foundation's rental hostels in Kerala. They also suggest that each working site should facilitate skill development of the workers. The coalition recommends that JJ clusters be given tenure security and no cut-off date be set for residents.

The collective also suggests that resettlement should be the last resort. If carried out, the resettlement site should be close to the residents' place of work, within three to five km. No eviction should take place without notice to residents, without consulting them and without a rehabilitation site ready.

Concerns around the Yamuna and the zone near it, called Zone-O, also fell under the ambit of the campaign. The collective suggests that ghats like Yamuna Bazaar and Majnu ka Tila should be developed for cultural tourism. They recommended that the Yamuna's drainage system be developed as an ecological asset.

Many organizations that work on gender made suggestions to encourage women's presence in public spaces. Public child-care facilities affect women's participation in the workforce. The master plan should make provisions for them and allocate land for public toilets.

Safetipin, one of the member organizations of Main Bhi Dilli, found that mixed use areas are safer for women. The coalition encourages mixed use neighbourhoods and suggests that there should be reserved spaces for female vendors in commercial markets and spaces earmarked for women's markets.

These demands were structured in the form of fact sheets which included pertinent data, key issues and key demands. In November 2019, campaigners held a day-long workshop with NIUA and presented 12 factsheets to them. "They were very open in engaging with us," said Narayan.

There are some broad principles the collective wants planners to follow. For example, livelihood and housing are linked for home-based workers. Understanding how women earn their livelihood requires one to think of gender and livelihood together.

The next step is to open up the campaign to the general public, said Narayan. They will be launching a website so that citizens can send in suggestions. ■

Contact the coordinators at: Email: mainbhidillicampaign@gmail.com
Telephone: +91-837974331; Twitter: @mbd2041

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SHREY GUPTA



A sea of angry students protesting against the violence unleashed on the JNU campus

THE BIG CAMPUS UPSURGE

How students have come together on issues

Civil Society News
New Delhi

IT was an old-style rampage that shook the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on the evening of January 5. The lights mysteriously went off on cue. Marauders with their faces covered streamed in and attacked left-wing students and professors in their hostels and homes. The police stood by but didn't intervene. Iron bars, hammers and large stones were used with lethal effect. The goal was to be swift and brutal and when the vandals left, it was as easily as they had entered.

But if the browbeating was staged to perfection, it also almost immediately ran into a barrage of outrage from quarters much beyond JNU. In a networked world it is difficult to keep even the most carefully scripted pogrom secret. Images of the attackers destroying property and assaulting people quickly went viral. Videos and pictures went onto television and into homes. More importantly, they

got shared on campuses across India, galvanizing students in spontaneous protests on a scale not witnessed in the 70 years since Independence.

Most shocking of all was a clip of Aishe Ghosh, blood gushing from a head wound, appealing for help. Ghosh is the firebrand leader of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU). She is also a small and frail MPhil scholar all of 25 years old with a straightforward face and startlingly

The young have been seething about rising fees, privatization, women's rights, lack of campus freedom and minority bashing.

honest eyes. To think that anyone should have hit her on her head with an iron rod and fractured her arm was beyond shocking.

In the days after the episode, as she courageously addressed press conferences along with other students and teachers, she became a rallying point for the young in particular and decent-minded Indians in general. In contrast, the JNU administration and the Modi government at the Centre came to be reviled for allowing such violence to happen in the heart of the capital.

The theatre of action at JNU is currently about Left vs Right. Being unassailably in power at the Centre, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sees this as an opportunity to give a drubbing to a traditional leftist bastion known for its liberal atmosphere and socialist ideals. The BJP would like leftist unions to be replaced by its own Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

Similarly, the government-appointed vice-chancellor, Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar, hasn't

SHREY GUPTA



Teachers from colleges in Delhi joined the protests to express support for the students

AJIT KRISHNA



Jamia's vice-chancellor, Najma Akhtar, promised students an FIR would be filed against the Delhi Police

exerted himself to be seen as being impartial. He is a respected professor of engineering, but he has made it clear that he is no admirer of JNU's brand of liberalism.

The attack on JNU, however, has had quite the opposite effect. Instead of frightening leftists and liberals, it has brought out in large numbers young people unhappy with what they see as authoritarian policies and lack of prospects in a failing economy.

The immediate issue at JNU has been an increase in hostel fees. Other campuses, too, have been seething over rising fees and privatization. But the fee-hike worry has proved to be merely the tipping point. Students share a host of common concerns from the safety of women and their rights in educational institutions to the targeting of lower castes and Muslims, diminishing inclusion and the heavy-handedness of university administrations.

The rising tide of this collective unhappiness among the young has been directed against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) passed by the Modi government and plans for a National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The JNU events followed a police crackdown at the Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) in Delhi when students were protesting against the CAA and NRC. Jamia students were brutally beaten in their library and toilets. Then students from all over Delhi sat all night outside the police headquarters in protest.

After the JNU episode, students came out in an even greater display of camaraderie on campuses as far apart as Tezpur and Patiala, hooking up through WhatsApp groups and coordinating protests. It has been a show of solidarity on a scale not witnessed before.

Some of the outpouring was predictable, an example being the politically volatile Jadavpur University in Kolkata. But students also came out on the most docile and apolitical of campuses such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, the Delhi School of Economics (DSE), St Stephen's College, IIM Calcutta, IIM Ahmedabad, IIT Bombay, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, National Institute of Design (NID) and so on.

The protests have been spontaneous and, though

visibly supported by the leftist parties and the Congress, they have essentially been apolitical. Campus concerns have acquired traction of their own volition.

The main influence on campuses is wielded by the established unions such as the Students' Federation of India (SFI), affiliated to the Communist Party of India (Marxist); All India Students' Association (AISA), the student wing of the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist; National Students Union of India (NSUI) affiliated to the Congress, and the ABVP. On certain issues they agree. For instance, the ABVP and the leftist unions both opposed the fee hike.

But the recently witnessed nationwide protests have also come out of students banding together over time in loose and apolitical formations which provide collaborative energy of a different kind.

Pinjra Tod, The Collective and the Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS) are examples of groupings that have brought young people together to jointly take up issues that concern campuses without being politically branded.

The Pinjra Tod movement began from Jamia Millia Islamia in 2015 when the administration issued a strict curfew for its female students. In October 2015, Pinjra Tod held a public hearing at Jantar Mantar and women from many Delhi colleges spoke about their experiences with their college

Instead of frightening leftists and liberals, the attack on JNU has brought out in large numbers young people unhappy with authoritarian policies and the lack of jobs in a failing economy.

administrations. It was the first platform to articulate such issues and Pinjra Tod grew as a women's collective in Delhi institutions like JNU, Delhi University and Ambedkar University. Pinjra Tod has actively participated in campus protests since then — its members stood in solidarity in January 2016 when Rohith Vemula committed suicide and in February 2016, when Umar Khalid and Kanhaiya Kumar of JNU were labelled anti-national. With such involvements, Pinjra Tod has acquired a national character.

In 2015, The Collective was formed when some students in JNU felt the need to start a student organization independent of any political party. Students affiliated to political organizations often push their own agendas and toe a party line. "The idea of starting a student organization was to strengthen the revolutionary tradition of student politics. Students have been a very important constituent of any imagination of social change," said Shreya Ghosh, a member of The Collective.

"The way the student movement is taking place, we realize there are some general demands across

ANKIT DATTA



Girls demonstrate on a Kolkata street

The values the young espouse point to the emergence of a different India. There is an abhorrence of caste and religious divides. Young women find their freedom from patriarchy in education and seek equal rights and access.

campuses. If there are no networks, it won't work because JNU is not an island in itself," explains Ghosh.

The Collective publishes a magazine, which circulates among students. Some students of Delhi University and Ambedkar University expressed a desire to be a part of the organization and in 2017-18, The Collective expanded to include the two universities.

The KYS has been an active participant in protests since December 15. Not much is known about it, but it was launched in 2004 to address the issues of young working class people and students. It has a presence among students of the School of Open Learning in Delhi University and among residents of Anand Parbat, Seelampur and similar areas in Delhi.

"We want to link JNU's struggle against the fee hike to the larger movement of making education equitable and accessible to marginalized sections of society," says a KYS spokesman.

