

INDIA PERSPECTIVES

Volume 34 | Issue 04 | 2020



CELEBRATING SELF-RELIANCE

A visionary approach that not only ensures swift economic revival but also promises a more stable, secure and positive outlook

PRESERVING HERITAGE

Indian conservationist initiatives at various monuments in SE Asia

FUELLING SUCCESS

Successful innovations by the DRDO

EXCEPTIONAL PRODUCE

Exotic agricultural produce grown in India





17-25 OCTOBER, 2020



NAVRATRI

The festival of nine nights, or Navratri is an observance of abstinence, faith, perseverance and the spirit of righteousness. Across the country people observe fasts, offer prayers and dress up in their traditional best. This celebratory period is observed with regional variations like dramatic reenactments of the *Ramayana* through the *Ramlila* (classified as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO) in the northern parts and the iconic swirling dances called *Garba* throughout India's Western region.

WHERE: Across India



17-18

SEPTEMBER, 2020

ABHANERI FESTIVAL

Named after the Abhaneri (city of brightness) village, the festival is one of the major celebrations of the vibrant culture and traditions of Rajasthan. During the festival, numerous artistic communities from India's desert state like Mangniyar singers, Kalbeliya and ghoomer dancers etc perform their traditional routines. The village is also home to the *Chand Baori*, one of the largest and oldest step-wells in the region and offers a deep insight into the cultural nuance of the desert.

WHERE: Dausa, Rajasthan

25-28 SEPTEMBER, 2020

LADAKH FESTIVAL

The Ladakh festival was first started to extend the tourist season but over the years it has grown to become one of the biggest celebrations of the region's cultural heritage. The four-day long festival culminates with a Polo match at the iconic Polo Ground in Leh. The village archery competitions, traditional dances and monastic processions are amongst the top highlights that have large crowds in attendance.

WHERE: Union Territory of Ladakh





26
OCTOBER , 2020

DUSSEHRA

The day following the Navratri celebration is called *Vijay Dashmi* or Dussehra, marking the day of Lord Rama's victory over King Ravana of Lanka. *Vijay Dashmi* (victorious 10th day) signifies the victory of the good and righteous over the evil and corrupt. The festival, celebrated nationwide with regional variations sees effigies of Ravana being ceremoniously ignited (North India) while in some regions ornamental and celebratory elephantine processions take the stage (South and east India).

WHERE: Across India



29/30
OCTOBER, 2020

EID MILAD UN NABI

Also known as *Mawlid*, Eid Milad Un Nabi is one of the major highlights of the Islamic festival calendar. The festival that celebrates the birth of Prophet Muhammed, sees Muslims offer prayers and recite stories and anecdotes from his life. In some areas, the festival is simultaneously observed to mark Prophet Muhammed's death with people reciting verses from the Quran in fond remembrance. Communal feasts are also shared with the poor and needy showcasing a feeling of sacrifice and brotherhood.

WHERE: Across India

22-26

OCTOBER, 2020

DURGA PUJA

Durga Puja, an immensely popular celebration observed amongst India's eastern parts celebrates Goddess Durga's victory over the demon king Mahishasura. During the nine-day long period, the deity is worshipped in her many incarnations like Sarasvati (Goddess of knowledge), Laxmi (Goddess of prosperity) etc. The culmination, on the tenth days sees ceremonious processions before the idols of the Goddess are immersed in sacred tanks and demarcated water bodies signifying her departure to her home and to her husband, Lord Shiva, in the Himalayas.

WHERE: Eastern India



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FOREWORD

As we celebrated the 74th Independence Day on August 15, 2020, the nation reverberated with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for a self-reliant India. Despite the restrictions in place to curb the spread of COVID-19, the vision for this 'New India' has started to take shape with the nation marching ahead with a strong commitment towards becoming Aatmanirbhar or self-reliant, in every sector.

With this issue of India Perspectives, we give you an overview on India's outreach during the pandemic, which has reaffirmed our ties with our diplomatic partners while supporting the nation's efforts in dealing with the global crisis. We also travel across Southeast Asia to understand the ancient cultural ties that are being strengthened and reaffirmed through India's efforts to restore some of the most iconic and historic monuments that are a testimony to our shared civilisational and cultural links with the region.

As we move towards marking 75 years of our independence, we take you through the recent technological advancements that have propelled India to new heights. We look at how indigenous development of digital platforms is becoming a mass movement in India, and analyse new scientific partnerships that have enabled a digital transformation in the country.

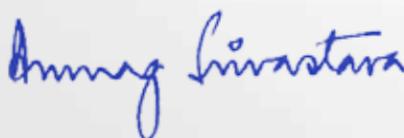
We look at the 'new normal' that is being embraced by people as restrictions resulting from COVID-19 are gradually eased, and understand the new requirements that have redefined travel and other economic activities. For our photo-feature section, we journey across the country as the monsoon brings much needed respite from the hot Indian summer. As sports make a gradual albeit cautious return, we look at football in India, which has grown exponentially following several international events that have been hosted in the country.

In this issue, we introduce a section dedicated to pioneering Indian institutions that have contributed to the country's progress. We begin with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and look at the numerous innovations that have not only made India's defence sector more robust, but have also set the country on a path of self-reliance. We also look at India's agricultural sector that has, over the years, not only ensured our food security but has adapted to the growing demands of consumers by adding several exotic products to its list of produce, thereby reducing our dependence on imports and taking another step towards making the country self-reliant.

We look at India's diversity that is reflected vividly in its rich and varied linguistic heritage. Similarly, iconic Indian handicrafts and the traditional processes used to produce them have become the distinctive identity of different regions of the country. We journey across the nation to understand how Geographical Indications (GI tags) have helped in promoting these indigenous products and the many farmers and artisans associated with them, while simultaneously ensuring the protection of their unique identity.

Finally, we retrace the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda across the US and the UK and reflect on how he has been instrumental in introducing India's culture and heritage to the western world.

Happy reading!



Anurag Srivastava



Going strong

India has taken several innovative steps during the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen its diplomatic ties with the rest of the world by forming more stable, progressive and proactive relationships with its diplomatic partners

BY AKSHAT JAIN

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, India has been reaffirming its commitment to strengthen its diplomatic relations. Following a series of high-level diplomatic engagements in the recent months, the 15th India-EU summit was successfully held on

July 15, 2020, with the core objectives of promoting effective multilateralism, fighting the COVID-19 pandemic through international cooperation, facilitating trading and investment, Clean Energy and Climate Partnership, Research and Development in 5G and artificial intelligence, Global peace and security, promoting people-to-people



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi (C) along with External Affairs minister (right) Dr S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval (far right) attend 15th India-EU Virtual Summit on July 15



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Kumar Jugnauth virtually inaugurate the new Supreme Court Building of Mauritius

exchanges and EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025.

India has also emerged as a stable and reliable partner for its neighbours through regional partnerships. The government, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm has showcased its commitment towards maintaining mutually beneficial regional relationships under its 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policy.

INDIA-EU SYNERGY

The European Union is a collective and strong association that was formed in Europe and has 27 member states

with an idea to promote inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination throughout the region. The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU on 31 January 2020 has had a major impact on the multi-national assemblage that has resulted in a restructuring of its global partnerships. With India emerging as one of the most promising investment destinations in Asia, offering both stability and immense growth potential, the India-EU summit offered a perfect opportunity for strengthening the country's existing relations with the European Union.

WE HAVE EXPANDED THE INDIA-EU ENGAGEMENT INTO MANY NEW SECTORS AND HAVE AGREED THAT WE MUST CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO MAKE IT MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND BENEFICIAL, BASED ON MUTUAL TRUST AND UNDERSTANDING

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

Continental bond

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi's opening remarks at the 15th India-EU virtual summit

- We are committed to form a more deeper and extensive bond between India and the EU.
- India and the EU must adopt towards a long-term strategic partnership.
- India and EU are natural partners. Our partnership is also useful for peace and stability in the world. This reality has become even more evident in today's global situation.
- India and the EU share universal values such as democracy, pluralism, inclusivity, respect for international institutions, multilateralism, freedom and transparency
- The India-EU partnership can play an important role in economic revival and, building a human centric and humanity centric globalisation model.

PM Modi led the Indian delegation for the EU Summit while the President of the European Council, Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, represented the European side. The leaders decided to work together for the larger benefit of the people by promoting the shared values of democracy, freedom, rule of law, and respect for human rights, aiming at delivering concrete benefits for the people in India and the EU.

With multilateralism becoming a favourable facet of diplomatic engagements, the two sides decided to implement a rules-based order with the UN and WTO at its centre.

In view of the financial havoc wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the summit focused on measures to help nations recover their economic stability and also deliberated on how to encourage investment in healthcare. A discussion was also held for adopting a robust strategy to combat climate change and environmental degradation across the world and to incorporate more sustainable practices.

The two sides also discussed holistic development and human-centric digitalisation to develop inclusive economies and societies. As countries around the world are looking to revive economies, discussions

The use of maritime ports will reduce the time of shipping to Bangladesh and bring prosperity that will significantly raise the revenue generated for both nations



PM Modi interacting with President of the European Council, Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen during the 15th India-EU summit



AS WE COME OUT OF THIS PANDEMIC, LET US BE CLEAR ON ONE FACT. THE WORLD WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. THAT MEANS NEW THINKING, FRESH IDEAS, MORE IMAGINATION AND GREATER OPENNESS. WE NEED TO GO BEYOND ORTHODOXIES, WHETHER OF TRADE, POLITICS OR SECURITY.

Dr S Jaishankar
External Affairs Minister
(At the AINTT roundtable conference)



focussed on opening new business opportunities were held. In the light of the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM), established at the 13th India-EU summit in Brussels, Belgium (2016), the two sides welcomed active people-to-people exchanges including those among students, researchers, professionals, business persons and tourists.

The two sides also reaffirmed their commitment towards comprehensive connectivity partnership. A highlight of the summit was the adoption of

the 'India-EU Strategic Partnership: a Roadmap to 2025' to guide mutually-beneficial cooperation between India and the EU for the next five years. The Indian side also welcomed the ongoing European investments in the country and welcomed the planned upcoming investments of Euro 500 million in Pune and Bhopal Metro Rail projects. The two sides signed an agreement for the R&D of nuclear power application project in the form of the Euratom-India Agreement in addition to a joint declaration on Resource Efficiency and

India's trade and development partnerships with its immediate neighbours will provide the much needed boost to the Indian manufacturing, export and maritime sectors, while simultaneously allowing port cities to grow

Regional ties

- India has been actively cooperating with countries in the South and Southeast Asian region to strengthen its ties under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy
- Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar addressed the sixth roundtable conference of ASEAN-India network of Think Tanks (AINTT) and urged leaders to contribute more towards the policy direction for future cooperation.
- India and Bhutan also opened up a new trade route on July 15, which passes through the Indian town of Jaigaon in West Bengal and connects to Alhay near Pasakha in Bhutan.
- India has also set up a port of call in Jorhat, Assam that will be a major link in the trade-chain between India, Bhutan and Bangladesh
- India's developmental assistance to Sri Lanka has identified infrastructure, energy, connectivity, IT, agriculture, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, tourism, and education as priority sectors for development.

Circular Economy. The two sides also expressed their appreciation of the upcoming renewal of the India-EU Science and Technology Agreement for another five years.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CONNECTIVITY

India has continued to focus on economic development within the country and in its immediate neighbourhood.

Mansukh Mandaviya, the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ministry of Shipping and Minister of State for Chemical & Fertilizers flagged-off the first trial run of a container ship from Kolkata to Agartala through Chattogram port in Bangladesh on July 16, as the neighbouring country allowed the use of its Chattogram and Mongla Ports for movement of goods to and from India through its territory. The opening up of this new trade route will enable the further development

of Indian trade and developmental partnerships with Bangladesh. The trial run of the ship was a great initiative to strengthen synergistic connectivity links in the neighbourhood.

The consignment first reached Chattogram port and was transported to Agartala via a fleet of Bangladeshi trucks. This move was an outcome of the signing and exchange of a Standard Operating Procedure by India and Bangladesh in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina, during the latter's visit to India in October 2019. The use of these ports will reduce the transportation time of Indian goods and result in enhanced financial benefit for both nations.

The development of this route also shines a favorable light on India's Sagarmala initiative, a National Perspective Plan (NPP) for the comprehensive development of India's 7,500 km coastline and maritime sector.



External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar addresses the 6th Roundtable of the ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT) with Vijay Thakur Singh, Secretary (East)



With India offering both stability and immense growth potential, the India-EU summit offered a perfect opportunity for strengthening the country's existing relations with the Union

External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar (C), Piyush Goyal, the Union Minister of Railways and Minister of Commerce & Industry and Harsh Vardhan Shringla (Foreign Secretary) virtually flagged off 10 broad gauge diesel locomotives to Bangladesh

Another positive addition to India's cross-border trade with Bangladesh was the landmark achievement of establishing a fully-functioning freight-rail corridor between the two nations. An Indian cargo train with FMCG goods and other supplies arrived in Bangladesh on its maiden trip on July 25. The corridor will connect major terminals in India with Bangladesh, giving a much-awaited boost to trade and bilateral development.

India, with its strong bilateral ties throughout the countries in the Southeast Asian region, is ready to improve significantly on the economic front and boost foreign investments in sectors that positively impact long-standing manufacturing capabilities under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

As the world gradually emerges from the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, India has begun work on a plan to boost Indian exports. The plan focusses on reducing import dependence and becoming self-sufficient or '*atmanirbhar*'. A systematic approach is being taken to build India's stake in global value chains and for the same, it's crucial to make our bilateral, economic and political relations with partner countries even stronger.



Akshat Jain is a writer, columnist, novelist, blogger, and a research scholar at IIT Delhi. He has authored books, numerous articles and white papers on different ideas and genres. His most recent book - *My Illusion my Mistake* has been dedicated to the forty families of Pulwama attack.

VISIONARY Approach

India's 74th Independence Day on August 15, 2020, was celebrated as the world lay in the grip of an unprecedented pandemic, which has disrupted every aspect of life. Former Ambassador **Anil Wadhwa** takes stock of the developments that make this a momentous occasion



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi delivers a speech during the Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort in New Delhi on August 15, 2020

India has not been spared when it comes to the spread of the COVID-19, but has demonstrated great resilience in fighting the impact of the pandemic with determination. It has pushed ahead with accelerated development and the creative energy for innovative and new policies as demanded by the times. This strength to face challenges derives from the Indian struggle for independence and is rooted in the concepts of political and socio-economic inclusion inherited from the nation's founding fathers like Mahatma

Gandhi, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, in his address from the ramparts of the Red Fort, recalled the immense sacrifices of India's freedom fighters and saluted the country's belief in the millions of personnel of the Indian armed forces who strive to protect the nation. Remarking on the situation arising from the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, PM Modi thanked the essential and medical workers who are battling the pandemic on the frontlines and assured them of

Prime Minister Modi after addressing the nation on the occasion of 74th Independence Day from the ramparts of Red Fort in New Delhi



INDEPENDENCE DAY IS A FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE FREEDOM. IT IS AN OCCASION TO ENTHUSE NEW ENERGY BY REMEMBERING OUR FREEDOM FIGHTERS. THIS DAY IS A HARBINGER OF NEW INSPIRATIONS. IT REIGNITES NEW FERVOUR, EXUBERANCE AND ENTHUSIASM. WHEN WE COMPLETE THE 75 YEARS OF OUR FREEDOM, WE WILL BE ABLE CELEBRATE THE REDEMPTION OF THOSE PLEDGES.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

Highlights of the Prime Minister's address

- In the entire World, in its war for independence, India kept marching with its head high with its strength of unity, collectivity, the resolve for its bright future, its commitment and inspiration.
- If India wants to increase its contribution then she herself will have to be empowered; she will have to be self-reliant or 'AtmaNirbhar'. We must make ourselves capable of contributing towards world welfare.
- Our farm sector needs to evolve in line with requirements of world; Value addition is required for our farming sector.
- We should take pride in our local products. Come, let's pledge that as we move towards the 75th year of our independence, we shall adopt the talisman of 'Vocal for Local' and together let's strengthen ourselves.
- We must ensure that the infrastructure is a comprehensive and an integrated one. We are moving towards a multi-modal connectivity infrastructure for the new century.
- Once we get a green signal from our scientists, we will launch massive production of the vaccine. We have made all the preparations.
- Today India is inspiring the entire world with its vision of one world, one sun and one grid, particularly in the field of solar energy. India has established itself as one of the five countries in the world in the generation of renewable energy.

the unwavering support from India's citizens in their fight.

