

CAPSULE



Unlocking plant growth
Researchers have unveiled the structure of one of the key components of photosynthesis. This is cytochrome b6f, a protein complex that significantly influences plant growth by means of photosynthesis. With this understanding and further research, larger plants that yield more food can be developed. The study was published in *Nature*.



Ritual secrets from DNA
There are doubt as to whether ancient Egyptians, for ritual use, domesticated the Sacred Ibis. A study published in *PLOS* argues that the genetic diversity of DNA from mummified specimens is similar to that from modern Sacred Ibises. If they had been tamed, there would be less diversity. Thus, the birds were caught just for mummification.



Monkey embryo cultured
A study published in *Science* reports that cynomolgus monkey embryos were cultured in the lab and studied up to 19 days post-fertilisation. This is a feat as mammalian embryos attach themselves to the uterine wall and develop there. Along with ethical issues, this makes it difficult to grow them outside. The study may guide ones on human embryos.



Carbon capture ways
A study published in *Nature* investigates the potential scale and cost of 10 different ways of capturing and reusing carbon dioxide, such as in fuels, chemicals, plastics and building material. On average, 0.5 gigatonnes of carbon that may escape into the atmosphere could be used by each pathway.



Ghost imaging
A paper in *Optics Letters* describes how a moving object may be imaged using unconventional techniques known as ghost imaging. Moving objects appear blurry when imaged. The researchers combined the data on the position of the moving object with the blurry images to produce a clear picture. -

Long-standing conundrum on the Sun’s atmosphere solved

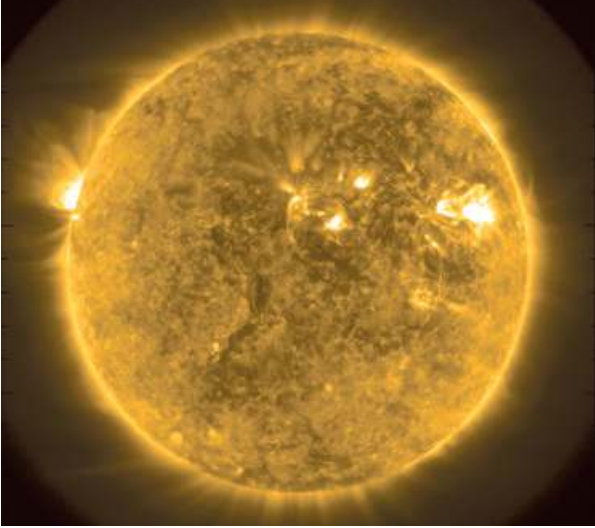
The study used high-resolution and high cadence images

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

The Sun is one of the most familiar celestial objects - it is on the sky everyday. Yet, it harbours many a puzzle for the solar physicist. One of the puzzles concerns its surface and atmospheric temperature. An international team of researchers including one at Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, has had a go at this question. These observations may have unravelled why the Sun’s atmosphere is hotter than its surface.

The temperature at the core of the Sun is nearly 15 million degrees Celsius, while that at its surface layer, known as the photosphere, is merely 5,700 degrees C. The natural thing to expect is that still further outwards, in its atmosphere, known as the corona, the temperatures would be comparable to that at the surface (photosphere). However, the temperature of the corona is much higher. It starts increasing outside the photosphere, reaching a value of about one million degrees or more in the corona.

Coronal heating puzzle
One would expect that as there are no extra sources of heat, when you move away from a hot object, the temperature steadily decreases. However, with respect to the Sun, after dropping to a low, the temperature again rises to one million degrees in the corona which stretches over several million kilometres from the surface of the Sun. This implies there should be a source heating the corona.



Geyser-like jets: The solar spicules emanate from the interface of the corona and the photosphere. ■ TANMOY SAMANTA

The puzzle of coronal heating has been tackled by many theories. Now, in a paper published in *Science*, the team of solar physicists has made observations and matched it with an analysis that explains this conundrum.

Spicules in the Sun
The key to the puzzle lies in geyser-like jets known as solar spicules that emanate from the interface of the corona and the photosphere. While in a photograph these look like tiny hairlike projections, they are in fact 200-500 kilometres wide and shoot up to heights of about 5,000 km above the solar surface.