The values the young espouse point to the emergence of a different India. There is an abhorrence of caste and religious divides. Young women find their freedom from patriarchy in education and seek equal rights and access. It is felt that higher education should be affordable and equitably available so that everyone can benefit.

It is this sensibility among the young that has led

to campuses erupting against the CAA and NRC and asking instead for genuinely competitive and forward-looking policies.

PRIVATIZATION, FEE HIKES

On October 28, the Inter Hall Administration of JNU passed the draft hostel manual, thereby increasing the hostel fees and doubling the cost of living on campus. Since then, students, led by JNUSU, have been protesting against the fee hike. The student body successfully boycotted the exams in December and asked for a return to the old fee structure.

"This is a government that has reduced its spending on education. Having denied jobs, having denied quality and access, now they want to physically destroy," Jayati Ghosh, professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning in JNU, said of the attack on January 5.

The proposed fee hike will directly impact 40 percent of students in JNU, whose annual family income is less than ₹1.5 lakh. The administration has said that it will offer concessions to students who come from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. But students are not satisfied with this measure. They want a universal, inexpensive higher education system for everyone.

"If the normal slab for fees is high, what that does is make it a rule that education will not be affordable.



One of the many protests in Delhi

SHREY GUPTA



Students in Chandigarh oppose the NRC and CAA



Women camping out in the cold at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi

SHREY GUPTA



A JNU hostel room which was ransacked and left in a shambles

SHREY GUPTA

It violates the principle of providing affordable education to all. The point is that, irrespective of your caste and class, you would have the same access to education," said Shreya Ghosh who is a PhD scholar at JNU.

Giving scholarships and concessions is not a viable solution because the mechanism for scholarships is not without its problems. Fund cuts have led to fewer scholarships. About three years ago, the number of students who could benefit from the Government of India's Post Matric Scholarship (GoI-PMS) was reduced.

"Most of the students, who I have the privilege of sharing the classroom with, would not be here if education is not subsidized," said Pranati Haldia, a

Master's student at TISS, Guwahati. At TISS Mumbai, the fees for GoI-PMS students are not released by the state government on time and the college administration scrutinizes the students for non-payment of fees.

Similarly, in Punjab, universities and colleges have a severe funds crunch. The Punjabi University in Patiala, one of the better-known universities in the state, has a deficit of ₹300 crore. The universities have failed to make new teacher recruitments since 1998. Thousands of students, mostly from high-income groups, go abroad every year for their studies.

In Delhi University and Jadavpur University in Kolkata, students and teachers alike have been

opposing the National Education Policy (NEP) because it lays the groundwork for privatization of education, and places the burden of funds on the university, instead of the government. These fee hikes can kill the social sciences, said Mounica Sreesai, a student at the Delhi School of Economics.

At Hyderabad Central University (HCU), the process is already underway. The university was given 'Grade 1 autonomy' which meant that it had to generate a larger percentage of the funds required on its own. This has led to fee hikes in the past and a fund cut for conferences. Three professional courses have been introduced in HCU, because higher fees can be charged for such courses.

Anupama Krishnan, a student at HCU, said that

the administration could have rejected Grade 1 autonomy, but didn't. "There are a large number of young people in India and it is the State's responsibility to educate them. The government has the resources for it," Krishnan said.

WOMEN'S CONCERNS

"Education can't be a commodity. Historically, certain communities, such as women, Dalits and the poor, have been kept away from education. By privatizing education, we will go back to that," said Maitreyi Jha of St Stephen's College. For women on campuses, fund cuts can have serious consequences.

A PhD scholar at JNU said, "My father is in a

Continued on page 20

SHREY GUPTA

‘JNU stands for what is just, for the right things’

Sidika Sehgal
New Delhi

Aishe Ghosh, president of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), spoke to Civil Society on the JNU campus about the events that have engulfed the university.

What does JNU mean to you? Is JNU worth fighting for like this? You've risked your life for it.

For any student here, JNU has been their second home, and for many, their home. It means a lot to people because many students aren't given an identity back home. Especially women. They don't always have the freedom to choose what they want to do. JNU gives you that freedom along with academics. It is a dreamland.

A lot has to do with the environment and our professors, the way they nurture us. Obviously, this is worth fighting for. When I think about it, I would want everyone to study in a university like JNU. You feel that this is not a place in India.

The system we have and the culture is rare. Take the library. You can put your things somewhere and go, but nothing will be stolen. People may use your things, but they'll put them back. From your wallet to your body, everything is safe in JNU.

I studied at Daulat Ram College in Delhi University. For a woman studying there, the curfew is 7 pm. It's not that you want to go out for a late night every day, but such a curfew is restrictive. When I came to JNU in 2016, I hadn't experienced this kind of security before. You know that if you return from the library even at 4 am, nothing can go wrong. Because this is the kind of understanding in every student. There is the sense that this university stands for what is just, for the right things. That is what makes it worth fighting for.

The video of the January 5 violence was frightening to watch. You were so badly beaten. What was going through your mind?

It was very scary. We never expected something like that to happen, especially in JNU. Even when the mob came very close, there was a sense of security because some teachers were also there. We thought that the maximum they will do is to shout. But that they would hit us in the way they did never occurred to us.

Why didn't you run away or hide? A lot of people did that night.

Before I could run away, I was attacked. My sister was with me and she



Aishe Ghosh after the attack on her

doesn't know this campus. She had come to visit me that day. We were sitting and having tea at Sabarmati, and suddenly this happened. I remember because I was telling other students not to panic. But before I could understand the situation, I was already hit.

What has the doctor said about your injuries? What is the nature of the fracture in your arm?

There was a deep wound. It's healing now. I have a check-up today. My arm is not fractured per se, it's a hairline injury. I think by January 22, the plaster should come off. I'm not on painkillers any more. I only take them when I really need to.

Your parents said that they won't ask you to come back. You must derive a lot of strength from them.

It has a lot to do with my father's orientation. He has been associated with the Left, so that influence comes from him. It is also the orientation I had in my city. I'm from Durgapur in West Bengal which has been a stronghold of the Left. So this sense, that you need to fight for whatever injustice is happening, was always there.

My father does scold me sometimes. Of course, there are priorities and academics should go hand in hand with other things. But he has never stopped me. My mother is also angry at me at times, about why I'm choosing to do this. My friends are leading a much more comfortable life. They are in jobs and they don't worry about fee hikes. She is concerned about why I'm going an extra step to be involved in all this. She thinks I have a good academic background and that I could be doing well.

So there is also this debate about what 'doing well' means. Obviously, coming from a very middle class family, the orientation is that being economically secure is essential to doing well. I can understand that. My father is also retiring soon.

You have asked for the removal of the vice-chancellor (VC). Is there any chance of going back on that?

No. Even our teachers' association has taken a strong stand that the winter semester can't start without the removal of the VC. Everything in the life of students has been jeopardized because of this VC. He has not filed a single FIR. He has not met the students who have been affected and injured.

With this kind of VC, the academic integrity of the university is also falling. The basic sense of safety and security is falling. If a mob comes to the campus again tomorrow, we don't know whom to approach or where to go. Even if we go to the VC, he might say, 'I don't care'. He's not bothered with what's

happening around him.

You've been accused of vandalizing the server room. What is your version of events?

Obviously, the JNUSU never gave a call to vandalize the server room. Had the server room been vandalized, we wouldn't be receiving emails. But we have. The wi-fi has been working fine.

We have been asking for CCTV footage. Their FIR states that I cut the wire. I want the footage where they saw me destroying servers. These are big claims they are making. I was not masked. I didn't have any rods with me. There is no video that shows me vandalizing anything. So how did they come to the conclusion that I am a suspect?

They are showing my face on national TV as a suspect. You can't malign anybody without authentic proof. Tomorrow it may be dangerous to go out of campus. Is the police going to take responsibility for my security and safety now? If something happens to me tomorrow or if I'm travelling alone, will the police take the responsibility? JNU might be safe for me, but the outside world is quite different.

Is that a fear? Travelling alone?

Yeah, it is. There are people outside who may not know our side of the story and may think that the Delhi Police is right in naming me as a suspect. What if a mob like this attacks me outside the campus?