The re-elected government has continued on the transformative course of India's development through breakthroughs in governance, enacting historic legislations, expansion and strengthening of programmes, upgrading basic amenities to all citizens, providing economic assistance to the marginalised, and enhancing protection for women, children, and those with disabilities. During the pandemic, the government acted promptly to save lives, provide effective

medical treatment and control the spread of the virus, by upgrading hospital infrastructure, and ramping up the manufacture of medical supplies and equipment to adequately deal with the medical exigency. Early preventive measures such as screening of international passengers started as early as January 2020 followed by restrictions on travel and a total nationwide lockdown imposed on March 24. These, along with a very effective mass health awareness campaign, helped India to stem the severity and spread of the virus, beating all predictions.

Even with a sharp increase in the number of cases has been accompanied by both the high recovery rate and low fatality rate, pointing to the success of the strategy to combat the pandemic. The slew of economic measures for the most vulnerable sectors of the economy,



Top: School children, following social distancing protocols wave after PM Modi's speech to the nation during the 74th Independence Day celebrations in New Delhi; **Bottom:** Police personnel wearing protective facemasks during the 74th Independence Day celebrations, at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur, Rajasthan



many agrarian reforms introduced and the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan will pave the way for a swift and efficient economic revival.

CREATING OPPORTUNITY

A total stimulus package of INR 20 trillion equaling 10 per cent of India's GDP has been announced by the government so far. Besides containing a plethora of fiscal and monetary measures, the package covers almost every sector of economic activity including mining, defence production, power, industry, space, education etc. Prime Minister Modi, in summing up the package, said that we need to preserve and propagate our skills and knowledge, and to enhance our calibre. We need to accentuate our skills, our creativity and with that we need to touch new heights.

CEMENTING FRIENDSHIPS

Internationally, the past year has seen India's global stature enhanced further as it exhibited a renewed confidence in leadership and the conduct of its foreign policy. PM Modi's outreach in South Asia included visits to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and hosting of PM Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, highlighting the centrality of India's neighborhood first policy. Despite the long-standing border dispute and the threat of terrorism, Prime Minister Modi took the initiative to launch a SAARC virtual Summit for regional cooperation in the fight against the pandemic. In keeping with the deepening multidimensional ties with the US, PM Modi paid a visit in September 2019, which was followed by a historic return visit by President Trump in February 2020. India's

Officers of the state police department wearing face masks take part in a rehearsal ahead of the Independence Day parade in Kolkata

A musical concert by the Indian Air Force Band organised as part of the Independence Day celebrations at Koshrab Ashram, Ahmedabad, on August 8

election to the UN Security Council as a non – permanent member, the assumption of the Chair of the Executive Council of the WHO, and forthcoming Presidency of the G20 in 2022 gives it an opportunity to lead institutional reforms in multilateral organisations. In fact, the pandemic has not restrained India's diplomatic engagements. In addition to the virtual summits with Australia and EU, PM Modi has spoken to his counterparts from over 60 countries while the External Affairs minister Dr S Jaishankar has spoken with his counterparts from over 75 countries thus elevating India's profile as a constructive and reliable actor and

partner on the global stage. They have also addressed important multilateral platforms such as the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) and G20 Summits, and ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council at the UN).

During the crisis, India has come forward to be a net provider of health security by supplying essential medicines, and equipment to almost 150 countries and sending medical assistance teams to friendly countries such as Kuwait, Mauritius, Maldives and Seychelles.

India has continued to deepen economic relations with foreign partners, attracting USD 74 billion



The past year has seen India's global stature enhanced further as it exhibited a renewed confidence in leadership and the conduct of its foreign policy



In light of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, Independence Day parades also conformed to government guidelines like social distancing and face masks to lower infection risks

last year and commitments of USD 20 billion in Foreign Direct Investment even during the months of the pandemic. The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (self-reliant Indian mission) provides an opportunity for India to engage more closely with foreign partners to make Indian manufacturing globally competitive and integrate domestic consumption and production with global supply chains; promoting resilience, embracing both investment and technology.

India celebrated its Independence Day with the usual enthusiasm, although special measures were put in place given the pandemic. Celebrations in Delhi, including those at the Red Fort where the Prime Minister addressed the nation, the states, as well as those organised by Indian missions abroad avoided large congregations of people,

ensured social distancing protocols, practised sanitisation and protected the vulnerable by using virtual technology.

A renewed push has been provided to India's plan to become self-reliant. Hence, as India celebrates its 74th Independence Day, its citizens will reaffirm their enduring belief in democracy, which ensured a clear mandate for the current government in 2019, and aspirations for a human – centric path of growth catalysed by open and responsive governance.



Ambassador Anil Wadhwa has served as Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, and as the Indian ambassador to Poland, Oman, Thailand and Italy. He has also been posted to Indian missions in Hong Kong, China and Switzerland and worked for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

Conservation WITHOUT BORDERS

India has been restoring several ancient temples and monuments across South-East Asian countries as a part of its development partnership initiatives.

The recent conservation projects of the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India and partner countries has brought forth a rich cultural heritage

BY JUHI MIRZA



The beautiful Ananda temples in Bagan, Myanmar. The temples were the site for massive conservation drive by the ASI in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, India and the Government of Myanmar

The Southern Asiatic region has been historically heralded as *Suvnabhumi*, or the golden land, in ancient Indian literature a title that is true for the immense wealth and more importantly for a vibrant and friendly mix of cultures that is evident in ancient monuments across the countries in this region. India has had an important role to play in preserving this shared cultural heritage.

The recent discovery of a 9th-century monolithic sandstone *Shiv*

Linga (representation of Lord Shiva) was made by Archeological Survey of India (ASI) during the ongoing conservation project at Cham Temple Complex, a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, in the Quang Nam province of Vietnam. The project, part of the India's development partnership with Vietnam through conservation of shared heritage, is being supported by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India. India has been actively involved in large-scale restoration and conservation projects which have reaffirmed the existence

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi unveiling a plaque signifying the contribution of India in the restoration of the Ananda Temple, in Bagan, Myanmar on September 6, 2017



“

OUR SHARED HERITAGE IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF OUR CULTURAL RELATIONS. RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC ANGKOR WAT TEMPLE BUILT IN THE 12TH CENTURY IS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS COOPERATION. INDIA IS HAPPY THAT IT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIS CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CAMBODIA.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

of strong cultural connection that thrived throughout the region in ancient times.

The conservation work of ASI is being carried out at several heritage sites beyond the national boundaries. India has been at the forefront of restoring heritage sites across South-East Asia, be it the Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia or the My Son monuments in Vietnam. These initiatives can be attributed to the country's policy of promoting a healthy and mutually beneficial

diplomatic outreach and bringing numerous facets of Indian cultural and civilisational heritage to the public at large.

The projects, funded by the MEA with ASI acting as the execution agency, have reaffirmed the ancient albeit strong connections across Southern Asia. Here are a some of large-scale undertakings:

ANGKOR WAT, CAMBODIA

Also known as *funan* in the ancient texts of India, this city reached

The majestic Angkor Wat temple complex in Cambodia. The historic cultural monument, was one of the largest restoration projects executed by the MEA and the ASI



THE UNEARTHING OF A MONOLITHIC SANDSTONE SHIV LINGA FROM 9TH CENTURY CE, AT THE MY SON TEMPLES IN VIETNAM, REAFFIRMS A CIVILISATIONAL CONNECT. THE ONGOING CONSERVATION PROJECT IS A GREAT CULTURAL EXAMPLE OF INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP.

Dr S Jaishankar
External Affairs Minister of India
(On the ASI's recent discovery on May 26,2020)



its zenith under the leadership of Jayavarman II. With the beliefs of *Vaishnavism*, *Saivism* and *Mahayana Buddhism*, the prominent archaeological site of Angkor Wat was built by king Suryavarman II in the 12th century. It consists of magnificent temples dedicated to Lord Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. The MEA with the ASI undertook its conservation on a grand scale in collaboration with the Government of Cambodia and have made tremendous efforts to preserve the beauty of these temples. In fact, in 1980, India was the first country to respond to an appeal made by Cambodia to the world community to come forward to help save the Angkor Wat, the centre of the Khmer kingdom for several centuries. The ASI team worked for seven years at the complex, restoring



the northern embankment of a moat, a gateway, the grand *Samudra Manthana* Gallery, the northern library and the central tower of the Angkor Wat temple among other sections. The temples' extraordinary bas reliefs, decorated panels of folklore

Top: The Vat Phou Hindu temples in Southern Laos, part of the restoration project executed by the ASI, with support from the MEA

Bottom: The monolithic *Shiva Linga*, unearthed on May 27 by a team of ASI professionals during the ongoing conservation project at the My Son temple complex in Vietnam

PARTNERSHIP

Conservation projects over the years

BAHRAIN

A team of ASI archaeologists excavated burial mounds in Bahrain in 1983. It excavated 70 graves, six Indus seals and a circular steatite seal with Indus script.

ANGOLA

An ASI team restored and reorganised the Museum of the Armed Forces located inside the 17th century fortress of Sao Miguel in Luanda in 1988-89.

NEPAL

In the early 1960s, ASI teams excavated Buddhist archaeological sites in Siddharthanagar, Kapilavastu, Tilaurakot and Lumbini. In the same decade, another team carried out an iconographical survey to discover rare images like Shiva as *Ekapada-Trimurti*, Chandra riding on a chariot of geese, Mahesha-samhara, etc.

AFGHANISTAN

The ASI conserved and restored the 6th century Buddhas of Bamiyan and the 15th century mosque at Balkh of Sufi leader Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa in the 1960s and explored Harappan, Buddhist and Asokan sites.

MALDIVES

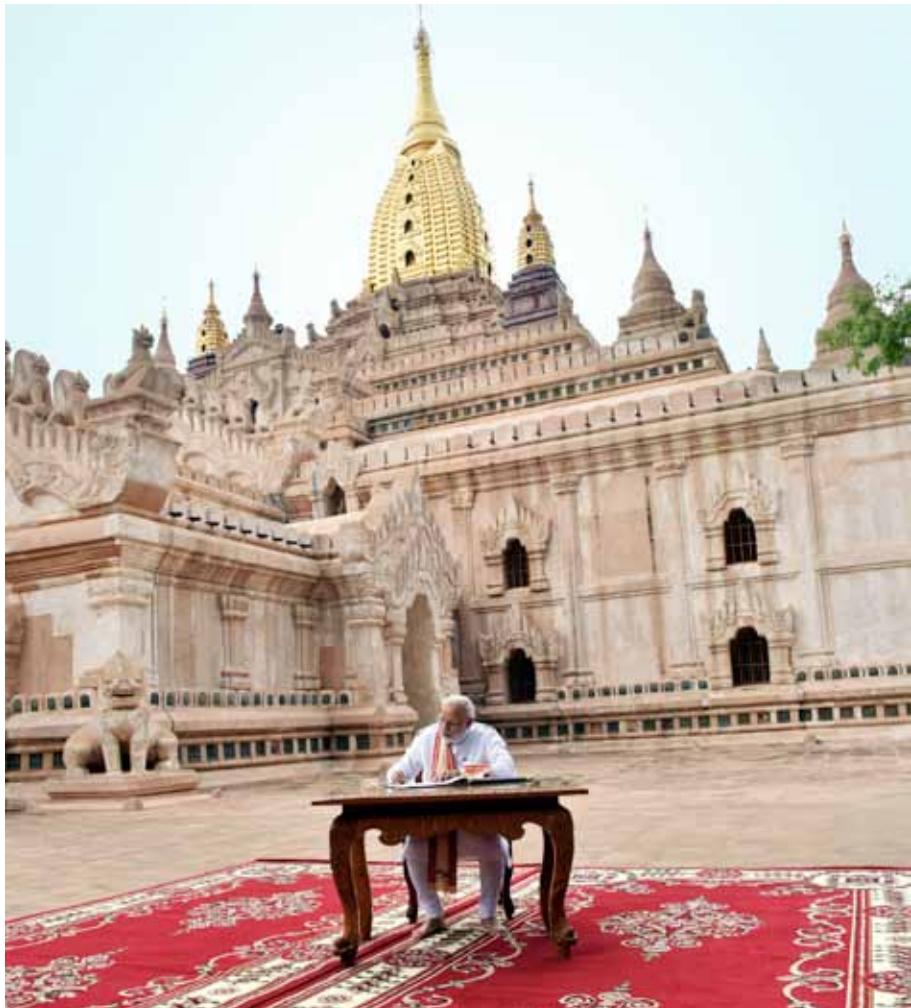
ASI teams have excavated sites in Kuramathi, Todd and Nilandhe atolls that revealed Buddhist traits.

BHUTAN

The ASI teams carried out preservation of murals of Do de Drak, Nekhang-Lhakhang and Mithragpe-Lhakhang of Tongsa Dzong in the late 1980s.

EGYPT

In the early 1960s, an ASI team visited Nubia to explore, excavate and salvage any ancient artefacts around Afyeh and Tumus and discovered middle and late stone age tools in the process.



PM Modi signing the visitors book at the Ananda Temple in Bagan during his visit to Myanmar in September, 2017

and notable iconography have been restored to their former prime.

TA PROHM TEMPLE, CAMBODIA

After Angkor Wat, ASI started restoration of the Ta Prohm temple located in the Angkor World Heritage Site. The temple of Ta Prohm was built by King Suryavarman VII and is an epicentre of the teachings of *Mahayana* Buddhism. This particular temple is an ancient monastery and a university, this *rajavihara* (royal residence) was built by the king in memory of his beloved mother. With the passage of time, Ta Prohm

encountered extensive growth of trees and bushes, which grew haphazardly threatening the original structure. The temple was also littered with excessive boulders and mounds that needed removal to form a clear passageway. The conservation project was taken partly under the expertise of ASI permitted by International Coordination Committee and Authority For The Protection And Management Of Angkor And The Region Of Siem Reap (APSARA). The ancient walls adorning the magnificent motifs of Buddhist beliefs and *Bodhisattvas* are in process of being restored to their original quality.

ANANDA TEMPLE, MYANMAR

The Ananda temple of Myanmar is considered to be one of the most beautiful temples preaching the teachings of Theravada Buddhism. Built by King Kyansittha of Pagan dynasty, this elegant pagoda style temple is an exquisite example of Mon architecture and houses four colossal figures of Lord Buddha. The wall plaques portray his early life forms, the *jatakas* and their enigmatic stories. The region was devastated by intense seismic activity and the temple frequently requires structural and chemical restoration. The ASI and the MEA with the local authorities of Bagan have taken the restoration responsibilities.

Left to right: A monk walks into the ancient Ta Prohm temple in Cambodia; the temples are a part of the Indian restoration efforts in Cambodia

VAT PHOU TEMPLE, LAOS

India shares a strong relationship with the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The ASI has undertaken the project to restore Laos' temple of Vat Phou. An ancient structure dating back to the 11th and 13th century, part of an important city of the Khmer empire, this temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, which later was transformed



PARTNERSHIP



Top: President of India, Ram Nath Kovind planting a tree sapling at the My Son temple complex during his visit to Vietnam in November 2018

Bottom: An aerial shot of the archeological site of the My Son temples in Vietnam. The ASI is executing the restoration of the temples in collaboration with the MEA

into a Buddhist centre. The ASI has been working on structural and drainage analysis, restoration as well as documentation that needs to be done for the restoration work of the temple.

The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi also highlighted India's historic and cultural links with Laos and expressed satisfaction at being involved in the restoration of the World Heritage Site at Vat Phou over a telephonic conversation with Dr Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of Laos in June this year.

MY SON TEMPLE, VIETNAM

One of the most prominent temples dedicated to the *Bhadreswar* form of Lord Shiva, this one-of-a-kind monument and its subsidiary shrines were constructed by the kings of Champa dynasty between the 4th and 14th century.





The Pashupatinath temple complex in Kathmandu, Nepal, is part of the Indian conservation and restoration efforts in the neighbouring country

Archaeological Survey of India has been successfully carrying forward with the conservation work to restore the premises of this temple. An MoU has been signed between the two countries and with the MEA's support. Currently, the restoration covers three prominent temple groups falling within the complex.