It has been suspected that these spicules act as conduits through which mass and energy from the lower atmosphere bypass the photosphere and reach the corona. The present study, led by

Tanmoy Samanta and Hui Tian of Peking University, China, has deciphered how these spicules form and also shows that they act as conduits through which hot plasma is carried into the corona region.

“Our observations show that these spicules heat up while propagating upward, reaching the coronal temperature. They are made of plasma - a mixture of positive ions and negatively charged electrons,” says Dr Samanta. Objects at different temperatures emit light of different wavelengths. “The coronal plasma emits light in extreme ultraviolet. We find an increase in coronal intensity (emission) as spicules propagate upwards,” he explains.

The team did their observations using the 1.6-metre Goode Solar Telescope at the Big Bear Solar Observatory (BBSO), the world’s largest

solar telescope, with the NIS instrument. “This is a high-precision instrument and can measure magnetic fields with high sensitivity,” says Dipankar Banerjee, from Indian Institute of Astrophysics and one of the authors of the paper. The researchers also matched these observations with simultaneous observations from the Atmospheric Imaging Assembly in NASA’s Solar Dynamic Observatory spacecraft.

Frequent images
The research involved taking many high-spatial-resolution images of the same region of the Sun within a short time. This is known as high-cadence. “Since spicules have a very short lifetime - from 10 to 100 seconds - to understand their dynamics, we need a higher cadence. This is also a limiting factor of many solar telescopes,” says Dr Samanta.

The key findings are that bursts of spicules originate from the boundaries of web like networks of magnetic structures in the surface. Near their footpoints, there emerge magnetic elements that have opposite polarity to the existing magnetic network. When the structures with opposing polarity run into each other, they cancel out. This was seen at the footpoints of some spicules. “Exactly at the time of cancellation, we found the presence of spicules, which are also responsible for heating the upper atmosphere,” says Dr Samanta, explaining how the spicules originate as per their observations.

SeeTB: new diagnostic tool for detecting tuberculosis

Device shows better sensitivity than existing methods

ASWATHI PACHA

Accounting for over a million deaths in 2018, tuberculosis (TB) remains a major healthcare burden for most developing countries, and India still leads the list with the largest number of cases. “The World Health Organization has aimed at eliminating TB by 2035, and the Indian government has vowed to do this by 2025. If this ambitious plan has to succeed, we should be concentrating on not missing out on any case,” says Dr. Sayed E. Hasnain from Jamia Hamdard University in New Delhi.

With this aim in mind, he and his collaborators have developed a small device that can be attached to a simple optical microscope to convert it into a fluorescence microscope, thus enabling better TB diagnosis at the point-of-care.

Battery-operated device
Named SeeTB, the device is battery operated and allows quick identification of the bacteria. The team has also developed a clearing reagent called CLR which helps in thinning the collected sputum thus enhancing the bacteria detection. A patent has been filed for both the reagent and the device.

“CLR-SeeTB is a highly economical platform and is most suited for a country like India which has a high TB burden,” adds Dr. Nasreen Z Ehtesham, Director-in-Charge at the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Pathology and one of the authors of the paper published in *Scientific Reports*.



Handy and fast: The device is battery operated and allows for quick identification of the bacteria.

CLR-SeeTB [combination] is a highly economical platform and is most suited for a country like India which has a high TB burden.

NASREEN Z EHTESHAM
National Institute of Pathology

published in *Scientific Reports*.

“Also, the currently used fluorescence microscopy requires infrastructure, an air-conditioned room, trained professionals and is functional only in tertiary health care centers. SeeTB can be used at the primary health care centres in the villages, and once diagnosed, the treatment can be started.”

The device was used to test more than 300 suspected pulmonary patients. The results showed that compared to fluorescence microscopy, the CLR-SeeTB system had higher sensitivity.

Relative performance
Against bacterial culture studies, fluorescence microscopy showed 63.38%

sensitivity while SeeTB system showed improved sensitivity of 76.05%.

When the performance was compared against GeneXpert, another diagnosis tool that looks for DNA markers of TB bacteria, SeeTB showed improved sensitivity. Also, while GeneXpert method takes about two hours, SeeTB can help find the bacteria in about 30 minutes.