What is the morale on the campus? Where is the movement going?

We are trying to restore normalcy on the campus because we don't think a protest can happen without doing that. There is a lot of fear. Students have gone back home. To bring them back, we need to bring academics back on track.

We are planning to finish our backlog of classes from last semester with help from our teachers. Then exams should happen. But we're not starting with the new semester at the moment.

We will sit with the council again to discuss how to intensify protests for the winter semester and for the removal of the VC. We are taking legal action also. As much time as it takes, three or four months even, we are ready to fight. But it is also our responsibility as representatives to normalize the situation and facilitate protest along with academics.

After JNU, where do you see yourself? Do you want to be in academia?

I'm in second year of my MPhil. And I have a PhD to do also. I'm in the integrated course. For now, I just want to focus on academics. Later, things might change and plans might change. ■

Continued from page 19

government job. Without a public education system, I would not have been able to study." She explained that families in India save money to spend on a girl's wedding instead of spending it on her education. A subsidized education allows women to pursue higher education.

Women are also concerned about their safety on campuses. "JNU is extraordinary because it is one of the few places in Delhi where a woman could walk alone at night, and she would be safe," says Jayati Ghosh. That sense of safety has diminished after January 5.

In Jamia Millia Islamia, female students were sexually harassed by the police but no student was willing to go on record about it, said Haldia, who was part of a fact-finding team at the university.

The Jamia administration asked female students to leave their hostels because it couldn't ensure their

safety. "This is the same administration which locks up women and restricts their mobility in the name of safety!" a coordinator from Pinjra Tod said.

"Anyway, it's not easy for women to come to universities. Now parents are calling incessantly and asking their daughters to come back," she said. Many have already left.

Since 2015, Pinjra Tod has been an important player in articulating women's demands. Women on campuses want to be treated as adult citizens. They want to be free of curfew timings and from the sense of being watched. Any kind of political participation is seen in a very negative light, especially for women, the coordinator said.

TEACHERS' SUPPORT

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNUTA) has lent unconditional support to students in their protest against the fee

hike. A professor, who also studied at JNU, said, "I have benefitted from a subsidized education. If I could get it, why can't the others?"

On January 9, when JNUSU and JNUTA called for a protest at Mandi House, demanding removal of the VC, many professors joined the protest. "We completely support our students in their protests," Jayati Ghosh said. After the January 5 violence, many professors opened up their homes to students who feared going back to their hostel rooms.

At NID, IIM-C, IIM-A and IIT-B, professors have broken their silence over CAA, NRC and campus violence. The teachers' association at HCU even released a statement in support of the anti-CAA protests.

"When we emailed our teachers about the boycott, their replies were very positive. Some of them even said, 'We're proud of you all'. We're also learning how to organize ourselves and we consult our teachers.

They tell us how to engage with people who may not agree with us," said Mounica Sreesai of DSE.

On January 8, when students of colleges in Delhi gathered at Arts Faculty, 15-20 professors from St Stephen's College marched along with their students. "The presence of teachers legitimizes the protest in many ways, because many students have not seen this culture of protest," said Jha.

STRICT COLLEGE ADMINISTRATIONS

While teachers have been supportive of their students as they express solidarity with JNU, JMI and AMU, and voice their dissent, this has not been the case with college administrations. They have not welcomed this burst of political activity.

Jha, a student of St Stephen's, mentioned that whenever there is a protest on campus, people from the administration videotape them to identify students. Rajvir Kaur from Punjab said, "Every time

a protest is held, we are being kept under watch. The security guards make it a point to note down who all are taking part."

At the National Institute of Design, the administration took down a poster put up by a student. At the Indian Institute of Management, in Kolkata, when students wanted to protest on campus, the administration tried negotiating with them, asking them to express their dissent in "other creative ways". Finally, a silent protest was staged with permission. At the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, policemen in plainclothes dispersed a Preamble reading by students and teachers in the college grounds.

The heavyhandedness of college administrations is not new. Aakriti Suresh, an MPhil student at HCU, said that they are familiar with police intervention in campus life. Once, when they tried to screen an award-winning film on the Babri

Masjid, the police detained them. At the English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad, students have been served show-cause notices for as little as organizing a street play.

But students are firm in their resolve. A student from NID said, "Students are scared of the administration taking action against them. But we realize there is strength in numbers." A JNU student who was an eyewitness to the January 5 violence said that they are scared, but undaunted. "JNU has long stood for these principles. We will continue to fight."

Students are fighting for the idea of an affordable public education and free university spaces. "The freedom to navigate spaces is the hallmark of any educational institution," a student from IIM-A said. The freedom to express political opinions and to question is essential to the imagination of a free campus. ■

In Mumbai the stars speak up

Saibal Chatterjee
New Delhi

THREE days ahead of the release of Meghna Gulzar's *Chhapaak*, inspired by the life of an acid attack survivor, the film's lead actor and producer, Deepika Padukone, visited the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus to express solidarity with students who were brutally attacked by lathi-wielding and stone-pelting goons while Delhi Police personnel stood by and watched.

The *Padmaavat* and *Bajirao Mastani* star did not utter a word but was clicked greeting wounded JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh with folded hands. The picture spoke a thousand words. Padukone, who spent 10 minutes in JNU, joined a crowd of students and teachers standing behind CPI leader and former JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar as he addressed the gathering.

With that symbolic gesture of defiance, Padukone put the fate of her film on the line. The BJP's foot soldiers instantly began baying for her blood on social media. Pro-government elements in cyberspace called for a boycott of *Chhapaak* and posted malicious reviews of the film on bookmyshow. But her supporters, including members of her own fraternity, were equally vehement in defending her.

Filmmaker Hansal Mehta told this writer: "It takes more than guts to take a stand the way Deepika did. As a popular movie star on whom so much rides, she would have been aware of the risk of losing a part of her audience. She went to JNU and stood by the assaulted students nonetheless and that's what mattered."

Writer-director Anurag Kashyap, a vocal critic of the Modi government, tweeted: "Let's not forget she is also the producer of the film... the stakes are even higher. Mad respect." Actress Sayani Gupta, too, lauded Padukone in no uncertain terms: "Thank you... for giving this movement a mainstream narrative. For using your position to choose the correct path."

It wasn't as if Padukone was the first from the Mumbai movie industry to lend support to the protests. Many Bollywood voices had already been heard loud and clear in favour of the growing agitation against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and celebrating the role of the students and women in propelling it. Many prominent actors and filmmakers threw their weight behind the battle to protect the secular core of the Constitution of India and to uphold the people's inalienable right to hold peaceful protests against a decision of the government.

The likes of Kashyap, Anubhav Sinha and Swara Bhaskar, whose political leanings are unambiguous, stood their ground and fought "pitched battles"



Protesters from the film industry at Carter Road in Mumbai

with an army of right-wing trolls on social media. Richa Chadda, Taapsee Pannu, Farhan Akhtar and Vishal Bhardwaj took part in protests and marches in Mumbai. Others, including mainstream stars such as Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt, Yami Gautam and Bhumi Pednekar articulated their alarm at the turn of events.

Many others pulled no punches in expressing their outrage at the brutality unleashed by the police (in Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University) and masked assailants (in JNU). Actor Pulkit Samrat tweeted after the Jamia incident: "BARBARIC! UNDEMOCRATIC! UNSECULAR! (capitals his) That's what we are turning into. Not the India I was born in!"

Actor Jim Sarbh was just as emphatic: "Stand up against divisive politics, against Islamophobia, against unconstitutional acts, and state sponsored violence. Power to the protesters, power to the students."

Filmmaker Alankrita Shrivastava, too, minced no words after the uncalculated-for police intrusion into Jamia: "Nothing can justify what has happened to the students. The broken legs, the lost eye, the assaults in the darkness, the barbaric beating up of the innocent, the vandalizing of a space of learning, the invasion of the student hostels. History will remember."

Indeed, history will remember that many in Bollywood, an industry known to usually shy away from politics except when it suits its interests, stood up to be counted when it mattered. The Khans and the Kapoors, the real big guns of Mumbai cinema, have been at the receiving end of censure for choosing to keep quiet as the anti-CAA protests swirl all around us.