NEPAL, INDONESIA AND SRI LANKA

The ASI has been actively involved in the conservation of the Pashupatinath temple in Nepal; the Borobudur temple in Indonesia and the Thirukuteeswara temple in Sri Lanka. Under ASI's skillful expertise these temples are being conserved with immense care to their former glory.

As ASI's experts keep restoring these ancient structures, not only is

history being preserved but it is also aiding bilateral relations. It is showing how this cross-pollination of various culturally impacted beliefs, customs and rituals has become an integral part of India's vision to promote global peace and prosperity. The ideology of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family) seems fairly appropriate as these conservation projects have helped us take a united stand on a global platform, which is only growing stronger with time.



Juhi Mirza holds a master's degree in Archaeology and is a keen enthusiast for all things ancient. The Lucknow-based writer has a deep interest in cultures and traditions of India and the world. She has travelled extensively to document ancient ruins and cultures across the world

THE INNOVATION bastion



India's premier organisation for defence manufacturing and production, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has grown to become one of the top centres of innovation in the world. With this new section based on Indian institutions, we bring to you some of the more recent developments of the DRDO that have put this institution on the global map



The Anti-Satellite missile (ASAT) from Mission Shakti during Republic Day Parade at Rajpath, New Delhi, on January 26, 2020

When India's top scientific institutions, the Defence Science Organisation (DSO), Defence Technical Development Establishment (DTDE) Directorate of Technical Development and Production (DTDP) were amalgamated in 1958, envisioning an exponential growth curve for the new Defence Research and Development Organisation or DRDO, would have been difficult. However, over the years the initial 10 laboratories have multiplied to form the existing network of 50 highly advanced research facilities across the country. Many scientific organisations in the country, with the DRDO at the forefront, have provided numerous brilliant and innovative solutions to solve India's technological hurdles.

When Project Indigo, to develop intermediate range Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) was first started in 1960s, the newly formed DRDO was just coming into its own. But, the



The launch of the A-SAT missile during Mission Shakti on March 27, 2019



WE WANT TO USE MODERN DAY TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE SECURITY AND WELFARE OF OUR 1.3 BILLION PEOPLE. A STRONG INDIA CAN BE A GUARANTOR OF PEACE IN THE REGION AND BEYOND. OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE IS TO PRESERVE PEACE, NOT PREPARE FOR WAR.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

INSTITUTIONS

Defexpo 2020

In February, at the Defence Expo held in Lucknow, the DRDO emerged as the largest crowd puller.

The organisation showcased recent innovations and advancements with a wide array of applications ranging from defence to counter-intelligence, surveillance and sanitisation operations.

A highlight was the *Daksh* robot which is said to be one of the first machines to not only handle unexploded ordnances but also diffuse them simultaneously.



Top: Defence minister of India Rajnath Singh (second from left) with his pilot Air Vice Marshal N Tiwari (second from right) after flying a sortie in a Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) at HAL Airport in Bengaluru; **Bottom:** The hypersonic scramjet technology mounted on Hypersonic Technology Demonstration Vehicle (HSTDV) at the APJ Abdul Kalam Launch Complex, off the coast of Odisha

successful launch of the Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) on September 7 is a testament to the massive growth of the DRDO, which has come in leaps and bounds.

Over the years, innovations have multiplied as the organisation has expanded itself to cover not just armaments, but also, electronics, instrumentation, advanced computing and simulation, capacity building, psychological research, reconnaissance and even medical research. Several times, leading innovations have put India at par with the select group of nations that have emerged as leading players when it comes to defence. Also, these innovations have been completely indigenous. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi's call for self-reliance had already been incorporated at the DRDO, which has been bolstering the

technological might of India's Army, Navy and Air Force for over 60 years.

SECURE SPACE

Almost a year after the successful demonstrator mission of India's anti-satellite (A-SAT) missile, the country still remains one of only four nations with this capability (the other three being the USA, Russia and China). Coupled with India's surveillance capacity, the precision striking capabilities of the A-SAT missile extended a safety-net well into outer space with a demonstration mission code named Shakti.

The A-SAT will play a critical role in providing necessary deterrence against rogue satellites as well as intercontinental ballistic missiles. Following PM Modi's go-ahead in 2016, the building blocks of the A-SAT missile were integrated and Mission Shakti started becoming a reality. "The



short time taken by DRDO to migrate from concept to capability demonstration indicates the maturity of technologies, dedication, willingness and capability of DRDO fraternity to accept technological challenges for its time-bound realisation," says Dr G Satheesh Reddy, Chairman of the DRDO. The missile has a precision striking capability and it has achieved the desired objectives through the successful test.

BRIDGE TO SUCCESS

Another major development from the DRDO for land operations on unfavorable terrains was the Sarvatra bridging system. The multi span

The DRDO has been actively participating in partnerships to provide some of the best innovative solutions for frontline workers to combat the spread of COVID-19

system offers a solution for all types of military traffic over wet or dry obstacles for 75 metres.

The Air Defence Tactical Control Radar (ADTCR) is a highly advanced surveillance, detection, tracking and identification equipment developed by the DRDO. The Radar can be deployed in plains, deserts and in the mountain regions for the purpose of tactical early warning for ground based weapon systems.

The Air Defence Tactical Control Radar (ADTCR) designed by the DRDO, showcased during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi



BEYOND ARMS

In the recent past, the DRDO has joined hands to form symbiotic partnerships with domestic manufacturers to provide innovative solutions for their scientific problems. The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Tejas, fitted with the ultra-modern and indigenously developed Kaveri jet-engine has become a good example of multifunctional partnerships. The development of these LCA with HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) has been a massive success as the technology, unavailable in the country, has been developed from scratch and has emerged as a pioneer in indigenous technological advancement. Infact, a critical-technology from these aircraft, the Onboard Oxygen (OBOX) generation system that ensures non-stop supply

The Sarvatra Bridging system showcased during the Republic Day parade on Rajpath, New Delhi (January 26, 2020)

of oxygen while undertaking long-endurance missions, has even been offered to hospitals assisting patients with respiratory distress due COVID-19 infections.

Moreover, in a partnership with Tata motors, an automotive giant, the organisation has also developed a state-of-the-art eight-wheeled Amphibious Wheeled Armoured Vehicle (WhAP).

When the DRDO joined the fight against the spread of COVID-19 with its decision to support production of ultra-modern sanitising equipment and PPE kits, the front-line medical and essential workers breathed a sigh of relief. Since then, the institution has been actively participating in partnerships to provide some of the best innovative solutions to combat the spread of COVID-19. Take





The MBT (main battle tank) Arjun Mark-II developed by the DRDO passing through the Republic Day Parade at Rajpath, New Delhi

for example, the 'Dare to Dream 2.0' contest launched on the fifth death anniversary of former President of India and DRDO scientist Dr APJ Abdul Kalam (July 27). The competition invites top innovators and tech startups from the country to contribute disruptive ideas and concepts in emerging technologies identified by the organisation for enhancing defence capabilities.

In the current scenario when the entire nation is rallying to the Prime Minister's call for an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and the stress on local innovation and production, the capabilities of the DRDO are ready for a definitive upgrade. The organisation has emerged as one of the leaders when it comes to making the country self-reliant, the Government of India has recently drawn up a list of a whopping 108 systems -including

the likes of mini and micro unmanned aerial and terrestrial vehicles, Night vision Infrared sights for weapons etc to be made in India. This development comes after DRDO's magnanimous albeit bold move to offer 450 patents for free access to domestic industries for commercial processes in a bid to further scientific development in the country. Over the foreseeable future, it is all but certain that the DRDO with its 24,700 employees, including 7,300 scientists, will continue to provide cutting edge technological solutions and innovation for defence industries in the country.



After a brief period at the Services Selection Board (Indian Armed forces) in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, the author of the article Nishi Misra moved to Defence Research and Development Organisation as a scientist at the Defence Institute of Psychological Research in New Delhi.



THE JOINT effort

The recent technological advancements in India reflect not only the immense youthful energy and innovation in the country, but also substantial reforms undertaken by governments, and enabling platforms created by public-private partnerships. Here are some recent developments based on coordination among public and private sectors

BY MUDIT NARAIN

India's innovation ecosystem has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years. It is currently ranked third in the world, with more than 50,000 startups and more than 500 incubators estimated around the country. More than just numbers, it is the astoundingly wide range of new services, products and technologies deployed by startups that attest to the strength of the country's ecosystem. These innovations have directly or indirectly re-envisioned the future for a variety of sectors like financial transactions, shopping and retail, urban

transport and office commute, and many more.

SECURING FINANCE

For thousands of years of recorded history to date, money was seen only in the form of currency notes and coins, of various sizes, materials, shapes and colours. Over the recent years, the speed of transformation in the financial sphere has seen exponential growth. Take for example instruments such as cheques and bank drafts that only appeared in the last few decades and have already become almost obsolete.

“

ONLY FEELING SCARED OF COVID-19 WILL NOT HELP. WE HAVE TO TAKE THE RIGHT PRECAUTIONS AND FIGHT THIS PANDEMIC. AAROGYA SETU IS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THAT DIRECTION. BY LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY, IT PROVIDES IMPORTANT INFORMATION. AS MORE AND MORE PEOPLE USE IT, IT'S EFFECTIVENESS WILL INCREASE.

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister of India



A view of the Cyber Towers building complex in Hyderabad. The iconic structure is at the heart of India's IT revolution

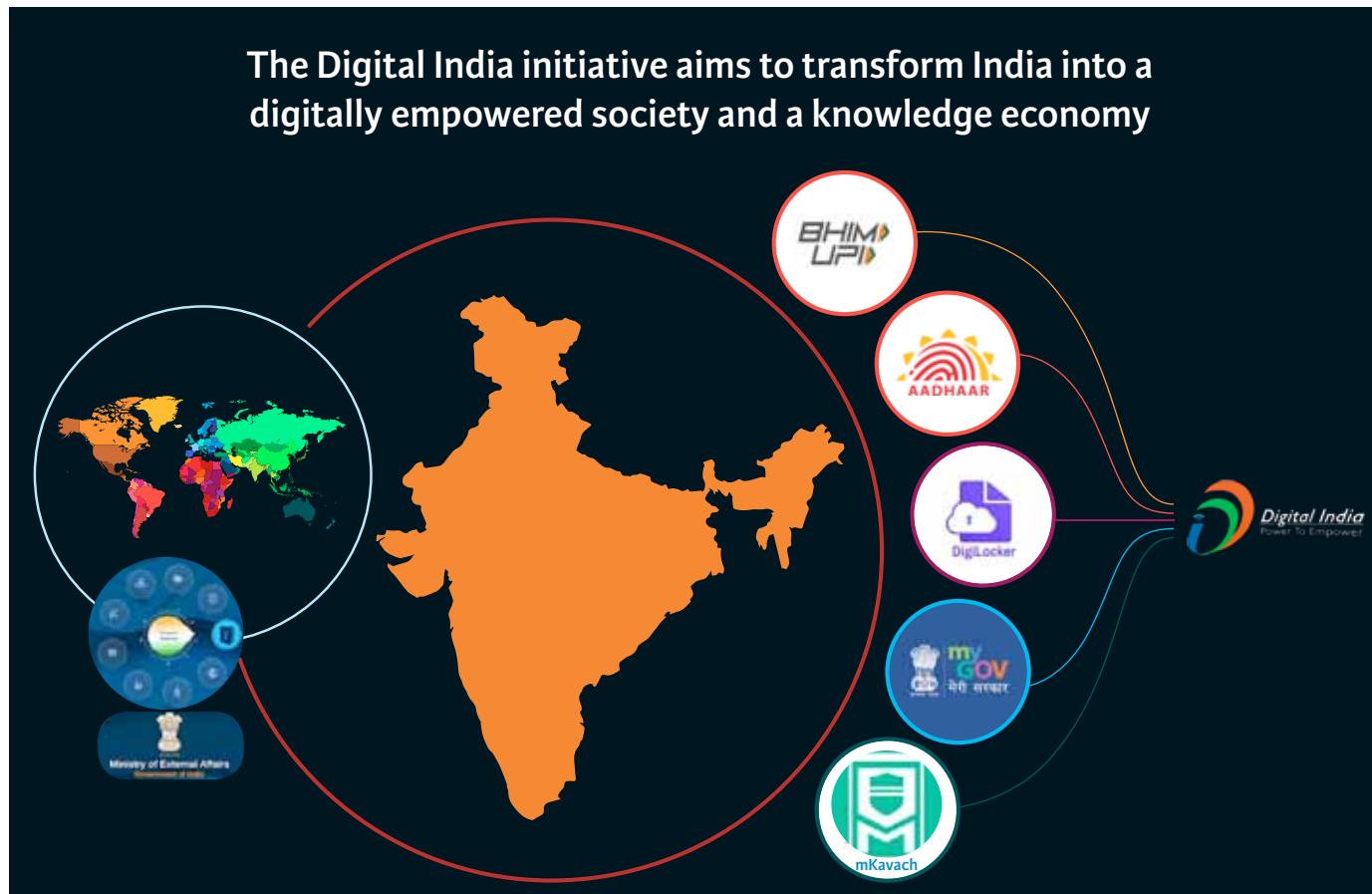
The Public-Private Partnership model shall be the bedrock of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, taking Indian science, technology and innovation to new heights

In India, it is common these days to pay for our daily essentials like phones and TV, our commute, or even a cup of our favourite ice cream by scanning a QR code or entering an email address-like string called the VPA. More than a billion transactions a month are carried out on UPI. It is foreseeable that within a few generations, all currency notes and coins would be visible only in

museums or history books. Digital technologies such as smartphones and affordable online connectivity have enabled changes in how money manifests itself.

Transfer of money from the consumers' wallet to the vendor's bank account is enabled by a system called the Universal Payment Interface or UPI. This UPI system is enabled and administered by the National Payments Corporation of India Ltd, a public private partnership of all of India's banks. This payment layer can connect every bank account in the country to every other, through

The Digital India initiative aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge economy



66

WHAT DEFINES POWER AND DETERMINES NATIONAL STANDING IS NO LONGER THE SAME. TECHNOLOGY, CONNECTIVITY AND TRADE ARE AT THE HEART OF NEW CONTESTATIONS. THE RELEVANCE OF OUR TALENT TO GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY IS ANOTHER FACTOR, ONE LIKELY TO GROW IN TIME. OUR ABILITY TO SHOULDER GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES AT A TIME WHEN THE WORLD IS MORE RETICENT IS ALSO EVIDENT.

Dr S Jaishankar

External Affairs minister



Left to right: An India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) QR card. The card provides a unique, secure and easy way to access personal banking information like account details, balance and payments; People register for Aadhaar card, an easily verifiable 12 digit number serving as a unique identity for Indian citizens

a simple virtual payment address (VPA) that looks like an email address, or the aforementioned QR codes. The very design of the UPI made space for private innovation and therefore its success has been driven by a plethora of private companies building interface layers or transaction apps for consumers to use the system seamlessly and as a matter of habit and preference over currency.

FUTURISTIC HEALTH

In recent weeks and months, India's fight against the global pandemic of COVID-19 was significantly strengthened by a tracking and tracing app called AarogyaSetu (Aarogya

meaning a state free of disease and Setu meaning a bridge), designed quickly and promptly by a collaborative team comprising of professionals from NITI Aayog, Ministry of Information Technology, and India's top startups. This app established a record of rapid adoption, racing to 50 million users in just 13 days, allowing Indian citizens to keep abreast of COVID-19 in their locality or region, and also access other services.

Similarly, a massive effort is underway to establish the Indian National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), which will provide a personal health ID to each citizen, connecting each to the medical system, while

One stop solution

UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) is envisaged to make e-governance 'mobile first'. It is developed by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and National e-Governance Division (NeGD).

Through the UMANG App, over 1000 services can be accessed across Central (284) and State (441) governments. Over 275 utility services can also be accessed from over 140 government departments.

Recently, new services like ICMR, Public Transport, Oil and Gas, Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research (AWSAR) and Agricultural support to farmers have also been added.

Ease of access

Passport Seva Project, being executed by Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, aims at providing all the Passport-related services to the Indian Citizens in a speedy, convenient and transparent manner.

The **mPassportSeva App** is one of the largest projects under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) and is being jointly supported by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) following a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.

The app, already in service, is being used to cater to Indian citizens across the country through over 75 Passport Seva Kendras.