3D printing
Dr. Ravikrishnan Elangovan from Indian Institute of Technology Delhi and one of the team members explains: “We used 3D printing to rapidly prototype this compact optical platform, and now we are using injection moulding to produce these components in large scale. This can help drastically bring down the cost, thus making it feasible for large scale distributions across the country.”

The Indian Council of Medical Research has planned to start large scale validation of the CLR-SeeTB in its primary health research units at different locations in the country.

Collapse of ancient civilisation linked to megadrought

A series of natural events weakened agriculture, amplified conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Neo-Assyrian Empire – that thrived between 800 and 600 BCE centred in northern Iraq, extending to Egypt – may have collapsed due to a 60-year, climate related megadrought, according to a study.

The researchers, including Indian-origin scientist Ashish Sinha at California State University in the U.S., said the Neo-Assyrian Empire was by far the largest empire in the region up to that time, controlling much of the territory from the Persian Gulf to modern day Cyprus.

The study, published in *Science Advances*, noted that climate-related factors contributed to political instability, civil wars, and invasion by outside armies, that ultimately led to the civilisation’s collapse.

The researchers said the Neo-Assyrian Empire experienced a series of megadroughts that probably triggered its collapse by weakening agriculture and

amplifying conflict.

They analysed fossilised drip water in the Kuna Ba Cave in northern Iraq and assessed the quantities of radioactive isotopes, or variants, of oxygen and carbon atoms present across different layers of the cave formations to infer historical time based on changes in precipitation.

“Because the isotope record went all the way up to 2007 CE, we were able to correlate the stable carbon and oxygen isotope ratios with modern instrumental climate information from the region. This has enabled us to compare the modern isotope data with ancient layers,” Adam W. Schneider, study co-author from University of Colorado, Boulder, explained.

The researchers found that the megadroughts that affected the empire started decades earlier than previously thought,

Climate-related factors have contributed to the collapse of several empires in history.

Understanding upside-down landings of flies

Turning around and settling on the ceiling involves four steps

ASWATHI PACHA

“When I was a student, Late Prof. K. S. Krishnan who was on the interview panel asked me, ‘how do flies land on the ceiling?’ Although seemingly an innocuous question, it turns out to be a really complex phenomenon,” says Prof Sanjay Sane from the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru. Now, after several years of research using the modern state of the art tools and months of video recordings his team has answered the question. The paper recently published in *Science Advances* notes that the inverted landing “involves a serial sequence of well-coordinated behavioural modules.”

Four steps
The international team lists out four steps that take place in the complex process which includes upward acceleration towards the ceiling and then based on visual inputs it begins to rotate - pitch and roll. It



Complex task: The data indicates that ceiling landings may be more ‘difficult’ for a fly. ■ GETTY IMAGES

then flings all six legs and prepares to land, and in the final stage does a leg-assisted body swing and lands firmly.

Precision landing
The question is how is it possible to do all the four steps so precisely. It involves visual, neurobiological and gyroscopic inputs. The team used video recordings of how blue bottle flies land and by plotting the distance at which landing is initiated and speed at

that point, they concluded that they have to initiate deceleration at 40 microseconds speed. For easy comparison, we blink our eyes at about 150 to 200 microseconds. If the fly missed initiating the landing response within this window, it ended up colliding with the substrate.

The team from NCBS had previously compared how houseflies land on the straight wall and inverted ceiling. The results published earlier this year in

PLOS ONE noted that in both cases, the fly uses the same landing manoeuvres but there are also notable differences in both types of landing.

Difficult task
“To orient itself in an inverted position, a fly can either perform a roll rotation or a pitch rotation or a combination of both,” explains Sujay Acharya, the first author of the paper from NCBS in an email to *The Hindu*.

“Vertical landings on the other hand are highly stereotyped. As the fly approaches the wall, it pitches up before contact. Our data also indicates that ceiling landings may be more ‘difficult’ for a fly. We observed that in close to half the cases, a fly landing on a ceiling bumped into it. Whereas, we did not observe such collisions for vertical landings.”