Early in Narendra Modi's first term as prime minister, Shahrukh Khan had spoken about growing intolerance in India. In retaliation, his film

Dilwale was targeted by an easy-to-offend tribe of BJP supporters. Aamir Khan, too, had flagged the issue of rising insecurity and fear. As a fallout, Snapdeal pulled out of an endorsement deal with him. Since then the two Khans have opted for silence in matters political.

Hansal Mehta suggests that we might be giving Bollywood too much credit for the protests that are being staged across the nation. "It is entirely a people's movement, completely democratic. It has spread organically," says the director of *Shahid* and *Aligarh*.

For the nation at large, there is a lot at stake, says Mehta. "But beyond a point, we, as film industry people, do not have all that much at stake," he adds.

"The students spearheading the protests have put far more at risk — their entire future."

Kolkata-based film director Sekhar Das, whose films usually deal with subaltern realities, says: "The protests are absolutely understandable. The government is telling us that we are not citizens unless we prove otherwise. It is high time people in power realize that majoritarianism does not work in a secular democracy."

It is easy to see why screenwriter, lyricist and standup satirist Varun Grover's poem, "*Hum kaagaz nahi dikhayenge*" (We will not show our papers) has resonated so widely, nowhere more so than in Kolkata. Not only has the musician duo of Mayukh and Mainak composed a tune for the lines, filmmaker Ronny Sen in collaboration with his associates has also produced a video of the Bangla version of the poem. A host of important Bengali film personalities ranging from veterans Dhritiman Chatterjee and Sabyasachi Chakraborty to Konkona Sen Sharma, Tillotama Shome and Swastika Mukherjee have participated in the video.

India's entertainers aren't shying away from making their voice count. ■

'Nothing can justify what happened to the students. The broken legs, the lost eye, assaults in darkness.'

INSIGHTS

OPINION | ANALYSIS | RESEARCH | IDEAS

Language and opportunity



DELHI
DARBAR
SANJAYA BARU

OF all the daily editorials I had to write during my tenure as the editorial page editor of the *Times of India* none elicited more hate mail than the one I wrote titled "English is an Indian Language". This was written in response to a protest hunger strike that Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav had threatened to stage outside the office of the Union Public Service Commission demanding that examinations for admission into the civil services be conducted only in Indian languages and applicants should no longer be allowed to appear in English. It was one thing to demand examinations in all Indian languages, we argued, and quite another proscribing the English option altogether.

Apart from drawing the attention of readers to Yadav's hypocrisy, given that his children were studying in English-medium schools, the editorial made the point that the Census of India had shown thousands of Indians declaring English as their mother tongue. The Census of 2011 showed 256,000 Indians declaring English as their mother tongue. It also showed that 83 million Indians had said it was their second language and another 46 million had said it was their third language. English came second only to Hindi (that included its various variants like Bhojpuri and Maithili) as the most widely spoken language across the country. Hundreds of readers wrote to the *Times of India* protesting against the view of the editorial.

This attitude towards English received a jolt when Dalit intellectuals began demanding instruction even at the primary school level in English. Kancha Ilaiah, political scientist, writer and Dalit rights activist, became a powerful spokesperson for this cause. Welcoming a 2011 decision of the Union government to allow the teaching of English in government schools, Ilaiah wrote: "English education is the key to the modernist approach suitable to a globalised India. The upper castes have handled the contradiction between English and their native culture quite carefully. But when it comes to teaching English to the lower castes they have been proposing a theory that English will destroy the 'culture of the soil'."

The recent decision of the Andhra Pradesh government to amend the AP Education Act, 1982, and allow all schools in the state to adopt English as the medium of instruction should be viewed in this context. The state government has reportedly decided to make English the medium of instruction for Classes 1 to 6 in all schools, replacing Telugu, and making Telugu or Urdu a compulsory second language. Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy was quoted as saying, "We will go ahead with English-medium schools, come what may. We have to prepare the students to boldly face and stand up to the requirements of the technology-driven world and we should not be found wanting in it."

The Andhra region of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh has for a long time had a forward-looking educational system that has emphasized the teaching of mathematics and science. It is not surprising that today the single largest group of



Indians in the United States, mostly in the fields of engineering, medicine and information technology, hail from Andhra Pradesh.

Critics of English have long quoted the architect of English education in India, Thomas Babington Macaulay, to argue that the British colonial administration began the teaching of English to create a class of clerks. Macaulay's famous Minute defined the objective of English education in India as being aimed at "creating a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." However, it is precisely this class that led the national movement and overthrew the colonial regime and eventually ensured that the sun did set on the British empire.

While Macaulay took a dim view of Indian languages and culture and had a disgustingly

condescending view of Hindu civilization, he was also interested in introducing English teaching in order to teach the 'natives' modern science and medicine, knowledge of which was not available in books in Sanskrit and Arabic. Macaulay was not opposed to the continued teaching of Indian languages; he was merely against the colonial government spending money on this. Rather, he wanted modern science to seep into Indian language teaching once there were enough Indians capable of translating knowledge available in English into Indian languages.

To quote Macaulay, "Twenty years hence, there will be hundreds, nay thousands of natives familiar with the best models of composition, and well acquainted with Western science. Among them some persons will be found who will have the inclination and the ability to exhibit European knowledge in the vernacular dialects." This is precisely what China has achieved in its post-

colonial phase and India has not done enough about. If China has become a superpower using Mandarin and many Indians still believe the knowledge of English is required for modernization and development, it is because of our failure to translate modern knowledge in adequate magnitude into Indian languages.

The demand for universal English language teaching will remain in India for as long as people believe that this is the only language through which they can secure modern knowledge in the sciences and other disciplines and widen their livelihood opportunities.

What Ilaiah and Jagan Reddy are saying is that there is no reason for Indians to feel defensive about accessing the English language. In fact familiarity with the language

opens doors to opportunity. An interesting debate triggered by Macaulay's Minute in his time was whether one is better off knowing only one language, one's mother tongue, or two languages. Macaulay spoke in favour of two languages against his orthodox English critics who felt Indians should continue to be taught only in their mother tongue.

The more developed non-Hindi states have shown that even knowledge of three languages is no constraint to intellectual development and economic progress. The more developed parts of India have all adopted the three-language formula, even if the best books in any discipline are still available only in English. The challenge for Indian language enthusiasts is to do what China has done — fund massive translation of all knowledge available in English and other languages. ■

Sanjaya Baru is a writer and Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis in New Delhi

Innovate to prosper



TECH TALES

KIRAN KARNIK

non-scalable solution to an immediate problem. It is better translated and understood as improvisation. At the other end of the scale is invention. Innovation is best thought of as being more than *jugaad*, but less than invention. All three are part of a continuum, with many grey areas. Where, for example, does one slot the washing-machine-as-a-*lassi*-maker or the missed-call method?

Many link innovation with products but, in fact, it is far wider in scope. Much of it has to do with processes and business models. Thus, while the Tata Nano (at one time the showpiece of Indian innovation) can be thought of as a product innovation, India's IT industry was built on the business model innovation of combining outsourcing with off-shoring. AirBnB and Uber are other examples of new business models, part of the new "sharing" economy, built on a no-asset-ownership basis and enabled by a tech platform. Google is built on a business model where the user pays nothing and yet the organization makes large



A digital dispensary which can do several tests in a few minutes

Many link innovation with products but, in fact, it is far wider in scope. Much of it has to do with processes and business models.

profits (if only we could do that for healthcare!). In the days of easier intellectual property laws, the Indian pharma industry prospered on the basis of process innovation. Dr Devi Shetty is able to do heart operations at extremely low costs thanks mainly to process innovations which he has pioneered.

We can hardly afford to ignore invention and we desperately need to begin making large investments in R&D to promote it. Without this, little can be expected by way of discovery or seminal inventions

like the steam engine, aeroplanes or transistors. Yet, for decades we have under-invested in R&D. Private industry is only now waking up to the advantages and necessity of investing in R&D, but its spending on this is still shamefully low. As for the government, while successive prime ministers have articulated their commitment to R&D and even to raising spending on this to 2 percent of GDP (low, compared to countries like Israel and South Korea), even today this figure is not even half that. Worse, the percentage has remained almost static for decades. In contrast, China has been ramping up its R&D spending, on a GDP base which is more than four times that of India.