Aarogya Setu is an open-source COVID-19 contact tracing, syndromic mapping and self-assessment digital service, provided primarily through an app developed by the National Informatics Centre

ensuring portability, privacy, fraud prevention, and grievance redressal. NDHM will have the IT backbone and governing rules, but the interface layers will be provided by the private sector, bringing in innovation, user-customisation, and lowering of costs for consumers.

VISIONARY APPROACH

UPI and AarogyaSetu are just two of several examples of how the public and innovation systems have come together for changing lives of Indian citizens. Many more such changes can be expected in coming months and years.

In the month of July 2020, a new public-private collaboration, called the Open Credit Enablement Network (OECN) was also launched. It will enable easier credit for Indian consumers, and will allow lenders and marketplaces to create innovative products for financial credit at a large scale. This will be done through a common platform utilising a shared language base and ushering in uniformity.

As part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's groundbreaking reforms under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative to make India self-reliant, the Indian

VISIONARY SOLUTIONS WITH DIGITAL APPLICATIONS

									
UMANG: Unified Mobile Application for New-Age Governance	IRCTC Rail Connect	Indian Police on Call	IndiaAI: Artificial intelligence platform	FASTag: Electronic toll collection system	AWSAR: Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research	Aarogya Setu: COVID-19 oriented digital service	MADAD: Grievances for Consular Services	ePathshala: Digital educational resources	GARV: Real time tracking of rural electrification



Top: A highway toll collection employee scans a FASTag for digital payment of toll. Electronic toll collection on Toll Plazas across National Highways is now carried out with FASTags that can be recharged online

Bottom: A farmer logs into a digital interface to check the quality of his produce. The agricultural sector in India has recently seen many technological interventions made by various stakeholders

space sector has been reformed and restructured, to enable participation of the private sector and startups in this exciting new frontier that combines science, technology and innovation. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is focussing on new research or new missions, while private entities will take the onus of providing space-based services at reasonable cost and maximum efficiency. This reform will attract Indian innovators to

apply their knowledge and efforts to the space sector, and make India a leading partner in the rapidly-expanding avenue of space science and its public applications.

In all these sectors, the common underlying theme has been visionary reforms and enabling support from the government or public sectors, upon which the entrepreneurs of India have built products and services. This model shall be the bedrock of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, and take Indian science, technology and innovation to new heights.



Mudit Narain is currently an OSD in the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Govt of India. He holds two masters degrees in engineering and public policy from MIT. He served in the Energy practice of World Bank for 7 years, working on projects across 9 countries before joining NITI Aayog to establish the Atal Innovation Mission.

THE BHOJPURI feast

From the iconic *litti-chokha* to the rustic vegetable curry in mustard paste and the mouth-watering desserts, this regional cuisine of India offers a host of fresh flavours with numerous health benefits. **Chef and author Pallavi Nigam Sahay** takes us on a unique culinary adventure discovering the nuances of Bhojpuri cuisine



Kachoris (fried snack) made with a spicy filling of *sattu* is a contemporary take on the traditional *litti-chokha*, one of the most well-known Bhojpuri dishes

Masala tel chodhne tak bhunjna. (Sauté the spices till you start to see oil at the edges of your pan)." This was my mother-in-law's advice on my first day in a traditional kitchen in Patna, capital of the state of Bihar. I still remember my mother-in-law familiarising me with the traditional Bhojpuri cuisine, which is popular in Bihar, and parts of Jharkhand, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. Even after 10 years, the memories of that day are as fresh in mind. As I noted down the recipes recounted by my mother-in-law, I stood there, amazed at the simplicity of it all, finally finding comfort in the moment I began to cook.

Bhojpuri food has historically been associated with the agricultural pastures of Bihar. It is high in protein and packed with carbohydrates. Every meal is a grand display of the rich flavours of the great Magadha empire

(684 BC-320 BC), an ancient kingdom located on the Indo-Gangetic plains of what is today Bihar. On my first day in a traditional kitchen, I fell in love with the simple yet wholesome flavours of this not-so-known cuisine. While today, a few dishes from this platter, like *makhana* (fox nuts) and *itti-chokha* (roasted wheat dumplings filled with *sattu* served with roasted and mashed vegetables), have become popular outside the region, there is much more to this culinary tradition. When I prepared an authentic Bhojpuri meal, helped by the family cook, I served a host of classics: *chane ka bachka* (a fritter prepared with soaked black gram and spices) and *pitha* (steamed rice flour dumplings stuffed with a paste of lentil and garlic). The main course included *kadhi badi* (deep-fried gram flour dumplings cooked in a yoghurt-based gravy), *aloo gobhi ki bhujia* (deep-fried cauliflower and potato), *kohra sarson ki sabji* (pumpkin cooked in mustard paste), *oal ki*

Left: The dessert *malpuas* is an integral part of the Bhojpuri cuisine

Right: A plate of *pitha* or steamed rice-flour dumplings



Pitha is another traditional dish that most Biharis love. These are half-moon shaped steamed rice-flour dumplings stuffed with a coarse paste of lentils

chutney (yam chutney), lentils and rice. For dessert, we served *malpuas* (deep-fried batter of flour, sugar and milk, soaked in sugar syrup).

The people of Bihar love their food. Take any festival – Holi, Diwali, Dussehra or Chhath, they are as much about the food as everything else, if not more.

Interestingly, weddings in the region are also a culinary celebration involving community feasts with friends and family. I learnt this during *kacchi*, a ceremony performed on the day following the wedding. On this occasion, traditional dishes are prepared and served to the groom's family by male members of the bride's

Left: A modern take on the traditional *kadhi-badi*

Right: A very common drink in the region, *sattu ka sharbat*, can be made with roasted gram flour, barley, sugar, salt and water

family. I was introduced to *baigan badi* (brinjal cooked with deep-fried lentil dumplings), *pachphoran kohra* (pumpkin cooked with a mix of five different spices), *sarson ka machli* (mustard fish), mutton curry, spicy chicken kebabs and the dessert *kala jamun*.

That day, I also learnt that mustard oil and the *panchphoran* (a mix of cumin; *radhuni*, a strong spice; dry fenugreek seeds, fennel seeds and nigella seeds) are the two pillars of Bihari cuisine, much like in several of India's eastern states. Tempering mustard oil with *panchphoran* at the beginning of almost every dish, manifolds the taste.

Within days I also learnt how integral *sattu* (roasted Bengal gram flour) is in the daily lives of families from Bihar. Many begin their day with a healthy and savoury *sattu* drink: by mixing *sattu* in water with lemon and black salt. *Sattu ke parathe* (shallow-





A plate of *litti-chokha*. The roasted *litti* is mostly served with roasted and mashed vegetables like brinjal and potato

fried flatbread with a filling of *sattu*) is a regular on the breakfast menu. High on protein, *sattu* is said to have cooling properties as well, ideal for summer. During winters, *litti-chokha* comes to the rescue. Culinary lore says this immensely popular dish was first cooked in the Magadha kingdom. The health value of the recipe and the convenience of the cooking procedure made it a staple with soldiers during wars. It requires very little water for cooking and can be baked without the use of utensils.

Bhojpuri cuisine is spreading its wings beyond the region and its recipes are becoming popular across the country

Pitha is another traditional dish that people love. These half-moon shaped steamed rice-flour dumplings stuffed with a coarse paste of lentils have grown to become one of my favourites too. Interestingly, a variation of this dish, called *farrah*, is common in Madhya Pradesh too. The difference being that Bhojpuri *pithas* are spicier and have a distinct flavour of garlic whereas *farrahs* have a more balanced taste and are given a tempering of curry leaves and mustard seeds after they are cooked. In Bengal, a similar-looking but sweet dish is called *doodh puli*, in which, instead of steaming, the dumplings are poached in milk and the stuffing is of coconut and jaggery. A version is



Sattu ka paratha can be served with various types of chutneys

Sattu is an ancient Indian superfood. Packed with proteins, it keeps the gut healthy and cools the body. What earlier belonged to a few states, is now a popular food ingredient that is easily available even in supermarkets. *Sattu* is now available in different forms that include wheat, barley or sorghum (jowar). All these variations have a certain percentage of roasted gram in them.



Right: Non-vegetarian dishes are very intrinsic to the Bhojpuri cuisine. Here we see a plate of kebabs
Bottom: A spicy mutton curry



popular in Maharashtra as well: the sweet *modak*! This flower-shaped rice flour dumpling is filled with a mixture of coconut and jaggery and steam-cooked. In Kerala, a similar dish called *kozhukkattai* is prepared on Easter, the only variance being its round shape and thick encasing. This is just a small introduction to the variety of Indian cuisine. Our integrity in diversity, immersed in our great culinary traditions, often overlap and interact in

surprising ways, creating gastronomic combinations that belong to certain geographical area but are accepted and enjoyed across the country. The food of a region serves as the best way to understand the social and cultural history of that area. Today, when we taste flavours from home at a nearby restaurant, memories come rushing back, nourishing our bodies and souls. Bhojpuri cuisine is spreading its wings beyond its home and its recipes are becoming popular across the country. As new speciality restaurants are launched and chefs experiment with the traditional flavours, hopes are high that the recipes of this ancient culinary style will continue to live on.



Chef Sahay is the author of The Bhojpuri Kitchen. Filled with regional anecdotes, the book captures the rich cultural heritage of Bihar and Jharkhand.

THE TRADITIONAL calling card

India's cultural heritage is represented through its rich variety of indigenous products and handicrafts. As the country becomes 'Vocal for local', **Chinnaraja Naidu** takes us through the journey of GI (Geographical Indication) tags and how they help local producers to protect and promote their unique crafts and traditionally acquired knowledge in the country



A man showcasing Odisha's GI tagged Single Ikat weaving tradition that includes the *Bomkai* and the striped or chequered *Santhali* sarees



Left to right: A farmer harvests saffron from flowers near Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. *Kashmiri* saffron, a GI tagged product, is valued all over the world for its fine quality; Prime Minister Narendra Modi with an indigenous *Meitei Lengyan* scarf of Manipuri

Several of Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi's recent appearances have been with the *gamusa*, a traditionally woven scarf with distinctive red borders and floral motifs from the state of Assam. The rectangular piece of clothing has been an iconic symbol of Assamese culture since the 18th century. Keeping aside its cultural and historical significance, the *gamusa* is also unique because it represents a traditional style of weaving practised in India's eastern frontiers.

With a demography as culturally diverse as India, the *gamusa* is not the only unique product, in fact, it is one amongst over 370 products exclusively produced across different regions of the country. In a mammoth effort to protect, propagate and celebrate Indian culture, the Geographical Indications (GI) were launched in 2004-05 as an intellectual property right, belonging to the concerned community of the said goods. The first product to be recognised under this norm was Darjeeling Tea. Since then the list has grown to include over

Scripting history

The Geographical Indications Registry with pan-India jurisdiction was set up in Chennai, Tamil Nadu and functions under the Registrar of Geographical Indications. The Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks is also the Registrar of Geographical Indications (GIR) in India.

MANY PEOPLE ARE NOT AWARE THAT CLUSTERS ARE NOW BEING DEVELOPED FOR VALUE ADDITION AND MARKETING OF LOCAL PRODUCTS UNDER THE AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAN. UNDER THESE CLUSTERS, ALL FACILITIES WILL BE PROVIDED TO AGRO STARTUPS AND OTHER INDUSTRIES. ORGANIC PRODUCTS FROM THE NORTHEAST WILL RECEIVE ALL POSSIBLE HELP TO MAKE THEIR WAY INTO DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS.

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister of India

(While displaying the Manipuri *Meitei Lengyan* scarf at a national address)



Left to right: A woman from Nagaland holds up a plate with tree tomatoes, garlic and *Naga* chilies (known as *Bhut Jolokia*, the chillies are thought to be the hottest in the world); Indian Bay Leaf (*Tejpatta*) a GI tagged agricultural produce from Uttarakhand; Freshly picked strawberries in Mahabaleshwar, one of the many GI tags awarded in the state of Maharashtra

India has the largest number of GI tags in food and agricultural products. Some of them are:

Saffron from Jammu and Kashmir

Gobindabhog rice from West Bengal

Tea from Darjeeling, West Bengal

Black rice from Manipur

Bhujia from Bikaner, Rajasthan

Kadalai Mittai (a type of peanut candy) from Tamil Nadu

350 unique local products with new applications submitted each year.

Geographical Indications empower producers to prevent its use by an unauthorised party, whose product does not conform to the applicable standards fixed by the registered proprietor within the demarcated geographical area. For example, in the case of *Bikaner Bhujia*, a savoury

snack from Bikaner, Rajasthan, in the jurisdictions in which the Bikaner geographical indication is protected, producers of the said *bhujia* are to exclude the use of the term "Bikaner" for the snack not produced in the demarcated area or not produced according to the standards set out in the case for the Geographical Indication.



A variety of premium teas laid out for tasting at a tea estate near Darjeeling, West Bengal. Darjeeling Tea, the first GI tagged product (2004), is now popular the world over for its crisp and fresh taste

High Five

Top five Indian states with maximum GI registrations

- Karnataka – **48**
- Tamil Nadu - **40**
- Kerala - **36**
- Maharashtra - **32**
- Uttar Pradesh – **31**

(Source: ipindia.nic.in; 2019-20)



Clockwise from left: Thanjavur dolls at a handicraft fair in Chennai, these dolls are a GI tagged handicraft product from Tamil Nadu; An artist gives final touches to his Kangra miniature painting, a craft practised exclusively in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh; Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee beans are laid bare beneath the sun at a plantation in Karnataka. There are seven different types of coffees that are GI tagged, including the iconic Monsooned Malabar from Kerala/Karnataka

In a country as culturally diverse as India over 370 products are exclusively produced across different regions of the country. These products and their producers are protected by Geographical Indications

PROTECTING INDIGENITY

Geographical Indications, registered for an unlimited duration, confer legal protection to tagged products that help to identify and register the genuine and legitimate producer(s). Largely, the GI system promotes economic prosperity of producers in a geographical territory and helps a community to differentiate their products from competing products in the market. It helps build goodwill around unique local products, and as a result, the premium price received is also directly transferred to those involved with the product.

Another aspect is that GI tagging ensures the high-quality as the

distinctive local production process of these products is standardised. All GI tagged products are recognised only after qualifying the benchmark criteria of quality and authenticity. Similarly, for consumers, GIs act as a sign that helps them identify genuine products, adding to the economic prosperity of the producers. It has been noted that an overwhelming majority of consumers are prepared to pay premium prices for goods they believe to have originated in a particular geographical area using a traditional set of skills and knowledge, unique to the region (identifiable with a GI tag).

Additional protection

Additional protection is a tool for the producers complementing the protection enjoyed by the registered Geographical Indications. Additional protection increases the value of the GI as a marketing tool and therefore, the Government of India is focusing on Indian traditional products which are useful for human consumption and promotion of knowledge, heritage and culture.

GI tags promote economic prosperity of producers in a geographical territory and help a community in legitimately differentiating their products from competing products in the market



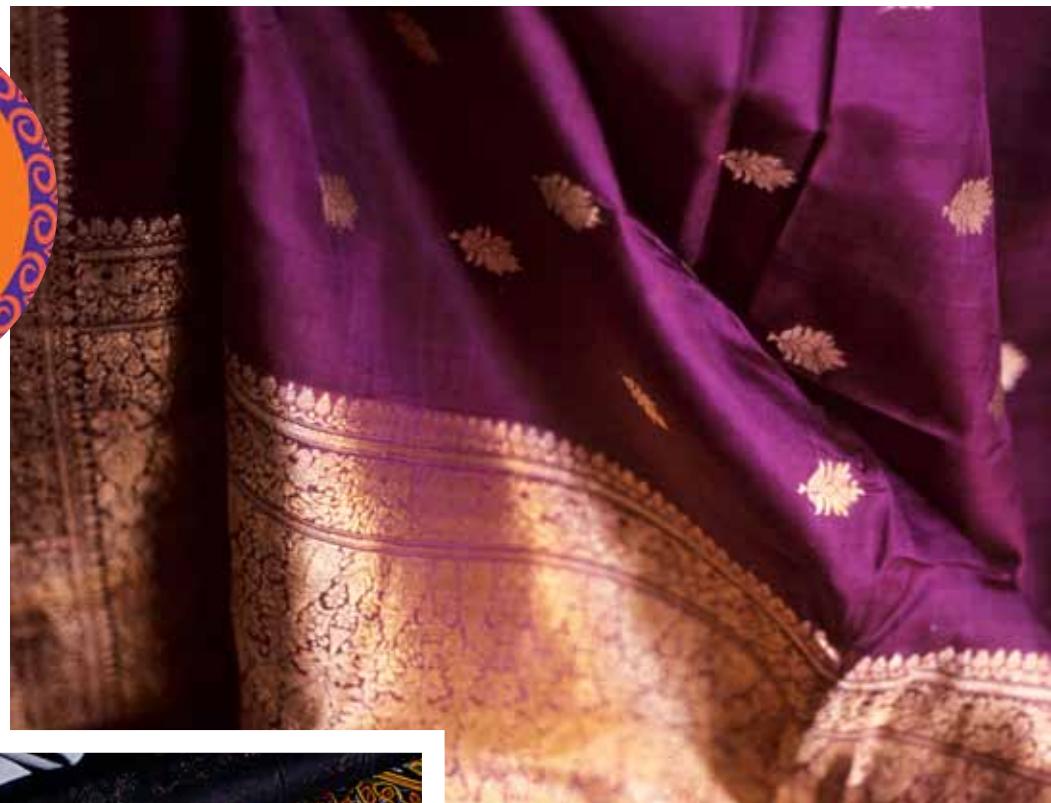
INDIA'S OWN

Geographical Indications are intellectual property, which means GI within our country is independent of any such rights existing in other countries.