Prof. Sane adds that, “This study will help us gain insights into how the nervous system acquires

and integrates inputs from multiple sensory modalities to execute a fast but precise behaviour.” He also explains that these flies belong to the Dipteran order which means they have only one pair of wings and their hind wings are modified into special structures called halteres, which helps in body orientation and alerts them when they are involuntarily pitching or rolling.

Inspired by nature
“We look at nature for inspiration. This helps drive the fundamental science of engineering, to understand how flies are able to solve these problems so we can apply them to future technologies,” explains Prof. Jean-Michel Mongeau, one of the authors from Pennsylvania State University in a release. “This work reiterates how fast these [manoeuvres] are executed within an extremely small nervous system. This data can lead to new hypotheses for understanding how brains function.”

Weeding out black hole mimickers by looking at gravitational waves

The universe contains not just black holes but many exotic objects, such as gravastars and boson stars

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

In September 2015, the LIGO detectors in the US made history by directly detecting for the first time the merging of two black holes. Since then, LIGO, joined by other detectors around the world, has gone on to detect eleven events of which one is the merger of two neutron stars and the remaining ten, of pairs of black holes (binary black holes).

As they spiralled in towards each other and merged, the binary black holes let off characteristic gravitational wave signals. The properties of the merging black holes, namely the



Remote objects: The properties of merging black holes can be calculated from the initial part of the signal waveform. ■ LIGO

masses and spins could be arrived at by looking at the initial part of the signal waveform. Similarly, by carefully

looking at the tail end - also known as the ring down part of the signal, the mass and spin of the final merged state

There are not many ways to look for exotic objects, and gravitational waves could be one...

K.G. ARUN
CMI, Chennai

(black hole) can be inferred. The question emerges - whether other exotic objects exist that may act as black hole mimickers and give off similar signals. And if so, how is one to distinguish between such spinning black holes and exotic objects?

Theoretically, there are possibilities such as the so-called gravastars and boson stars which are black hole mimickers. For instance, a

gravastar is a strange object that would have a core of exotic matter resembling dark energy with an external shell of normal star-like matter. “There are no observational evidences for their existence till date, but then, there were not too many ways in which one could look for them. Gravitational waves could be one...” says K. G. Arun, Chennai Mathematical Institute, Chennai, who led the study.

Gravastars spinning
The spinning of the compact object has a different effect on it whether it is a black hole or, for instance, a gravastar. Since the gravastar is filled with dark energy, it ex-

erts a negative pressure on the outside. So when it spins it behaves differently from normal stars and black holes. When a normal star spins about an axis, it tends to bulge about the equator and get compressed at the poles. However, for a gravastar this effect is just reversed - It gets compressed near the equator and bulges out at the poles. Thus their shapes change differently when spinning.

“Any compact object, in general, can undergo deformations due to its spinning motion and these deformations are expressed in terms of what is called spin-induced multipole moments,”

says M. Saleem an author of the paper published in *Physical Review D*, who is a post-doctoral fellow at CMI.

“For black holes, due to the existence of event horizon, any property we measure from outside will depend on only its mass and spin, unlike other compact objects. This is the fact which we make use in our proposed test,” he explains.

One property that can distinguish between a black hole and exotic object is known as spin-induced quadrupole moment. This parameter takes the value 1 for a black hole. “For other compact objects, the value ... of this parameter is different

from 1 and will vary depending on the internal structure,” says N. V. Krishnendu, the first author, formerly a PhD student at CMI, and now a post-doctoral researcher at Albert Einstein University, Hannover.

The researchers, including C.K. Mishra of IIT Madras, tested out their ideas on the events detected so far and found that the events of 2015, December and 2017, June were indeed just binary black hole mergers. These were the “low-mass” events for which their method is applicable. Further development of the idea can be used as a tool to discover exotic objects.

Fight for the future of Bolivia

Evo Morales’s resignation saw fierce protests by grass-roots organisations supporting him

LA PAZ



On November 10, the day Bolivian President Evo Morales resigned amid pressure from the armed forces and street violence, Luis Fernando Camacho, leader of the civic group Comité Pro-Santa Cruz, entered Palacio Quemado in La Paz, the official residence of the President. Flanked by armed forces and with an evangelical ally clutching a Bible, Mr. Camacho, a staunch critic of the former President, said: “Pachamama will never return to the palace,” referring to the Andean Mother Earth. “Bolivia belongs to Christ.”