A combination of poor funding and poor people meant few inventions and low affordability. After years of these being inhibiting factors, of late India has established a name as a centre for frugal innovation and frugal engineering. Innovations like portable and low-cost ECG and ultra-sound machines have reinforced the image created by the Nano: all aiming at affordability through innovative engineering. More recently, further sheen has been added to this by India's low-cost space exploits (particularly the Moon and Mars missions).

While hoping for a big increase in R&D spending, it may be wise to capitalise on India's apparent genius for innovation. To have an impact on the overall economy and well-being of the country, though, such innovation must be widespread. Ideally, we must aim not merely at having some innovative organizations, but on evolving an innovative society.

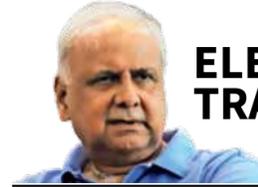
This will require many changes, beginning with our educational system. Rote learning and standard

answers must give way to the promotion of creativity and critical thinking: questioning answers, rather than merely answering questions. Rational risk-taking and entrepreneurship must replace the fear of failure.

Innovation is born out of lateral or crooked thinking. It is necessarily disruptive — of present models, of established assumptions, of entrenched players. The nursery for this — as is most visible in innovation hot-spots like Silicon Valley — is a society that respects, nurtures and celebrates diversity in all aspects, including ideas and thoughts. Interestingly, in recognition of this, an adviser to Britain's PM says that Britain is seeking "weirdos" for government posts. India is, in this context, uniquely blessed: almost no country can boast of so much innate diversity. Our future well-being and prosperity dictate that we promote and build on this by encouraging divergent thinking, so as to build a truly innovative society. ■

Dr Kiran Karnik is an independent strategy and public policy analyst. His recent books include *Evolution: Decoding India's Disruptive Tech Story* (2018) and *Crooked Minds: Creating an Innovative Society* (2016).

Who 'represents' us?



ELECTION TRACKER

JAGDEEP CHHOKAR

INDIA is a representative democracy. We, the citizens, are expected and required to elect 543 members of the Lok Sabha and 4,120 members of various state assemblies as our 'representatives' roughly every five years. After we do our job of electing them, we do not think about how or well we are being represented. What needs to be remembered is that an MP or an MLA does not represent a citizen or a voter individually. He or she is a representative of a constituency.

Let us take a hypothetical example of how our representatives are elected. Let us assume that a constituency has 100 registered voters. The qualification 'registered' is very important because 'registered' voters are almost always different from total 'eligible' voters for the simple reason that all eligible voters do not, or cannot, get themselves registered with the Election Commission. The total population of our hypothetical constituency might be 500, out of which the 'eligible' voters might be only 200. These will be those who have attained the age of 18, and of these only 100 may have chosen to or may have been able to get themselves registered as voters.

The voting percentage in most elections in India is around 50-60 percent. Assuming that the voting percentage is 60 percent, of the 100 registered voters, 60 persons will cast their votes. To complete the calculation, we need to make one more assumption — that there are only six candidates. Assuming that all candidates are equally good and the 60 voters who voted did so fairly and equally, each candidate should get 10 votes. This exact situation will result in a tie but if this ideal situation does not exist, then any one of the six candidates who manages to get 11 votes will be declared elected. This is because we follow the 'First-Past-The-Post' system of deciding the winner.

Though the numbers used above are hypothetical, the logic holds even with much larger numbers. This raises issues concerning 'representativeness'. Representativeness is simply an indicator of how 'representative' of the entire electorate the "elected representative" is. Let us analyse our hypothetical example from the perspective of representativeness.

A person getting elected with 11 votes out of 60 votes cast, means $[(11/60) \times 100]$ which works out to 18.33 percent. The readers can decide on their own how representative a person elected with 18.33 percent of the votes cast is of the entire electorate. If, instead of 'votes cast', we were to consider the 'total registered voters' (which is 100 in this case), then the percentage of votes polled by the winner becomes 11 percent.

Another way to look at the same situation is to see how many people did not vote for the winning candidate, or voted against the winning candidate. As the winner has got 11 votes out of the 60 votes cast, (60-11=) 49 voters did not vote for the winner. This works out to 81.67 percent. Taking the 'total registered voters', again, makes this percentage 89!

This raises two questions: (1) Can those elected with 18 percent of the votes cast or 11 percent of the registered votes in their favour; and 81.67 percent of the votes cast or 89 percent of the total registered votes against them, be considered to be 'really' representing the entire electorate; and (2) If these percentages are not acceptable, then what should be the percentage level above which an elected person can be considered to be genuinely representing the entire electorate?

While it may not be difficult to answer the first question, and presumably the answer would be in the negative, it is not easy to respond to the second question. It has been suggested that one figure to be considered is 50 percent. This suggestion was made by none other than the Law Commission of India, way back in May 1999, in its 170th report which was titled "Reform of the Electoral Laws". The Law Commission called it "An alternative method of election", and described it as follows:

"The idea is this: (a) no candidate should be declared elected unless he obtains at least 50 percent

An MP or an MLA does not represent a citizen or a voter individually. He/she is a representative of a constituency.

of the votes cast; (b) the ballot paper shall contain a column at the end which can be marked by a voter who is not inclined to vote for any of the candidates on the ballot paper, which is called hereinafter as 'negative vote'. (A voter can cast a negative vote only when he is not inclined to vote for any of the candidates on the ballot paper); (c) for the purpose of calculating the 50 percent votes of the votes cast, even the negative votes will be treated as 'votes cast'; (d) if no person gets 50 percent or more votes, then there should be a 'run-off' election between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes; (e) in the run-off election too, there should be a provision for a negative vote and even here there should be a requirement that only that candidate will be declared elected who receives 50 percent or more of the 'votes cast' as explained hereinabove; (f) if no candidate gets 50 percent or more of the votes cast in the run-off, there should be a fresh election from that constituency" (Para 8.1).

Describing what this "alternative method of

election" is meant to achieve, the Law Commission said:

"This method of election is designed to achieve two important objectives viz., (i) to cut down or, at any rate, to curtail the significance and role played by the caste factor in the electoral process. There is hardly any constituency in the country where any one particular caste can command more than 50 percent of the votes. This means that a candidate has to carry with him several castes and communities to succeed; (ii) the negative vote is intended to put moral pressure on political parties not to put forward candidates with an undesirable record i.e., criminals, corrupt elements and persons with unsavoury background" (Para 8.2).

The Commission was not ignorant of the possible complications involved in implementing this method, as is obvious from the excerpts given below: "No doubt this method calls for a run-off and a fresh election in case no candidate obtains 50 percent or more votes even in the run-off, and in that sense expensive and elaborate, yet it has the merit of compelling the political parties to put forward only good candidates and to eschew bad characters and corrupt elements" (Para 8.2.1).

The Commission goes on to mention a possible solution: "If the above practical difficulties and problems can be overcome, the idea of 50 percent + 1 vote — and even the idea of negative vote can be implemented. We may mention that if electronic voting machines are introduced throughout the country, it will become a little more easier to hold a run-off election inasmuch as it would then be not necessary to print fresh ballot papers showing the names of the two candidates competing in the run-off — or for that matter, for holding a fresh election (in case the idea of negative vote is also given effect to)" (Para 8.7).

Electronic voting machines (EVMs) are now in use all over the country, and the provision for a 'negative' has also been made, albeit indirectly, by the provision of the NOTA (None-Of-The-Above) button on the EVMs by a decision of the Supreme Court of India in 2013; there is no reason for not implementing this "alternative method of election". But it has not been implemented.

It is quite remarkable that the Law Commission was prescient enough to foresee this possibility and actually decided to put it on record:

"Alternative method mitigates undesirable practices. — Probably, the aforesaid problems arise because of the vastness of the country and lack of requisite standards of behaviour and also of cooperation and understanding among the political parties to ensure a peaceful poll... This is really unfortunate. Even so, we may make every effort to mitigate the undesirable practices and the alternate method of election set out in this chapter is certainly a step in that direction" (Para 8.8).