Because of their commercial potential, adequate legal protection of GIs becomes necessary to prevent their misappropriation. Notably, at the international level, the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) sets out the minimum standards of GI protection that WTO members are required to comply within their respective national legislations.

Adhering to this obligation, India has enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. In this regard, applications are made to multi-national consortia in order to protect the identity of these Indian products not just within the country but also across the world. For example, Darjeeling Tea is the

PM Modi sporting an Assamese *gamusa* (scarf), traditional *kurta* (long shirt) and a *mundu* (a traditional garment from Kerala worn around the waist) as he lights a customary *nilavilakku* lamp on April 5 to thank coronawarriors from across the country



Clockwise from top: A *Madhubani* painting from Bihar; Traditional *Banarasi* silk sarees from Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; An artist working on beautiful *Kutch* embroidery patterns, a craft practiced exclusively practiced in the state of Gujarat



only GI tag registered under the EU Regulations. Similarly, to protect the identity of Basmati rice, agencies are faced with an uphill task with litigations outside India. Even for international GIs, to enforce their right in India, the producers should apply under GIG Act. India has registered 15 such GIs from outside the country, that conform to similar, high-quality standards.

Geographical Indications are the identity of our rich cultural and national heritage. The tagged products and those involved with their production are an indispensable part of our diverse culture and society. The GIG act is symbolic of India's commitment to utilising a contemporary consciousness for protecting our traditional knowledge, while simultaneously promoting Indian heritage across the country. Documenting, protecting and promoting these products in its essence, is an effort towards sustainable intellectual development.



Chinnaraja G Naidu is the Deputy registrar for GI tags in India. Naidu, an active conversationalist, has published numerous seminars, white papers and official reports on India's cultural heritage and its preservation through the GI tagging mechanism in the country.

THE LOCAL passage



Travel to the interiors of the country is one of the best options to discover local people, their customs and culture

Travelling alone or in a caravanette and opting for remote and less populated destinations, choosing to stay in camps and homestays are some of the new norms of the Indian tourism industry during these trying times. Interestingly, these ways are also helping local population in far-flung areas become financially stable

BY VINAYAK SURYA SWAMI

As the world hits the refresh button and resumes normal life, the travel industry too is doing the same. The idea of travel today has gone through several revamps, redefinitions and reconstructions to suit the need of the hour. In India, the current focus is on short and long road trips and stays in local homestays and independent properties. Offbeat has become the new popular haunt, experiential, the new mode of cultural learning and adventure, the new comfort.

With a gradual easing of restrictions, people are looking for opportunities to travel while conforming to safety guidelines. Secluded homestays and boutique, stand alone properties are

the preferred option as they limit interactions to a minimum. A large number of working professionals are adapting to the idea of a 'workation', a holistic approach of achieving conducive state of employee productivity and wellbeing.

Unlike other tourism commerce, workations can mobilise a valuable knowledge source i.e. skilled working professionals, and brings them in vicinity of rural communities. This interaction could very well be manifested as a widespread community learning and development programme, by encouraging professionals to undertake pro-bono volunteering opportunities corresponding to their skill set. It requires coming together of local authorities,

Home away from home

Over longer durations, people prefer simple home-cooked food or cooking themselves. Homestays today are offering attached kitchens and a larger choice of food for guests.

Rooms at several boutique properties and homestays are being equipped with work desks, shelves, easy access 24X7 power back-up along with uninterrupted high-speed internet to make every workation as smooth as possible.

Homestays are offering a new long-stay tariff for the guests opting for a month or more, making the option economically viable as well. The monthly cost per person now starts at around INR 10,000 that is far below the cost of living in a metropolitan city for the same period.



Swedish actress Melinda Kinnaman being served breakfast at a homestay in Ladakh. Photographed before the COVID-19 pandemic, homestays are a good option to travel to avoid human contact

Work vacations

Working individuals in small teams and organisations are now opting for extended stays of over 15 days at boutique and standalone properties.

Companies have also remodelled their properties in-tune with post-pandemic requirements. From encouraging people to strictly conform to the guidelines issued by government authorities, to sanitisation of rooms and common areas, monitoring health (body temperature and flu-related symptoms) of all the guests and staff on a daily basis are some of the indispensable measures.

A prudently designed workation programme has a propensity to correct often overlooked but critical organisational concerns like monotony of work and employee mental fatigue, consequently propagating a greater impact on productivity and team bonding.



A traveller sitting on tourist camper van in Leh. Camper vans and caravans are becoming the most preferred way to travel in the post-pandemic scenario

organisations, government and service providers among others to create an ecosystem that aids professionals in delivering knowledge of vocational disciplines to rural youth and adults.

In the coming months we will see a more responsible travel society. New age travellers are opting to take longer means (by road) to reach secluded and off-beat places, stay in small standalone properties and respect the environment. People are getting more conscious towards their contribution(s) for the betterment of the local environment, people and economy. And the best way to do so is to stay in rural areas and contribute towards the betterment of local communities.

With the call for 'Vocal for Local', Prime Minister Narendra Modi

has made an appeal for significant additions to India's domestic industry. This initiative is aimed at supporting local businesses and especially sectors directly related to travel and tourism.

Ours is a country which offers delights at every corner, the cultural diversity is unparalleled and India's many natural wonders are a sight to behold. It is now time to postpone long-distance travel and head to lesser known locations to experience local culture.

THE NORTHERN ODYSSEY

The Himalayas have always guarded India's bountiful northern frontiers, but even in their foothills lie some brilliant vacation destinations. Just under two hours away from the bustling hill

station of Shimla lies the quaint town of Narkanda. Known for the sprawling acres of orchards that produce some of the most delicious apples in the country, Narkanda is the perfect destination for some quiet time or a focussed workation. A lesser known fact is that the quiet *Himachali* town transforms into one of the top skiing destinations with its cascading slopes every winter.

Another hidden gem in the Himalayas, away from the much-visited destinations of Nainital and Almora (200 km), is the small town of Munsyari. Situated amongst the upper

reaches of the Kumaon Himalayas, the west-central range in Northern India, Munsyari is home to several small mountain communities that coexist peacefully. Although accessible only via road, the sprawling Panchachuli massifs, numerous hot springs and pleasant weather make for a perfect extended stay.

WESTERN SPECTACLES

The country's western frontiers are an embodiment of rustic brilliance and old world charm. Khimsar, a sleepy village in Rajasthan's lesser known Nagaur district, is one of the state's

Crafted to perfection

Uttarakhand is known for beautiful wood-carving, an art incorporated so well into daily life that it becomes easy to miss. The ornate windows, intricate doors and artistic paintings are all part of a centuries old craft.

The patterned and handwoven clothing from Himachal Pradesh is the perfect example of sustainable production. Locally sourced wool is woven to make caps, shawls and jackets with traditional designs that are appreciated across the country.

The traditional weaving techniques and designs across Rajasthan and Gujarat showcase the vibrant and colourful culture of the region.

Konkan cuisine, is a must-try. The mix of flavours, spices and ingredients make for a perfect cultural representation.



Photo: Vinayak S.

A camp illuminated with lanterns amongst the sprawling expanse of the Thar desert in Khimsar, Rajasthan. Camping offers the option of staying isolated while on a vacation

Small businesses spread across the Indian countryside, stand to benefit immensely due to the much-awaited increase in domestic travel after PM Modi's call to rally support for domestic products and services

More than just a stay

India's southern region is also known for stunning artistic work showcased through paintings and traditional designs.

The state of Tamil Nadu is known for its traditional and alternative systems of medicine, like *Siddha*, a government recognised system of medicine.

Eastern India is one of the best destinations for a glimpse into the tribal lifestyle. Be it traditional recipes, indigenous games or ornaments, the local communities play a vital part in its preservation and positive propagation.

Music is another important part of life across Eastern India. Often performed with locally made traditional instruments, it is widely appreciated across the region.

A tourist in pre-COVID times works while staying in a boutique property in Himachal Pradesh. Workations or working vacations may become a trend in India in the next few months

undiscovered gems. The fort, that is now a luxury hotel, offers a glimpse of the laid-back pastoral lifestyle while still remaining within a short distance of major cities like Jodhpur (100km away). Khimsar is the perfect quick-getaway one may need to unwind and reset.

SOUTHERN SPECTACLE

India's southern reaches offer a stark contrast to the country's mountainous north in every way possible. Udupi, in the coastal region of Karnataka is a unique southern town with otherworldly temples, pristine beaches and lush green landscapes. Udupi also offers a chance to dive into a cuisine which is appreciated across the world and is one of best options for

a short trip from the education-hub of Manipal.

Thekkady, in Kerala's Idukki district is another example of a destination lost in time. Just 190 km from Kochi, the state's economic centre, Thekkady is home to the Periyar Tiger Reserve, one of most popular National Park in the country. The lake, sprawling expanse of coffee plantations and a relaxed pace of life, make for the perfect excuse some short experiential travelling.

THE CAPTIVATING EAST

Dawki, a small hamlet nestled close to the Umngot river in Meghalaya's West Janti Hills district is every traveller's delight. The village, situated on the India-Bangladesh border, is known for





Top: A tourist stops to admire a view while hiking in Lonavala near Mumbai. Going on solo hikes or treks is another way to explore the country without being exposed to too many travellers

Bottom: Staff members of a hotel sanitise a room in Pune, Maharashtra. As the country opens up for tourism post COVID-19, hotels are taking extra precautions to disinfect and sanitise their properties

the crystal clear waters of the Umngot river along with the lush environs that surround it. Dawki is just 81 km from Shillong the bustling capital for the state of Meghalaya, and is a delight for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts.

These offbeat destinations are not just an alternative to well-known tourism hotspots but also provide an interesting insight into India's vibrant and diverse rural culture. Companies are training small groups of youngsters to meet the increasing demand in

domestic tourism, an effort aimed towards educating guests in local specialities, traditions and environs through nature trails, jungle walks, birding expeditions etc that also serve as the best stress busters in these times. The small-scale businesses spread across the Indian countryside, also stand to benefit immensely due to the much-awaited increase in domestic travel after PM Modi's call to rally support for domestic products and services as a means for quick and effective economic revival.

With inputs from Manuj Sharma co-founder Workation India (an HR tool that combines work and aspects of vacation in an enjoyable mix) and Shailza Dasgupta co-founder of Homestays of India, a platform for homestays aimed to help local people augment their village life through sustained, low impact eco-tourism.



Vinayak Surya Swami is a Delhi-based journalist. He holds a degree in mechanical engineering and has worked as an apprentice Shipbuilder with the Indian Navy. A part-time writer since his teenage years, he switched to journalism to pursue his prurience for writing and travel.



Football today has made its way to India's interiors with a rapidly growing popularity. Children enjoying an evening game of football at a ground in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh

THE RIGHT formation

With junior World Cup championships being hosted in the country (2017 for men and 2021 for women), streamlined professional league tournaments domestically and improved infrastructure, football in India is witnessing a resurgence

BY ARJUN PANDIT

The former president of FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the governing body of international football (soccer), Sepp Blatter, had once called India the “sleeping giant” of football. His comment resonated with many in the country, who feel that with the world’s second largest population, India is under-represented in the world’s most popular sport. While it’s true that in this cricket-loving country, football hasn’t had much success with mass following, but it has flourished in certain pockets

of the country. In Kolkata, Pune, Goa, Srinagar and parts of the Northeast, football reigns supreme. Critics may say that these are diminishing segments and the national team hasn’t had any luck on the international arena, but slowly a revolution is taking place on the field. In the past five years, football has made huge gains in India.

One of the major triggers of this growing fan base has been the age-group world cup championships that are being held in the country. The under-17 (U-17) team competing with the world’s best at the 2017 World Cup, hosted in India for the

The Indian team walks out amidst loud cheers during the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup match between India and USA at the JLN Stadium in New Delhi



In the run-up to the world cup, the AIFF has made it mandatory in its licensing agreements for all domestic clubs to have a women's team

Top: English players pose for photos after the U-17 World Cup 2017 final match in Kolkata

Bottom: A view of Indian dressing room before the U-17 World Cup group stage match against Ghana

first time added significantly to the phenomenon. Since the successful completion of the grand-scale event, the sport in the country, along with those associated with it, has seen a much-needed infrastructural change. The young Indian teams appearing in international sporting events benefit from the global exposure

when they compete against the world's best. In the U-17 matches, the Indian youngsters were up against the likes of Columbia, Ghana and the USA.

India will also be hosting the U-17 women's World Cup in February 2021 and has bid for several other global events, which ensures a top-down approach, allowing for a more systematic building of the grass-roots or baby level football ecosystem.

INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

One of the biggest positives that we can draw out of India hosting age-group world cups is that the infrastructure – be it existing or new stadiums and training facilities or the increase in investments made in the sport – is being revamped. FIFA has stringent norms for approvals that have to be met in order to host these events and as a result, players get to train and play in world-class facilities.





Top: The Gateway of India, illuminated on the occasion of the unveiling of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup official emblem in Mumbai. The event has been postponed to 2021 in light of the COVID-19 outbreak

Bottom (L-R): AIFF President Praful Patel, Union Minister of State (I/C) Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju, FIFA Chief Women's Football Officer Sarai Bareman and FIFA Head of Youth Tournaments Roberto Grassi during the launch of the official slogan for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in New Delhi

The U-17 World Cup was hosted across seven venues that included Guwahati, New Delhi and Kochi. In addition to these stadiums, there were several other training grounds that received massive upgrades and have helped budding local players train better in the years that followed.

For the women's world cup too, the choice of venues is aimed towards spreading awareness about the sport across the country. One of them is Ahmedabad in Gujarat and another is Bhubaneswar in Odisha. What's also different is that India will actually be building an U-17 team for the women's world cup. Trials have been held across the country to select emerging players, who will then be groomed in world-class facilities to prepare for the event. This will ensure that a much-needed awareness about the game is created amongst budding players. A solid



“WE NEED TO DEVELOP THE CULTURE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AT THE CLUB, SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LEVEL. PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS HAS RISEN IN THE SPORT AND WITH THE NEW COMPETITIONS MORE WOMEN WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE SPORT”

Dalima Chhibber
Indian Football Star

Living the dream

Any sportsperson is defined, in essence, by their willingness to persevere, he or she is a person who does not give up. It is natural for a player to face rejection and then to emerge victorious with determination and hard-work. Sunil Chhetri during his days in Delhi used to play age-group level football. He was earmarked since that time for a bright future, he did very well across U-19 and other groups before he joined Mohun Bagan in 2002 on a three-year contract. For the next two years, he saw very little of the pitch, he acquainted himself with the bench but worked twice as hard to match the level of football that was being played at the club. Top-level football is as much a test of mental strength as it is physical. He persevered and started getting some game-time during his third year, so much so that he earned himself a transfer to the JCT football club from Punjab after his three years. Again for the first two-years there, he got very little game time. Moreover, West Bengal is a hot-bed of football where the media, the people, are all part of it, but JCT, based out of Phagwara in Punjab, saw very little of that. Even there, Chhetri struggled against very little game-time, he used to practice with the team and then continue when everyone else left the field, in the third year, he finally made it to the club's premier ranks. He led the club to a second-place finish in 2006-07 and the years of practice finally showed when he was also named the Indian Player of the Year with 11 goals (fifth highest) for JCT FC. From there his growth curve became absolutely steep and he never looked back. Even when he is well past 30 years of age, he has shown no signs of relenting. Many have joked about him joining the studio for the next year's AFC Asian championship and Chhetri has answered all his critics by not showing any signs of relenting. "You mark my words", he has often said. That is his level of determination and that, is why he is still called India's 'Mr Football'.