Mr. Camacho, along with other anti-Morales leaders, played a key role in the ouster of the President. The immediate cause of the current

turmoil was the elections on October 20, in which Mr. Morales appeared to secure victory in the first round but the Opposition accused him of fraud. This led to mass protests and counter-protests on the streets of cities across Bolivia.

To quell the unrest, Mr. Morales invited the Organization of American States (OAS) to audit the election. On November 10, the OAS released its report which found that there had been ‘manipulation’ in some of the electoral data. Mr. Morales immediately pledged to hold fresh elections, but the head of the Bolivian armed forces suggested that he resign, following a mutiny of police personnel across the country. After his resignation, Mr. Morales’s house was ransacked, the ex-president of the electoral authority arrested, and groups of anti-government protesters took to the streets to burn

the wiphala, the flag representing indigenous peoples in the Andes.

Mr. Morales denounced the new government as “illegal and unconstitutional” and on Wednesday called for international bodies, including the Catholic Church, to facilitate a dialogue to restore peace in Bolivia. He left for Mexico after the Mexican government offered him political asylum. Opposition candidate Carlos Mesa from the Comunidad Ciudadana party described the developments as a “legitimate and massive citizen mobilisation, a genuine Bolivian democratic spring”.

Future uncertain

Much of the popular opposition towards Mr. Morales stems from his decision to defy a 2016 referendum in which the people voted against him running for a fourth term. In addition, this summer, he faced criticism for his handling of the catastrophic fires which swept the dry forests of Chiquitania.

Mr. Morales, the first indigenous



President of Bolivia, was elected in 2005 with his social movement backed party, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). Under his tenure, Bolivia slashed poverty rates, reduced inequality, nationalised key industries and saw economic growth

while rejecting IMF debt bondage. Yet, the immediate political future of the country is now uncertain. The interim President, Jeanine Anez, unilaterally assumed power on Tuesday at odds with Bolivian constitutional process.

Lawmakers lacked the quorum to formally approve Mr. Morales’s resignation because too few MAS representatives were present. Numerous MAS officials resigned or were forced out of office, including the heads of both chambers of Congress. Many are currently in the Mexican Embassy in La Paz.

“God bless you and allow us to be free and to hold transparent elections soon,” Ms. Anez said on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, pro-Morales forces promised not to end their protests. Marches by residents from El Alto, a satellite city next to La Paz, took place. The main peasants union, the CSUTCB, declared that it does not accept Mr. Morales’s resignation and that it “reserve[d] the right to use all

democratic means of resistance”. The largest trade union, the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), also declared a state of emergency. Juan Carlos Huarachi, executive secretary of the COB, said, “The COB calls for an expanded emergency nationwide... to discuss and take action in defence of democracy,” he said. “It was hard for us to recover democracy and we are going to defend it.”

Fears of violence by MAS supporters were encouraged by Opposition leaders, with Mr. Camacho on Twitter calling on the armed forces to “save the people...”

Schools in La Paz and El Alto were shut in the interests of security and the *teleférico*, (cable cars) were suspended. “The Opposition has consistently avoided dialogue, avoided engagement, rejected the voice of international organisations...” Kathryn Ledebur, director of the Andean Information Network, told The Real News Network. “[They] have rejected and violated Bolivia’s Constitution and laws.”



Olivia Arigho Stiles is a researcher & a contributing editor at Alborada magazine

Shifting sands in the Kingdom

Social and economic reforms in Saudi Arabia are opening up new avenues for its women

RIYADH



On board the national carrier of Saudia, the inflight magazine *Leaders* with its cover story on ‘Breaking Barriers’ displayed the photograph of a smiling Kariman Abuljadayel. The first Saudi woman athlete to take part in the Olympics 100 m sprint, Ms. Abuljadayel is now preparing for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in rowing. In 2012, when the ban on Saudi women from competing in Olympics was lifted, her mother called her to the living room to watch the news being announced on television, according to the magazine. “Come On! It’s your turn next,” Ms. Abuljadayel’s mother told her.