The Law Commission did its job 20 years ago but when the political establishment will do what only it can do, no one knows. ■

Jagdeep S. Chhokar is a former Professor, Dean, and Director In-charge of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and a founding member of the Association for Democratic Reforms.

Masthi and the bees



VILLAGE VOICES

R. BALASUBRAMANIAM

THERE is so much talk today about the GDP and the economy not doing well across the country. Discussions about the falling sales of cars, the sluggish real estate sector and NPAs of banks dominate the headlines.

Very few of us have stopped to think whether the current economic model itself is flawed and whether this could be an opportunity to explore more sustainable alternatives.

Thinking about all this reminded me of an incident that took place in 1989, when I was just beginning my work with indigenous tribals in Karnataka.

At that time I was slowly beginning to understand the indigenous way of life and learning about tribal ways and dialect. I was keen to understand how the Jenukurubas, an indigenous tribe with distinct anthropological features, collected *jenu* or honey from the forests. Hostel Masthi (as he was popularly called) was the chieftain of the Jenukurubas living in Hosahalli. He was a respected elder who used to be sober only when he ventured into the forest.

When he was told that I was keen to understand how they collected wild honey, he invited me on his next trip. Full of anticipation about the adventure ahead, I set out with him, his 10-year-old son, Mara, and three other Jenukuruba tribals from the colony.

After walking for around three to four km, Masthi spotted a large bee hive perched on a tall tree. He asked Kala who was accompanying him to quickly climb up and cut the hive with the sickle he was carrying. Kala was a natural and watching him climb up the tree is a sight I can never forget. Within minutes he reached the hive and shouted to Masthi to be ready below.

Not sure of what was happening, I stood a little distance away watching the whole scene unfold. Masthi and Mahadeva, another tribal, spread out their towel and placed broad leaves that they had cut from a nearby teak tree on it. Holding each end of the towel, they stood beneath the tree directly under the hive.

The bees must have sensed Kala's presence. They started buzzing angrily around the hive. In a split second Kala put his hand into the hive and gently extracted the queen and placed her in the middle of his forearm. All the bees followed the queen and

quickly settled down on his forearm.

I stood transfixed, staring at the hive that was forming on Kala's forearm, wondering why he was not getting stung by the bees he had disturbed. With his other arm, Kala sliced the hive around six to eight inches below where it was attached to the branch and the rest of the hive with its honey, wax, pupae and all came crashing down. More adept than a determined fielder on a cricket field, Masthi and his mate caught the falling hive on the bed of teak leaves and folded the towel immediately around it. Kala, meanwhile, pulled the queen again from the new hive on his arm and gently put her back onto the original base of the hive still hanging from the tree.

Within minutes, all the remaining bees flocked around their queen again and the hive re-formed in the exact shape that it was before Kala sliced it. Kala



Masthi said since the bees had done all the hard work, it was only fair that we left most of the honey behind for them to use in the difficult months.

came down the tree as quickly as he had climbed up. Everything seemed to have happened in a few minutes and it looked as though nothing had really changed.

I was left spellbound and unsure of how to respond when Masthi offered me a dripping piece of the crushed hive — honey, wax and possibly some unlucky pupae and larvae. I had never tasted anything like it and it was delectable.

Masthi felt that we had had enough adventure for the day and we started to walk back to Hosahalli. I could not contain my curiosity any longer. I was keen to know why Kala had sliced the hive so low and left most of the honey back in the hive. It seemed economically stupid to leave so much honey in the hive and still feel that a good day's job had been done.

Masthi's answer resonates with me even today. For him this was indeed a no-brainer. He explained simply that the honey belonged to the bees and that we were actually thieves stealing it from them. In fact, the song that they were singing was to seek forgiveness from the bees for taking away what was rightfully theirs. He said that since the bees had done all the hard work by collecting the honey, it was only fair that we left most of it behind for them to use during the difficult months ahead. If he and his people did not have to use this part of the hive with the honey in it for food and for preparing medicines, he would not even have taken this much. And Masthi and his fellow tribals were bringing back this hive not just for themselves but to be shared amongst all his clansmen. For a person educated in a system that aims at maximizing profits and minimizing labour, this lesson in compassion, fairness and sharing seemed perplexing. For Masthi, it was all about sharing the benefits reaped with everyone — including the bees.

The norms of market economics revolve around 'profit maximization' and current experiences are clearly indicating how damaging and unsustainable this is. This is an appropriate time for us to explore the emergence of a 'fourth sector' that seeks to create public good while ensuring reasonable private gains for the entrepreneur. We need to build the system to transform into an economy that promotes 'benefits' for all stakeholders involved.

Unless capitalism gets embedded in compassion, equity, fairness and justice for all stakeholders, sustainability will remain just a fashion statement. For a world that seems to be rapidly absorbing and celebrating the spirit of market economics and individual attainment, Masthi and his fellow tribals will seem unreal and this anecdote difficult to believe. But embedded in this anecdote is the paradigm of a soulful economy that takes into consideration the state of the planet, the people involved and the gains that everyone needs to derive on an equitable basis. It is in this movement away from mindless 'profit maximization' for the shareholders to 'benefit optimization' for stakeholders that a sustainable world economic order lies. ■

Dr R. Balasubramaniam, founder of the Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement, Mysuru, is a development activist and author. www.drbbalu.com

LIVING

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In search of *Kastoori* Vinod Kamble's film reflects his life

SAIBAL CHATTERJEE

A tree outside Vinod Kamble's home in a village in Barshi block of Maharashtra's Solapur district planted in him a love for movies early in life. A local exhibitor's men would arrive every other week with a new film poster to put up on the tree. They would give the boy's uncle, a sweeper with the municipality, a free pass for a show.

"I would sneak out with those tickets and watch films," the 32-year-old writer-director reveals. "Nor was that all. I would take a few of the posters and hang them on my wall. They filled me with wonderment." The costly tools of cinema were obviously way beyond his grasp, but the magic of the medium surrounded Kamble, a sanitation worker's son, all through his boyhood.

Kamble's maiden effort, *Kastoori* (The Musk), made in a dialect of Hindi and located in the environs in which the filmmaker was born and raised, has struck a chord with its unflinching, gritty take on the life of a Dalit boy grappling with grinding poverty and caste prejudice.

Says Kamble: "I had no inkling that I wanted to be a filmmaker, but the movies that I saw, most of them alone, piqued my curiosity about the medium." As the wide-eyed boy saw more and more films, he was hooked for life. Though filmmaking still wasn't a realistic career option, his mind was made up. He had to break the social shackles and venture forth into the world to find his own space.

Kamble took one step at a time. He acquired a degree in civil engineering and then appeared for the UPSC entrance examinations. After one such exam in Pune, he wrote a rough treatment of a film on the back of the question paper. "It gave me a high. Something inside me told me my place was elsewhere. That was the last academic exam of my life," says Kamble, who joined a theatre group in 2014. There, he worked as a backstage hand for a year or two and picked up the ropes of storytelling.

He attended a filmmaking workshop and made a four-minute short. His confidence grew as the film, *Grahan*, about a beggar scrounging for food in a heartless city, garnered some attention — and applause. He assisted director Amar Bharat Deokar on the Marathi film *Mhorkya* (The Leader), which won the National Award for best children's film in 2017. It told the story of a marginalized shepherd boy determined to be the leader of his school parade.

Kamble's second short was the critically acclaimed *Post-Mortem*, a 25-minute fiction film inspired by the life of a boy in Solapur, Sunny Chavan, who



Shravan Upalkar plays the role of Adim and Samarth Sonawane that of Gopi in *Kastoori*



Vinod Kamble

The film revolves around a 14-year-old schoolboy, Gopinath Chavhan, who cleans latrines, performs post-mortems and buries unclaimed bodies to fund his primary education.

helps doctors cut up bodies for autopsies. Despite being an arts post-graduate, Sunny, who is now 25 years old, continues to do post-mortems. "He has done over 6,000 of them to date," says Kamble. The protagonist of *Kastoori*, a 100-minute film that emerged out of the *Post-Mortem* screenplay, is part Sunny, part the filmmaker himself.