Left: Sunil Chhetri, Indian sports star and captain of the Indian senior football team

Bottom: The trophy for the FIFA 2017 U-17 World Cup in India ahead of the final match between England and Spain in Kolkata

start for what may eventually become a thriving sporting environment.

HOME FRONT

As these global events make their way to India, not only are they helping increase people's participation, and enthusiasm towards the game, but a definitive uptick has also been observed across the domestic circuit, significantly raising the standard of how the game is played.

Only when a country has a fully-functioning domestic ecosystem, can it hope to bring its best and most talented players to the international stage. In terms of local-level football in India, the National Football League, started





Till a few years ago, only the top players received contracts of INR 7 million and above. Today, even mid-level players have INR 30-40 million deals with leading Indian clubs

by All India Football Federation (AIFF), the governing body for the sport in India, in 1996, gave way to the professional I-League in 2007. However, the sport in its entirety was restructured with the arrival of the Indian Super League (ISL) in 2014. A brainchild of AIFF, the ISL has become an increasingly popular event in the country, and can help India find a foothold in Asian football as well. With ISL attracting international players and highly qualified professionals offering world-class training, many young

players and budding talents have gained significantly. The positive effect is discernible from the Indian team's remarkable performance on the international circuit at AFC (Asian Football Confederation) Asian cup last year.

The ISL now operates with a significantly larger ecosystem and considerably increased budgets. Earlier, where teams were only spending INR 30-40 million every year, there are teams with annual budgets of upto INR 500 million today. This has managed to give

A boy heads a football in front of graffiti of Argentine soccer player Lionel Messi in Kolkata, a city that loves the game



Top: FIFA President Gianni Infantino presents the champions trophy to Angel Gomes of England, after the FIFA 2017 U-17 World Cup 2017 final at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata

Bottom: Indian captain Amarjit Kiyam and Josh Sargent of USA pose with referees prior a FIFA U-17 World Cup match in New Delhi

Indian players a great opportunity to become full-time footballers and earn a lot more.

SCRIPTING SUCCESS

Additionally, there have been several government programmes that have been launched to promote the game, like the Mission XI Million (2017) that boosted involvement in the sport

at school level. The main aim of the programme is to instill the passion for football in around 11 million children from over 37 cities and 12,000 schools across all the states. The Sports Association of India (SAI) has taken several initiatives to boost the sport, be it the SAI Training Centres Scheme (STC) and the Centre of Excellence Scheme (COX) for senior-level players.

The AIFF strategic plan (2019-2022) aims to have 11,000 junior level players (below 12 years) playing across 200 'baby' leagues by 2022. The association plans to successfully run atleast one league (each for players under 13, 15 and 18 years) in every Indian state by 2022, a decision that will provide a massive stimulus to Indian football.

As the sport moves in this direction, there will also be a need for more technical personnel for



Fans cheer during a football match between Real Kashmir and Mohun Bagan at the TRC Turf Ground in Srinagar on January 5, 2020

the around 40,000 junior league matches being planned by 2022. In this regard, the AIFF says that almost 18,570 coaches (9,357 currently) and 15,000 referees (5,940 currently) will be certified through development activities directly associated with well-structured competitions. As of 2019, over 60 accredited football academies have already been setup in India, a number that stood at just 12 in 2015-16.

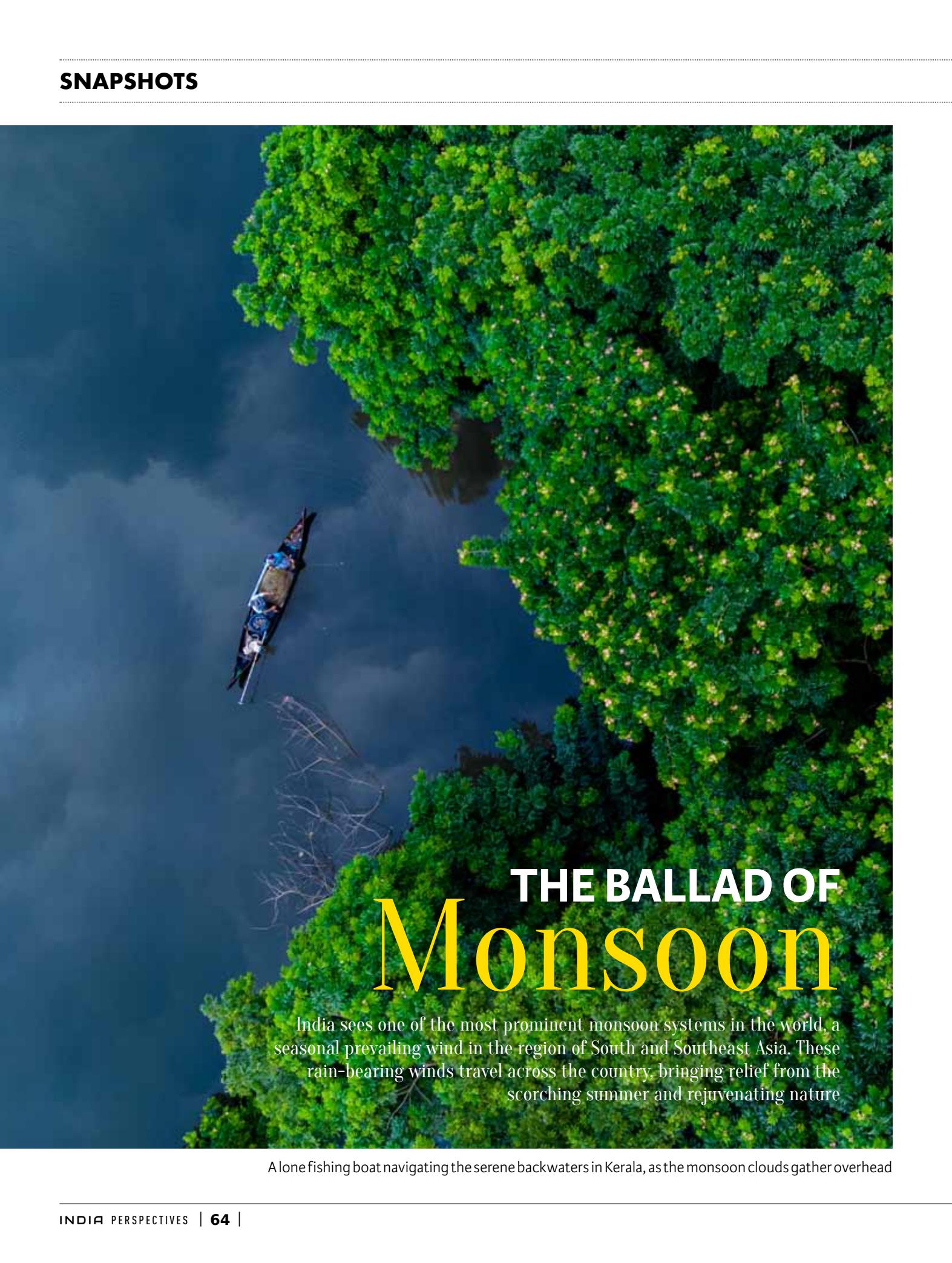
GOING FORWARD

Indian football has become very competitive and professional. The ISL operates like a well-oiled machine with new franchises, transfers etc. Big corporates are investing in the game, a recent example being Kolkata's century-old football club,

the legendary East Bengal joining the ISL. The age-group teams for India are also doing well on the national and international circuit. What India now needs is a unified system with a premier league functioning in sync with the lowest localised tiers. A unified system, professional standards, improved infrastructure and an enabling environment is all that is required to fan the flame of football in India, a flame that seems to have been reignited.



Arjun Pandit is a former football player, having played at leading clubs like the Salgaocar FC in Goa. Pandit was forced to graduate to being a sports journalist and anchor after an injury. He has appeared on India's leading networks like Star, Zee etc. and has been actively involved with football related developments in India over the years through his show 420 grams.



THE BALLAD OF Monsoon

India sees one of the most prominent monsoon systems in the world, a seasonal prevailing wind in the region of South and Southeast Asia. These rain-bearing winds travel across the country, bringing relief from the scorching summer and rejuvenating nature.

A lone fishing boat navigating the serene backwaters in Kerala, as the monsoon clouds gather overhead



Top: The majestic Kumbhalgarh Fort in Rajasamand, Rajasthan. The UNESCO listed heritage fort is at its most beautiful during the monsoon

Bottom: A man rows his boat across a waterway amidst heavy seasonal rainfall near the scenic town of Alappuzha in Kerala



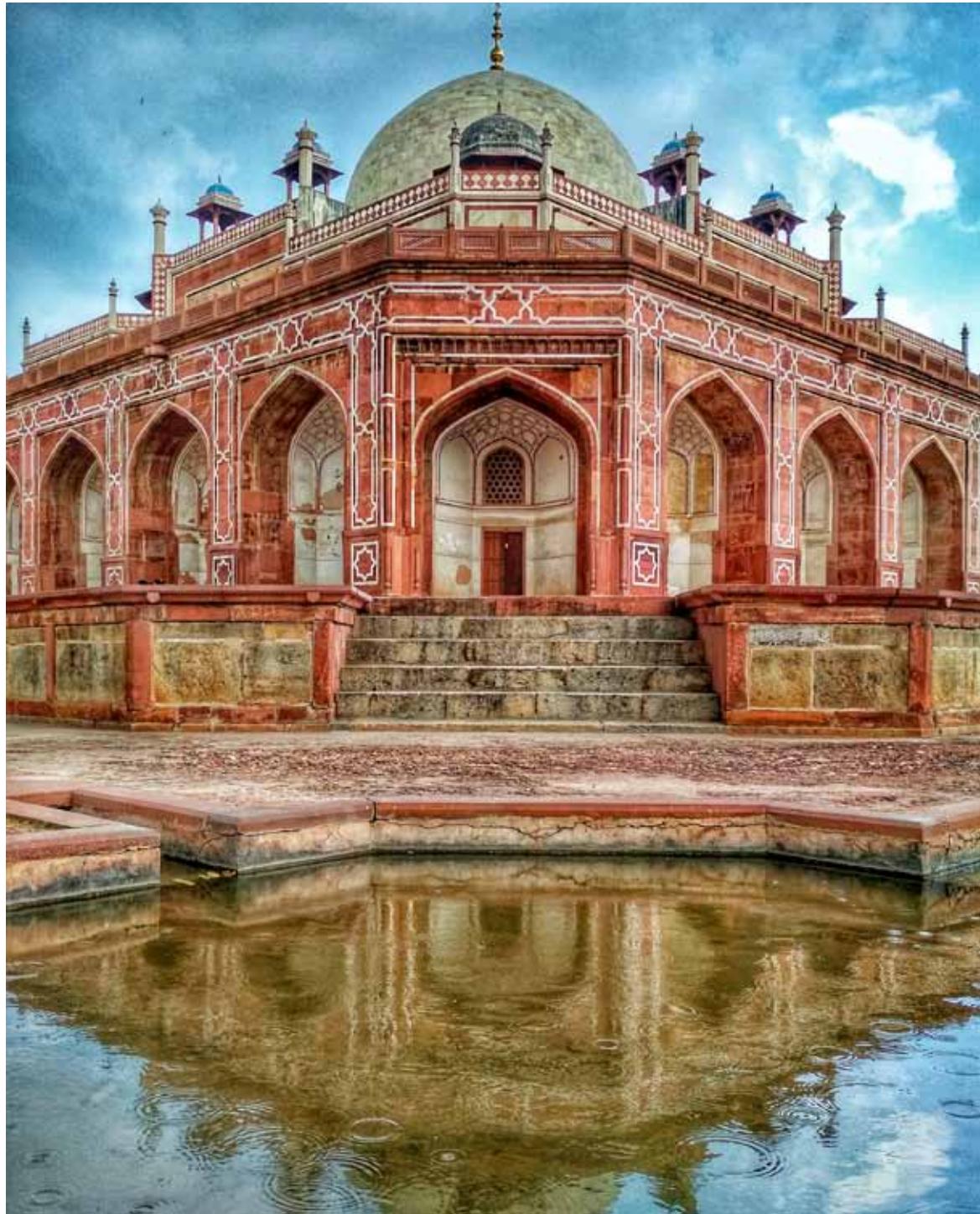
SNAPSHOTS

Top: A monastery stands silhouetted against dark rain clouds in Gangtok, the capital of the northeastern state of Sikkim

Bottom: A man with a colourful umbrella walks through the tea plantations in Munnar, Kerala, during the monsoon rains



Monsoon in India is a celebration of life and nature. After the summer months, the rain-bearing winds are deflected southward, beginning the winter monsoon season (Oct-Dec) for the southeastern region of India



The UNESCO listed monument of Humayun's Tomb in New Delhi after heavy showers during the monsoon season

SNAPSHOTS

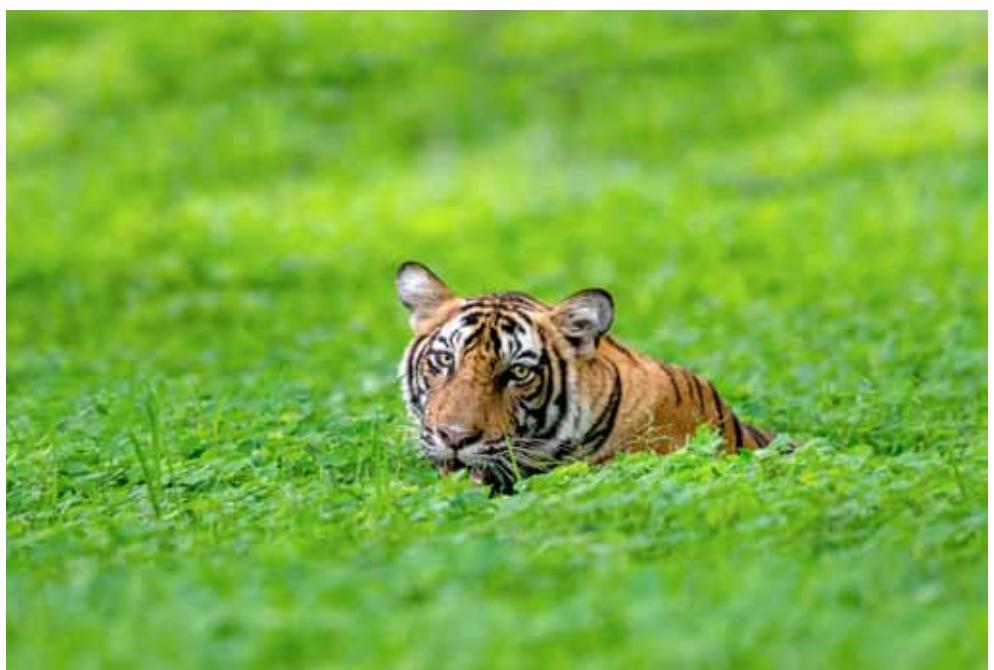


Some of the most picturesque train journeys in India are on the iconic Konkan Railway that runs across the Western Ghats, a mountain range parallel to India's western coast. During monsoon, the fresh green vistas here are stunning



Top: The beautiful tea plantations across the quaint resort town of Ooty in Tamil Nadu. The serene hill station is particularly beautiful during the monsoon season

Bottom: A tiger enjoys the cool environs on a rainy day during the monsoon season in Ranthambore National Park, Rajasthan



SNAPSHOTS



Top: Meghalaya, in the northeast of India, receives bountiful rainfall that sees its numerous waterfalls roar down mountains during this season

Bottom: Golden Temple, the holy Sikh shrine in Amritsar, Punjab, stands in stark contrast to the dark monsoon clouds gathering above it. The Indian state of Punjab is home to the most fertile lands that depend on seasonal rains for irrigation



Top: The Kaas Plateau on a foggy morning following heavy rainfall near Satara, Maharashtra. The Kaas plateau is a unique system harbouring a large number of flora and fauna