In *Kastoori*, the self-taught Kamble tells his own story fictionalized ever so slightly to drive home the complexities and repercussions of the caste system. The screenplay, jointly written by Kamble and Shivaji Karde, described by the director as "a friend and a poet", is bound to shake the audience out of its

complacency and make it squirm in discomfort. But *Kastoori* does not indulge in any angry, dramatic thrust and parry as it probes rural dynamics through the prism of caste.

The film revolves around a 14-year-old schoolboy, Gopinath Chavhan (Samarth Sonawane), who cleans latrines, performs post-mortems in a civil hospital and buries unclaimed bodies to fund his primary education. Gopi's work not only places him at the receiving end of racist slurs from his classmates but also, inevitably, fills him with a sense of low self-esteem.

Continued on page 28

The *Kastoori* crew at workAdim and Gopi set out in search of *kastoori* or musk

'I shot *Kastoori* on real locations in my village,' says Kamble. 'Many of the places where we filmed are linked to my life.'

The boy desperately wants to rid himself of the stench of death and dirt that clings to his clothes. At a religious discourse that he attends with his grandmother, he learns of the mythic power of *kastoori* (musk) to drive away bad odour.

With his best pal, Adim (Shravan Upalkar), a butcher's son, Gopi plots ways to lay his hands on a vial of the fragrance that he believes can change his life. "Adim," says Kamble, "has a bit of a very close Muslim friend that I had in school. He left the village after a few years but I still remember him fondly."

The obstacles in Gopi's way are numerous. His father is an alcoholic who loses his job in the local hospital for dereliction of duty. His mother believes that it is more important for Gopi to go to work than attend school. "Good marks won't feed you, work will," she says to her son as she tears his textbooks.

Gopi is a good student but he has to keep working because he needs the money to buy musk before the school's Republic Day celebrations, where he is due to receive a prize for writing the best Sanskrit essay. Adim keeps egging him on even as Gopi's spirit flags.

The older males in the community work as manual scavengers. One of them, a cousin of Gopi's, is nearly killed by noxious fumes when he descends into a drain: a fate that the boy is determined to avoid.

Kastoori is essentially a children's film, but its theme lends it an urgent edge that cuts beyond the genre. It pulls no punches and stares at the horrors of the caste system in the face while employing the

unblighted innocence of a young boy to underscore the daunting nature of the hurdles that Gopi and his community face.

"I shot *Kastoori* on real locations in my own village," says Kamble. "Many of the places where we filmed are inextricably linked to my life." Among them is a store where he used to sell discarded scrap for the money that he needed to buy movie tickets.

Kamble also credits his grandmother, now 90, with kindling his interest in cinema. "I've always been close to her. I would accompany her on her garbage-collection rounds. I saw my first ever film in a matinee show with her after we were done with our day's work," he reminisces.

The filmmaker is thankful for the complete creative freedom that the production company gave him. "It is rare for a first-time director like me to be allowed to function without interference," he says. *Kastoori* has been produced by Insight Films, a company formed by eight women who are unrelated to cinema but have plans to bring untold stories to the big screen.

What's next for Kamble? There are other stories from his life that remain to be told, he says. "My next film, which I am currently writing, is also drawn from the world of my own experiences," he reveals. Does he believe that there is an audience out there for his kind of cinema? "I know Indian moviegoers do not usually want to see themselves on the big screen. They'd rather look away from reality. But we cannot give up the fight. We have to keep telling our stories. I am sure we'll find our audience," adds Kamble. ■

Romance, heritage at Mandu

SUSHEELA NAIR

ON a wintry morning, I checked into my tented accommodation in the fort town of Mandu in Madhya Pradesh. I was there to participate in the first edition of the five-day Mandu Festival and rediscover this quaint town with a past, replete with stories of romance and battle, courage and betrayal.

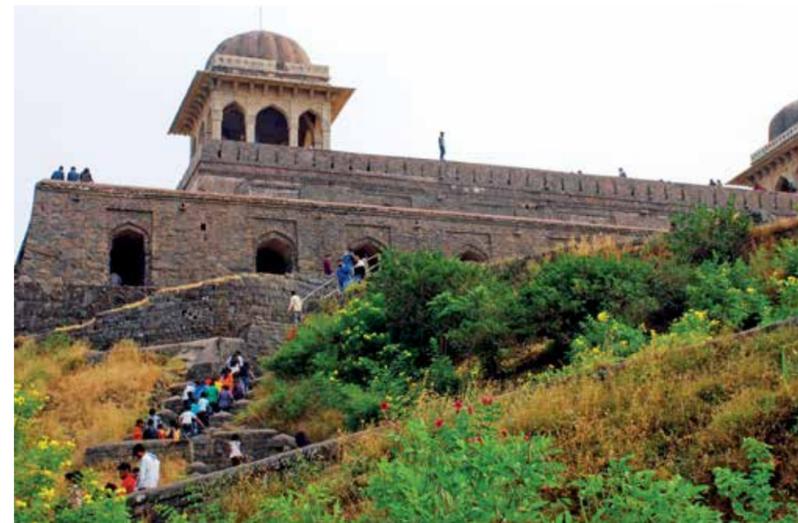
Mandu was celebrating the idea of '*Khojne Mein Kho Jao*', an eclectic mix of performing arts, workshops, art installations, nature walks, poetry reading, architecture, music and much more. The Mandu Fest reverberated with an exuberant mix of activities weaving together traditional norms and old-world charm.

It delved into history, heritage, culinary experiences and romance through Instagrammable locations. Visitors also experienced an adrenaline rush through aero sports activities like hot-air ballooning and gliding. The roads sported a vibrant look with draped flags and festoons, welcome arches, streamers and multi-hued ribbons. The illuminated trees and colourful bunting added to the fervour.

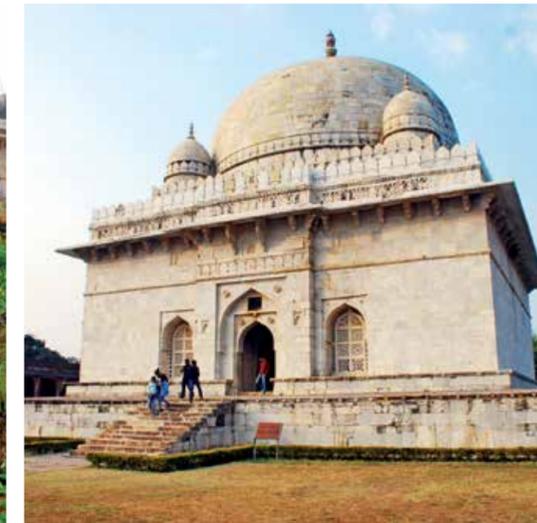
The festival retold the beautiful love story that unfolded between the legendary Baz Bahadur and Roopmati, his beloved, through story-telling sessions. Each monument in Mandu seems to tell a story, adding to its grace. The beauty of the architecture lies in its minimalism. The monuments have been divided into three groups. The first is a group of buildings referred to as the Royal Enclave, then there is the Village Group and the third is the Rewa Kund Group at the south of the Fort.

We embarked on our monument-hopping spree with the Village Group where the Jami Masjid, patterned on the great Omayyad Mosque in Damascus, overlooks the village of Mandu. Considered the largest and finest example of Afghan architecture in India, it was begun by Hoshang Shah and completed in 1454. But, in contrast, the imam's 'pulpit' is distinctly Hindu in decoration. Its beautiful courtyard, enclosed by huge colonnades with a variety of arches, pillars, bays and domes, all aesthetically laid out, evoke a sense of grandeur. The vast *masjid* can seat 5,000 people and its variety of domes are sound-amplifying and echo-absorbing devices so that the faintest voice, speaking from the pulpit, would be heard afar.

Hoshang's Tomb, located behind the mosque, is one of the first marble edifices of its kind constructed in India. The interior of the tomb, with a well-proportioned central dome, surrounded by four smaller domes, the beautiful lattice work, and



Roopmati's Pavilion overlooks Baz Bahadur's palace



Hoshang Shah's marble mausoleum



Ashrafi Mahal was originally built as a madrasa



A courtyard with a tank in Baz Bahadur's palace

its porticos and towers, is overwhelming. Light enters the interior through stone *jalis*, and falls on the six tombs within. It is no wonder Shah Jahan sent his architects on a recce to Mandu before they designed the Taj Mahal. Yet few know that its architecture is said to have inspired the Taj Mahal. A flight of steps leads to Ashrafi Mahal, another monument in the same group located right across the road from the mosque. Originally built as a *madrasa* (religious college) by Mahmud Shah, it was later extended to become his tomb.