Bottom: Rain clouds over the mountains surrounding the Namika-la pass in the Zanskar range. The mountain range runs across the high-altitude cold desert in the Union territory of Ladakh



The linguistic LANDSCAPE OF INDIA

India is a land of around 500 different languages, of which a majority are used even today. **Sonal Kulkarni-Joshi** talks about their diversity and traces their ancient global linkages



India's society, culture, history and politics have continuously been shaped by the multiplicity of her languages. So, how many languages are spoken in India? The country is home to speakers of about 461 languages. Of these, 447 languages are actively used in daily communication, while 14 are extinct - they no longer fulfil any

communication need. Among these, 121 languages have more than 10,000 speakers and 22 of these are officially recognised in the Indian Constitution. These include Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Maithili, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. These

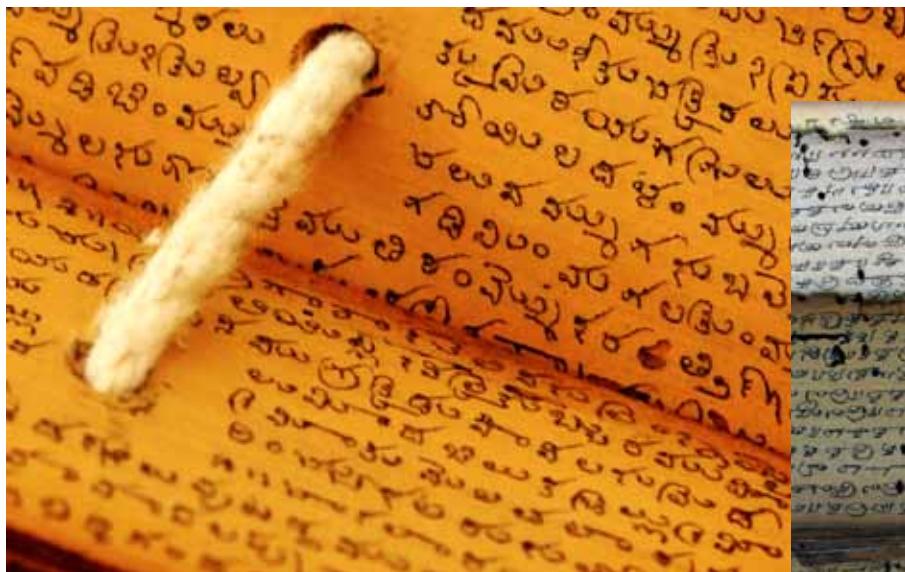
Visitors next to the reproduction of an ancient Sanskrit-inscribed stone slab marking the India stand at the 2006 Frankfurt Book Fair

are referred to as the 'scheduled languages' and according to the nation-wide census conducted in 2011, 96.72 per cent Indians speak any one of these languages as their mother tongue. Hindi is spoken by a majority of the Indian population (26.6 %), followed by Bangla (7.94 %), Marathi (6.84 %) and Telugu (6.68 %). Of the scheduled languages, Hindi is recognised as the national official language; English is used at the national level as a subsidiary official language. Post-independence, several of India's states followed the linguistic line, making the language

spoken by most number of people its official communication tool: Marathi in Maharashtra, Bangla in West Bengal, Kannada in Karnataka and so on. Hindi and the other scheduled languages are also used as official languages in the states – they are used in regional administration and education. Thus, unlike many monolingual countries that have a single official language (eg Japanese in Japan, French in France and so on), there is no single 'Indian' language.

Enumerating languages in India poses a unique challenge, largely because of the blurred distinction

Palm leaves served as the paper of the ancient world for thousands of years. The manuscripts, that were used until the 19th century often contained jewels of ancient knowledge that are relevant even in contemporary times. Seen here are ancient Tamil manuscripts



“

EVERY LANGUAGE HAS ITS OWN SIGNIFICANCE, SANCTITY. INDIA TAKES GREAT PRIDE IN THE FACT THAT TAMIL IS THE MOST ANCIENT OF WORLD LANGUAGES. WE INDIANS ALSO FEEL PROUD THAT FROM VEDIC TIMES TO THE MODERN DAY, SANSKRIT LANGUAGE HAS PLAYED A STELLAR ROLE IN THE UNIVERSAL SPREAD OF KNOWLEDGE.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

between language and dialect. Hindi and Urdu are regarded as separate languages in spite of very strong linguistic similarities between them, as are Marathi and Konkani. The Tangkhul dialects spoken in the state of Manipur are not all mutually intelligible, but the speakers regard these varieties as constituting a single language. According to the census of 2011, 43.6 per cent of the people speak Hindi as their mother tongue – this includes more than 40 dialects of Hindi such as Angika, Awadhi, Bagheli, Bhojpuri,

Braj, Chhattisgarhi and so on. A large segment of Indians use their multilingualism to index multiple identities – local, regional, national and so on. Very often the knowledge of multiple languages is acquired not in school but in multilingual neighbourhoods. For example, a child belonging to a Bengali family living in Mumbai will converse in Bengali at home, speak the local language Marathi with neighbours and friends, and learn English and Hindi in school. This linguistic division is very characteristic of the Indian society.

Bottom: Ancient Tamil inscriptions at the Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjavur. The temple was built during the Chola empire in around 1010 CE

Inset: A stone wheel with ancient engravings, carved in the walls of Konark Sun Temple (Odisha, India), believed to be built around 13th century CE

Language in India has a complex relation with writing. Not all Indian languages are written, though they have a rich oral tradition built over many years





Top: Former Union Minister for Education (formerly Human Resource Development),

Prakash Javadekar, lighting the lamp to inaugurate the 17th World Sanskrit Conference, in Vancouver, Canada 2018

Bottom: India's cultural strength lies in its diversity, a phenomenon highlighted with the use of multiple languages even today.

Newspapers in various languages at a news stand in Mumbai, the country's financial capital



THE LANGUAGE FAMILIES

Languages carry signatures of the varied ancestries of the people of the land. Hence, like people, languages can be classified into various 'families' based on the genealogical similarities among them. The main language families of India are the following: Indo-Aryan - this family includes major languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Marathi, Oriya, Bangla and Axomiya as well as tribal languages such as Bhili and Katkari. These languages have descended from the classical language Sanskrit via the Prakrits. In the present times, the speakers of this language family spread from Northwest India to the Northeast of India, occupying the plains of

North India. The Dravidian family of languages includes four major, literary languages in southern India – Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu – as well as a number of tribal languages such as *Toda* in the Nilgiri Hills and *Gondi* in central India. The Daic family of languages in Arunachal Pradesh and in Assam and the Andamanese language family in the Andaman islands are two smaller genealogical groups in the country.

THE GLOBAL LINKS

Interestingly, all these Indian language groups share ancestry with languages from other parts of the world: Indo-Aryan languages are historically related to languages in Europe, which

Ode to the Indian languages

Hindi is the third most spoken language in the world today after English and Mandarin Chinese. In terms of the largest number of native speakers, Hindi, Bengali and Marathi are ranked among the top 10 languages of the world.

According to a study published by the UNESCO in 2010, India, with 197 endangered languages, had the highest rate of language loss in the world. 156 of Indian languages 10,000 persons and 93 of these languages are spoken in the Northeastern states of India and in Jammu and Kashmir. 2019 was declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, with a resolution to continue fostering indigenous languages and pass on their knowledge to future generations.

Tamil and Sanskrit are the oldest attested languages in India. Earliest records in Old Tamil include some cave inscriptions (2nd century BC) and a long grammatical and poetic treatise, *Tolkāppiyam* (1st century BC.) The *Sangam* literature, a collection of 2,381 poems, is the most ancient literary works in Old Tamil.

Did you know?

In India, the study of language goes back to the 4th Century BC. The first historical figure to ever study language was Sanskrit scholar Panini.

Tamil is recognised as the oldest living language in the world.

The earliest example of Sanskrit can be found in the 2nd Century BC.

were derived from Latin and Greek. Thus, Bangla, Hindi, Persian, English, German and Dutch are all distant cousins. The Munda or Austro-Asiatic languages are genetically related to languages in Vietnam and Cambodia, while the Tibeto-Burman languages are relations of languages spoken in Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and China. The Munda group of the Austro-Asiatic languages includes Santali, Mundari, Ho and a few other tribal languages spoken in central India. The Tibeto-Burman family of languages is represented by languages such as Manipuri, Bodo and almost a hundred other tribal languages spoken in Northeast India. Speakers of the different language families are said to have arrived in the Indian sub-continent at different times in history; the ancestors of the speakers of the Great Andamanese language belonged,

perhaps, to the first migration of humans out of Africa into South and South-East Asia.

THE WRITTEN WORD

Language in India has a complex relation with writing. Not all Indian languages are written, though they have a rich oral tradition. The development of writing is associated mainly with commercial record-keeping rather than any religious or social activity. Scripts used in the present day for writing all Indian languages are predominantly derived from the Brahmi script. Devanagari or Nagari, its modern derivative, is used to write Hindi, Marathi, Konkani and Sanskrit. The recitation of Devanagari system follows a phonetic order in which vowels precede the consonants. Symbols of the writing system are ordered such that sounds produced



Prof Malhar Kulkarni with Prof Ramsubramanian at the Sanskrit cell of IIT Mumbai. Premier institutions for engineering and scientific studies, including IITs, have a Sanskrit cell to help study ancient Indian literature



Top: The new National Education Policy (2020) aims to reintroduce regional/local languages into the country's education system

Bottom: Road and information signs in multiple languages are a common sight in India, a marker for the country's linguistic diversity

at the back of the mouth cavity (*ka, kha, ga, gha*) are followed by those produced progressively in the front of the mouth cavity (*cha, chha, ja, jha and pa, pha, ba, bha*). Another characteristic of the writing system is that the vowel is inherently present in the consonant symbol. Local scripts were devised and adopted for some languages – for example, Ol Chiki for Santali in Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha; Kaithi and Tirhuta for Maithili. Some Indian languages are written in more than one script – Devanagari and

Perso-Arabic for Sindhi; Devanagari, Malayalam, Kannada, Perso-Arabic and Roman for Konkani.

Irrespective of their varying ancestries, the speakers of the various Indian languages do not live in isolation. Over millennia, they have intermingled for social, economic and other reasons. In the process, their languages have been enriched with words and constructions from the surrounding languages. Such processes of assimilation and convergence define the Indianness of the multitude of languages, highlighting the unity underlying the country's linguistic diversity.



Sonal Kulkarni-Joshi is Professor in Linguistics at the Deccan College (Deemed University), Pune. She received her doctoral degree in Linguistics at the Reading University in England. Her research interests include the study of language change, mapping of dialectal variation, diaspora languages and the effect of migration on language.



INDIA'S EXOTIC food basket

Be it iceberg lettuce, exotic mushrooms, fresh broccoli, tangy kiwis, healthy avocados, green olives or fresh blue cheese, several global food products are now being cultivated and produced in India and the segment is looking at a surge

BY MIRVAAN VINAYAK

Hand-rolled pasta with garlic butter caper sauce, served with oven-roasted Brussels sprouts, and on the side, a fresh kale salad with a handful of bocconcini balls. For dessert, a mint-green kiwi sorbet! As exotic and global these dishes may sound, their main ingredients are all grown locally

and are sourced from Indian farms: capers from Tamil Nadu, kale leaves from Jammu and Kashmir, Brussels sprouts from Kerala, kiwi from Himachal Pradesh and bocconcini cheese from Punjab.

For a few years now, exotic food ingredients like vegetables, fruits, cooking oil, grains, and cheeses have become very common in

A platter of exotic cheeses, including blue cheese. Karnataka and Kerala have been hubs of artisanal cheese units

India, especially with food connoisseurs and those with a globally attuned palate. Initially, they were all imported from across the world and came at a high price. But with growing popularity, many of them are now being cultivated and produced in India; ensuring higher nutrition with fresh produce and at a fraction of the cost. The positive ecological impact from reduced carbon footprint due to reduction of travel

time of the ingredients is an added advantage. You no longer have to look for international labels to buy these products: the best quality of lettuce is grown in the hills of Nilgiris; the freshest avocados are supplied from the farms of Himachal Pradesh and rare cheeses, sourced from various parts of the country.

MADE IN INDIA

India is the second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, and is also a significant consumer market for these products. Vegetables account for over half of the total market share of the Indian fruits and vegetable market, with a growing segment dedicated to exotic products. Indian farmers are leveraging the growing demand for exotic vegetables. In 2018, India imported fruits and vegetables worth about USD 3,000 million. In 2019, this figure dropped

to USD 1,189 million. Interestingly, import of edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers more than halved in the year (2019) ended March at USD 1.18 billion, down from USD 2.9 billion in 2017-18. Import of raw vegetables, lettuce, and sweet potatoes, too, saw a decline in 2018-19. Experts say this fall is triggered by stricter import rules regarding food items enforced by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and a significant increase in local cultivation. The imported food industry in India, growing at 22-23 per cent, is being closely followed by domestic production of international foods having a growth of 14-16 per cent.

The Government of India has identified this small yet significant sector and has announced plans to introduce the best quality of exotic



An Indian woman farmer working in a strawberry field in Maharashtra

PROGRESS



Top: Organic exotic vegetables fruits on a supermarket shelf in New Delhi. The number of consumers with a preference for organically grown food has steadily risen in India

Bottom: Fresh avocados hang from a tree in a farm. Himachal Pradesh grows one of the best varieties of avocados in India

India is the second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, and is also a significant consumer market for the same



food ingredients in India, by providing local farmers seeds and saplings of these plants. A three-year-project funded by the Government of India, will be importing original planting material of exotic varieties of apples, almonds, walnuts, grapes and date palm to promote cultivation of these varieties. The state-owned National Seeds Corporation has been appointed as the nodal agency, which will import seeds, saplings and rootlets for further propagation in India. While private firms have been importing these seeds, the government will do so for the first time.

FRUITY APPEAL

Among fruits, the ones that are imported in large quantities include Japan's Fuji apples and other varieties

of green apples, red grapes, dates, berries, kiwi, different types of mandarin orange, pomelo, and several other varieties of citrus fruits. While some of these are easily suited to India's diverse climate conditions, others like Fuji apples and green apples are among the tougher ones to replace. However, Indian farmers are successfully cultivating an alternate variety of Fuji apples, in the form of Lal Ambri apples from Jammu and Kashmir. This hybrid variety is produced by cross-breeding Himachal Pradesh's Delicious Red apples with the indigenous Lal Ambri breed. The cream-white pulpy flesh of these (Lal Ambri) apples possesses a crisp, tender texture alongside a sweet-juicy flavour. Grown throughout the year,

it is popular for raw consumption and jams, jellies and desserts.

Among green apples, the Granny Smith variety grown in Himachal Pradesh serves as a good alternative to the imported ones from the US. These have a grass-green peel with white dots. The crunchy and juicy flesh is deliciously tart, and makes an excellent choice for making pies, cakes, and pastries.

The country's grape production centres are Maharashtra (contributing to over 80 per cent of India's grape production) and Karnataka. These states primarily focus on table grapes and give imported varieties a run for their quality.

Among other exotic fruits being cultivated in India, kiwi is mostly

Large scale efforts

- Amongst fruits, the country ranks first in production of Bananas (25.7%), Papayas (43.6%) and mangoes (including mangosteens and guavas, 40.4%)
- Among exotic grains, quinoa is grown in India in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.
- On the outskirts of Bengaluru, a new-age organic farm produces shishito peppers, Kamo-nasu eggplant, greens like Komatsuna, Mizuna, and over twelve varieties of tomatoes from around the world, including the Blush tomato.



A lush farm of vegetables and various kinds of lettuce leaves in India. Several farmers grow these exotic vegetables between the main cropping season

grown in the mid-hills of Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala. Berries are in focus as well. The primary berry-growing state of India is Karnataka and fruits cultivated here are comparable to the global variety. The lush green hills of Nainital and Dehradun in Uttarakhand and Maharashtra's Mahabaleshwar are covered with strawberry plantations.

VEGETABLE DELIGHTS

In a similar manner, India imports a vast variety of exotic vegetables like broccoli, iceberg lettuce, asparagus, coloured capsicum, parsley, celery and cabbage. However, in the recent times, farmers from all over the country have been growing these vegetables both during main cropping season

and during off-season. Various government and non-government organisations have initiated schemes to motivate farmers to practice the growing of these crops. Farms catering to exotic greens have mushroomed in Haryana, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Himachal Pradesh too has been a major contributor.

Another food product that used to be imported in large quantities from Europe but is currently being produced in India, is cheese. Rare and artisanal varieties of cheeses are being manufactured in the Deccan region, in states in Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Uttarakhand too is producing the rare blue cheese variety. Most of these cheese-making units produce small batches to maintain quality and it is

Various varieties of cheese, including gouda, parmesan and mozzarella, from the La Ferme Cheese farms in Auroville, Tamil Nadu





Top: An apple and apricot orchard in Spiti, Himachal Pradesh. Even in the harshest of climates, local farmers have managed to grow exotic fruits using ancient farming methods coupled with modern-day technological reforms.

Bottom: An Indian farmer shows a full-head of an organic lettuce grown at the Sardar Patel Farm at Kathwada village near Ahmedabad

this attention to detail that makes local cheese comparable to imported alternatives.

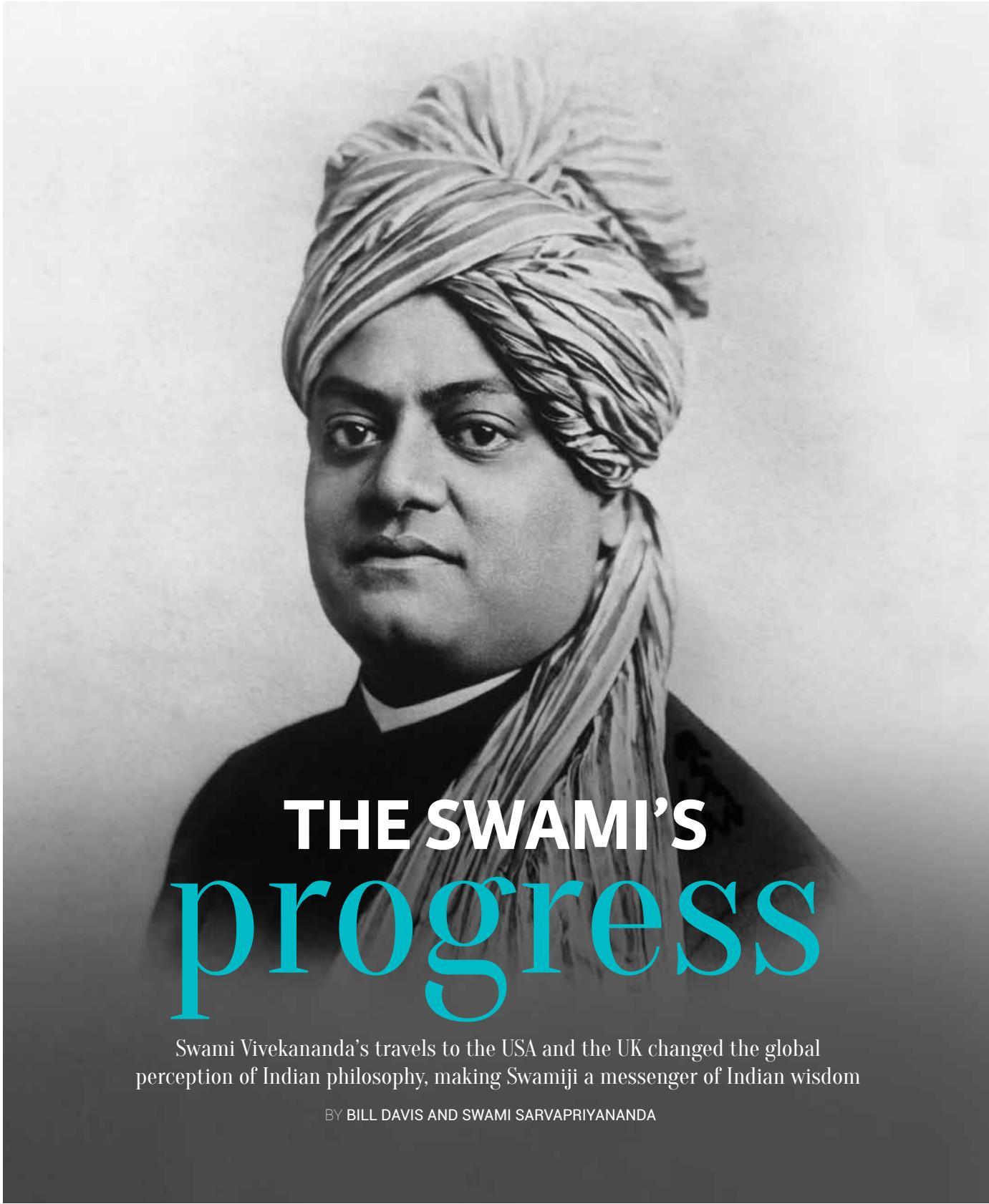
The growth of cultivation of exotic vegetables and fruits, and grains and other food produce in India is also fuelled by new-age farmers, or people who have quit corporate careers to turn to organic farming. They are using innovations like aquaponic methods to grow various exotic salad greens for a

rapidly increasing consumer base. An average individual today is more open to experimenting with global cuisines, organic farming techniques and healthy dietary options.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi focusses on the country becoming self-sufficient in the agricultural sector and allied sectors, the cultivation and production of food items once imported can minimise India's dependency on global imports. We can safely say that with the ongoing strategic intent and reforms from both the government and the industry, the exotic food basket of India shall be witnessing a new narrative.



Mirvaan Vinayak is a trained chef who was amongst the finalists of MasterChef India. He has hosted several cooking shows and is a celebrity on social media due to his easy food hacks that make cooking simpler and fun. Mirvaan is known for his love for Indian cuisine and his passion to experiment with global ingredients.



THE SWAMI'S progress

Swami Vivekananda's travels to the USA and the UK changed the global perception of Indian philosophy, making Swamiji a messenger of Indian wisdom

BY BILL DAVIS AND SWAMI SARVAPRIYANANDA

Swami Vivekananda, born in Kolkata, West Bengal, was a key figure in the introduction of Indian culture and philosophies to the western world
DoB: Jan 12, 1863; **DoD:** July 4, 1902

In September 1893, when Swami Vivekananda arrived in Chicago, USA, to deliver his now iconic address at the Parliament of Religions, the Western world didn't think much of the saffron-robed Indian representative. Within a few days, however, that view had altered dramatically, as the power of Swamiji's words and persona travelled far and wide. After winning over his audience at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he began to give talks all over the eastern part of the USA travelling by steam locomotive. He startled and amazed his American listeners with the message that all religions are valid paths to god, that human beings, in

their essence, are none other than the divine being himself, and that it was the goal of life for each individual to realise this truth as a fact of experience. In his own powerful words: "Come up O Lions. Shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are spirits free. Blessed and eternal." He had realised these truths at the feet of his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, who lived at a Kali temple north of Kolkata. Swamiji became known as the "Cyclonic Monk." Wherever he went he stirred things up and great excitement would attend his talks.

Swamiji was invited to teach on August 1894 at an interreligious camp meeting (living in tents) in Greenacres, Maine, USA. This had been inspired

Swami Vivekananda photographed in London, United Kingdom (1895). After almost two years in the USA, Swami Vivekananda travelled to the United Kingdom in 1895 and gave a series of lectures there

THE THOUGHTS AND IDEALS
OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
INSPIRE AND ENERGISE
CRORES OF INDIANS,
PARTICULARLY OUR YOUTH.
IT IS FROM HIM THAT WE
DRAW THE MOTIVATION OF
BUILDING AN INDIA THAT IS
STRONG, VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE
AND AN INDIA THAT TAKES
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN
SEVERAL AREAS.

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister of India

On the occasion of Vivekananda Jayanti, also known as the National Youth Day (Jan 12)



Swami Vivekananda's power lay in the courage he gave others to put high ideals and transcendent teachings into practice

by his Chicago addresses. He was in his element there, lecturing under a towering pine tree to a circle of eager students sitting with him on the ground. After leaving he decided he had had enough of travel and audiences. He wanted to settle down and have students so he could leave something permanent in America. He debated within himself between Boston and New York. He said to himself, "Boston is the Athens of America, but New York is the Rome."

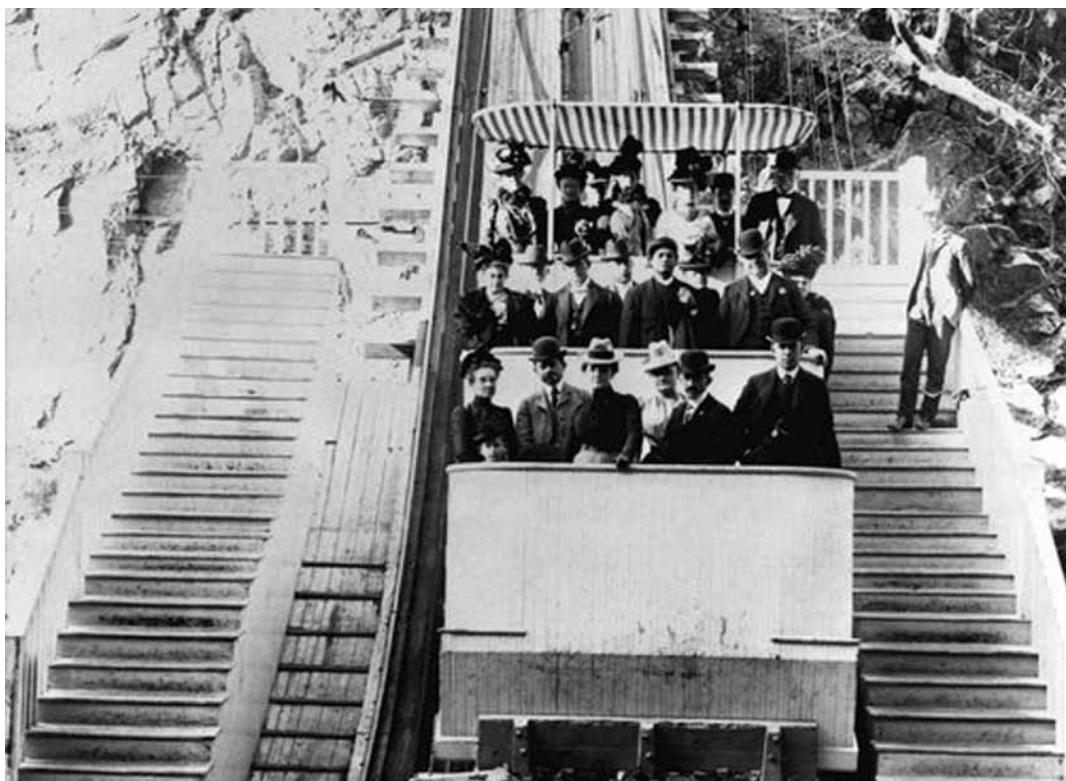
He chose Rome. That autumn he gave a series of packed lectures at the Brooklyn Ethical Society and founded the Vedanta Society of New York.

In January of 1895 he left the fancy residence of a Dr Guernsey and moved into his own quarters at 54 W 33rd St in Manhattan. This was a somewhat disreputable neighbourhood. Some friends of Swamiji warned him that the "right sort of people" would not come there. However, come there they did. It was said that his rooms used to be full to overflowing. When the chairs were all taken, people would sit on tables and on the floor and even outside the door. Josephine

Humble origins

Swami Vivekananda was born in Kolkata on January 12, 1863, as Narendra Nath Datta. From an early age, he nurtured an interest in world philosophy, history, and theology. He met the religious leader Ramakrishna Paramhansa, who later became his guru.

Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga are some of the books Swami Vivekananda wrote.



On his second tour to the USA in January 1900. Swami Vivekananda (second row, fifth from left) at Mount Lowe, California.



Swami Vivekananda spent six weeks at a house in South Pasadena, California in January 1900. The house (309 Monterey Road) is now known as the Vivekananda House

MacLeod, who became a lifelong friend of Swamiji, said that what she heard from his first word to the last, was truth. Frank Leggett, a wealthy businessman and pious Episcopalian, also attended. He heard Swamiji say, "I don't want to make you into Hindus. I want to make you into better Christians." He was touched by this message and began to take a fatherly interest in Swamiji.

Swamiji always kept himself occupied, giving talks twice a day on most days. Seeing how exhausted he was, Leggett invited him to take rest at his weekend residence, Ridgely Manor, about 100 miles north of the city on the west side of the Hudson river. He loved to meditate there under a giant oak and that spot is especially marked out at the

Vivekananda Retreat, Ridgely, now established on the grounds of Ridgely Manor. That summer Swamiji gave classes to a group of students at the summer home of one of them at the Thousand Islands Park. Those talks can now be read in a book titled *Inspired Talks*.

In the autumn of 1895, Swamiji travelled to England, stirring things up there. When he returned in December, in addition to giving classes, he started publishing the four yogas. *Raja Yoga*, an introduction to and commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga sutras*, made a strong impression on his audience across the world. The great psychologist and philosopher, William James, is said to have put it into practice with great psychological and spiritual benefit.

An Inspired talk

Excerpts from Swami

Vivekananda's iconic speech at the first World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA on September 11, 1893

Sisters and Brothers of America,

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us.

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation.

Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

PERSONALITY



Swami Vivekananda
photographed during his
time in London, United
Kingdom in 1895



Swami Vivekananda (centre) on the afternoon of the opening day of the Parliament of Religions on September 11 in Chicago (1893)

Swamiji was invited to Harvard where he spoke before the Graduate Philosophical Club. He made such a deep impression on the Dean and other professors that he was offered a full professorship (which he declined). The Dean wrote in an introduction to the published lecture, that Vivekananda enabled him to understand that the *Vedanta* is the actual beginning of all philosophy. One of his New York students asked Swamiji why he never spoke about sin. He replied, "Blessed are my sins... It is my sins, as much as my virtues that have made me what I am today." Another spoke of the overwhelming force of his presence, saying some among his audience at various lectures were literally exhausted. However, Swamiji wanted everyone to maintain independence.

On Swamiji's second visit to the West, during one talk in New York,

he became aware of his power over his listeners and abruptly left the platform for fear of turning them all into disciples. Another teaching surprised Americans: "Humans are God. To serve them is worship." Josephine MacLeod would say his power lay in the courage he gave others to put these lofty teachings into practice.



Bill Davis is the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Vedanta Society of New York. He is a disciple of Swami Pavitrananda. He came to The Vedanta Society of NY in 1972. After a career as a psychologist, he retired in 2007 and now lives and volunteers at the Vivekananda Retreat, Ridgely.



Swami Sarvapriyananda is the minister and spiritual leader of the Vedanta Society of New York. He joined the Ramakrishna Math (and Mission) in 1994 and has served as an acharya (teacher) of the monastic probationers' training center at Belur Math, West Bengal.

INDIAN IMPRESSIONS

Know India a little more with these interesting facts



GLOBAL REPRESENTATION

India was elected as a member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), the principal global body focussed on gender equality and women empowerment, on September 14, 2020. UNCSW is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The 54-member ECOSOC has elected India for a four-year term beginning in 2021 with 38 votes. The prestigious election is of even greater significance as it comes when the country is gearing up to sit at the UN Security Council high table as a non-permanent member.

TEACHING SELF-RELIANCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone across the world. We bring you enterprising Indian women who have turned this adversity into an opportunity

- Malsawmtluangi Hmar, is a homemaker from Mizoram started Zo Weave, a network of over 60 weavers across the state that produces high-quality *Puan*, a traditionally woven garment from Mizoram.
- Srishti Tehri, a 25-year-old graduate of fashion media communication from Gurugram founded Artisans of Banjara, an online portal for traditional and rustic handicrafts of the city's nomadic community.



L to R: Malsawmtluangi Hmar wearing a pink *Puan* with her daughter; A Banjara woman who now benefits directly from the Srishti's page

Image: betterindia.com



GLACIAL ENTERPRISE

Climate change and shrinking glaciers have been the major reasons behind villagers from Ladakh migrating to more hospitable areas. The government of India with the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives has started a programme that builds gigantic ice stupas in these villages over the winters (November to March). Ice Stupas (a dome-shaped building) are a form of glacier grafting technique that creates artificial glaciers, used for storing winter water (which otherwise would go unused) in the form of conical shaped ice heaps. These Ice Stupas ensure availability of water for irrigation and daily use during the dry period (May-June). The project has become a model of collaborative effort between local people, organisations with expertise in this area, NGOs and the government.



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