From there we headed to the sprawling Royal Enclave which flaunts the Jahaz Mahal, or Ship Palace, the most famous palace of Mandu. The palace was built by Ghias-ud-din, son of Mahmud Shah, for his reputed harem of thousands of beautiful women. A beautiful two-storied palace with scalloped arches, airy rooms and beautiful pools, it is flanked on either side by two lakes, adding to its ship-like look. When viewed from afar, its open pavilions, balconies overhanging the water and open terraces are unforgettable on a moonlit night.

Next to this star attraction is the Hindola Mahal.

Known as the Swing Palace, it has a wide, sloping ramp enabling the ruler to be conveyed upstairs on elephant back. The Hindola Mahal, an audience hall, derives its name of 'swinging palace' from its perceptible sloping side walls which give the illusion that it is always swinging. It is valued for its trellis-worked sandstone and elegant façade. To the west of this palace is the famous Champa Baoli, a step-well with underground chambers. Adjacent is a hammam with chambers equipped with channels supplying hot and cold water and a steam sauna.

The Rewa Kund group is located about three kilometres south of the village group. Baz Bahadur was the last independent ruler of Mandu, and his palace is located beside Rewa Kund with an underground tank and a water lift which supplied water to the palace. The palace is a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal styles of architecture. While strolling through the long corridors, amidst the numerous pillars and arched entrance, we could sense echoes of a resplendent past.

Roopmati's Pavilion, located on the crest of a hill, overlooks his magnificent palace, and the balladeers of the region still sing about their love. Originally

conceived as an army observatory, it became a lookout point for the lovely queen as Baz Bahadur's palace was visible from here. Roopmati is said to have been a very beautiful Hindu singer, and Baz Bahadur persuaded her to move to the Fort by building this pavilion from where she could have sweeping views of the fertile Nimar plains with the silvery streak of the Narmada flowing past.

When Emperor Akbar marched to the Fort, Baz Bahadur fled, leaving Roopmati to poison herself. Mandu's ruins still narrate the tragic end involving Akbar and Baz Bahadur and the suicide of Rani Roopmati to save her chastity. We left with a heavy heart when we heard about the sad and tragic end of this romantic saga but with a promise to return to capture the magic of the Mandu Fest in 2020. ■

FACT FILE

Getting there: Nearest airport and railhead - Indore (99 km). A regular bus service connects Mandu with Indore and Bhopal.

Best season: July to March is ideal. In the rainy season, it is idyllic.

Where to stay: Malwa Resort.



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Dr SRIKANTH

Ease your cramps

EVERY one of us has suffered from muscle cramps at some time or the other. When a muscle involuntarily contracts and is unable to relax, it is known as a muscle cramp. That sharp, excruciating pain one experiences is caused by the inability of the muscle to loosen.

CAUSES: Long periods of exercise or physical labour, particularly in hot weather, can lead to muscle cramps. In other words, overuse of a muscle, dehydration, muscle strain or holding a position continuously for a prolonged period can cause a muscle cramp. In many cases, however, the cause isn't known.

Although most muscle cramps are harmless, some may be related to an underlying medical condition:

Inadequate blood supply: Narrowing of the arteries that deliver blood to the legs can produce cramp-like pain in the legs and feet while exercising. These cramps usually go away soon after one stops exercising.

Nerve compression: Compression of nerves in the spine can produce cramp-like pain in your legs. The pain usually worsens the longer one walks. Walking in a slightly flexed position — like pushing a shopping cart — may improve or delay the onset of these symptoms.

Mineral depletion: Too little potassium, calcium or magnesium in the diet can cause leg cramps. Low electrolyte levels may be due to use of some diuretics, alcoholism, certain hormonal disorders, Vitamin D deficiency or conditions that cause loss of fluids (and thus electrolytes). Electrolyte levels may become low late in pregnancy.

Cramps can occur shortly after dialysis, possibly because dialysis removes too much fluid from the body or too quickly and lowers electrolyte levels.

TYPES OF CRAMPS

Leg cramps: • Drinking very little water can cause the calf muscles to tense and result in leg cramps. • A build-up of lactic acid can also cause leg cramps.

Side cramps: • When one is nervous or stressed, breathing gets altered. This can cause side cramps.

• Lack of electrolytes like calcium, potassium and sodium might also lead to side cramps. • Side cramps are mainly caused due to 'shallow breathing' (not breathing deeply from the lower lung). One may experience slight pain near the rib-cage before the cramp occurs. This symptom suggests that faulty breathing technique should be rectified.

ABDOMINAL CRAMPS: • Shallow breathing techniques and a deficiency of electrolytes can cause abdominal cramps. • Consuming too much food or fluid just before running or exercise time can restrict breathing, giving rise to abdominal cramps.

RISK FACTORS: Factors that might increase your risk of muscle cramps include:

Age: Older people lose muscle mass, so the remaining muscle can get overstressed more easily.

Dehydration: Athletes who get fatigued and dehydrated while participating in warm weather sports frequently develop muscle cramps.

Pregnancy: Muscle cramps are also common during pregnancy.

Medical conditions: You might be at higher risk of muscle cramps if you have diabetes, or nerve, liver or thyroid disorders.

HOW TO AVOID CRAMPS: Drink plenty of fluids — avoid caffeine (coffee/chocolate).

Eat fruits and vegetables that are rich in water content and provide the required minerals.

Do NOT exercise immediately after eating.

Gently stretch the muscles before and after exercising and before going to bed.

If you are prone to getting cramps while you sleep, make sure the temperature of the room is not too cold or too hot.

Avoid tobacco and stimulant drugs like ephedrine/pseudoephedrine.

Ayurveda advises avoiding cold drinks/refrigerated food/germinated pulses and exposure to cold wind.

A set of 'pranayama' practised twice daily should help relieve side cramps.

Regular warm oil massage (Ksheerabala taila from any reputed pharmacy/or even plain gingelly or mustard oil) and simple stretching exercises can help prevent muscle cramps.

TREATMENT

Stretch and gently massage: Stretch the cramped muscle and gently rub it after applying warm oil to help it relax. Stretching makes muscles and tendons more flexible and less likely to contract involuntarily. The runner's stretch is the best stretch for preventing calf cramps.

Apply heat: Use a warm towel or heating pad on tense or tight muscles. Taking a warm bath or directing the stream of a hot shower onto the cramped muscle can also help. Alternatively, massaging the cramped muscle with Dhanvantaram taila/Prasarini taila/Maha Narayana taila/Karpuradi taila (any pharmacy) or pain-relief oil (Himalaya) followed by steam fomentation will relieve cramps.

Lashunadi vati, Shankha vati or Dhanvantaram gulika (any reputed pharmacy) – 1 or 2 pills with warm water is helpful in relaxing muscles.

Reosto (Himalaya) 2-0-2 may be continued for about 3 months if the cramps are due to calcium deficiency. ■

Dr Srikanth is a postgraduate in Ayurveda and has been a consulting physician for the past 19 years. He is currently National Manager, Scientific Services, at The Himalaya Drug Company

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PRODUCTS

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Handcrafted chocolates taste better and make you feel better. Queen & Bee's range of tempting chocolates are handcrafted by women in rural Rajasthan. Manshu Ahuja, founder of Queen & Bee, says tempering chocolate is the most important process in chocolate-making. Five women from Alwar in Rajasthan were trained in making chocolates for two or three months and are now full-time employees of Queen & Bee.

At their stall in Dastkar's Nature Bazaar in Delhi's Kissan Haat, nearly 20 flavours were on display. "Salted caramel, coffee and plain dark chocolate are our bestsellers. Rose is a familiar flavour for Indians, so it does well too," says



Ahuja. They also have a *paan*-flavoured chocolate bar. Customers can choose from a range of milk chocolates and chocolates with a higher percentage of cocoa. The chocolate bars are modestly priced and cost between ₹120 to ₹300. Queen & Bee also sells honey and coffee.

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