We were flying to Riyadh as part of a global media delegation to attend

the ‘Davos In the Desert’, or third edition of the Future Investment Initiative in Saudi Arabia. Riyadh hardly wears the festive look one finds in neighbouring Dubai. Shopping malls with fancy global luxury brands are lit up but not buzzing with customers. High-end SUVs zip past multi-lane streets which seem to have no concept of a pedestrian crossing. On one evening, to our question as to how to cross the street, a Saudi woman engaged in a phone conversation outside a mall quipped: “With Limousines!”

A skywalk designed like an airlines lounge was discovered at much distance, but clearly its existence was inconsequential to the locals given its dirty condition.

Riyadh is promising change. And a welcome sight signifying this are women driving fancy cars down the streets of the capital. The grant of



freedom to Saudi women to drive alone by the de facto ruler and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, popularly known as MBS, following prolonged protests by activists that made international headlines last year. In the ancient

Salwa Palace of Al Diriyah, some 35 out of 53 tourist guides are women, who work in shifts.

Many of them have started driving their own cars. Nora, a young guide, says her family is supportive of the decision. “It is easier transportation for us to move from place to place. I used to take a taxi earlier.”

‘Come and see the change’

“There are more women starting to work. And thousands of girls are learning to drive now in schools. People have a wrong idea. Come to our Kingdom and see and I suppose they will change their mind,” she adds. Madi, another young tourist guide, is gearing up for licence exams and hopes she can drive to India one day.

Nidhi Sultan, a 21-year old student has travelled extensively to the U.S., Canada and Switzerland, and has a liberal worldview. The change in the Kingdom that has her most excited is about movie screenings in theatres now. With a giggle, she adds that it is her uncle who was double checking

to ensure that she applied for a driver’s licence.

In many glitzy shopping malls, Saudi women clad from head to toe far outnumber the male employees even in evening shifts. Ninan, a sales executive, argued that the hijab is, in her opinion, a choice and reflects her culture. Another woman employee, though, was not sure if the ‘choice’ would be different were the Kingdom to make the Abaya, the loose over-garment, non-mandatory. Incidentally, there are restrictions for single Saudi men also in several public spaces marked as ‘Family’. But unrelated men and women working as colleagues walking together on the streets and chatting in some public areas are not a rare sight contrary to popular perceptions.

“Allowing men and women to share space in salons and gyms will be hard. But restaurants are mixing singles with families. We are improving. I am really happy with what is happening right now,” says Shahad Alobaid, a news producer. Rakan

Abdullah, a journalist and an aspiring actor, argues that it is a misconception that Saudi Arabia has started empowering women only in the past year. “Believe it or not, it was the case before. Now, it is more exposed. In Saudi Arabia, like in India or Lebanon, there are people who are conservative as well as open-minded. And we respect all.”

MBS is widely seen as the man behind the changes. But he’s not free of criticism. The murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi last year is a blot on MBS’s projected image as a reformer. He’s also accused of repressing voices of dissent at home. But slow but significant progress is palpable for the Kingdom’s women citizens, who still have to deal with the repressive guardianship laws. In 2014, Somayya Jabarti became the Kingdom’s first ever woman editor when she joined *Saudi Gazette*. As we departed Riyadh, Ms. Jabarti was appointed as assistant Editor-In-Chief of *Arab News*. Clearly, the desert sands are shifting.



Smita Sharma is a freelance journalist

Releasing a terrorist for foreign hostages

The decision to free Anas Haqqani in exchange for two teachers has been widely criticised

KABUL



After days of speculation, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani confirmed that the government has decided to free convicted terrorist Anas Haqqani in exchange for two foreign nationals, who were abducted in 2016.

In a statement, Mr. Ghani announced that the Afghan government would conditionally release three key members of the Haqqani network, an insurgent group with close ties to the Taliban, including Anas Haqqani, son of the group’s founder. While it is not clear, when the exchange will take place, the deal will facilitate the freeing of U.S. national Kevin King and Australian citizen Timothy Weeks, both professors at the American University of Af-

ghanistan in Kabul who were taken just weeks ahead of a major attack on the Kabul campus in August 2016. It is believed that they are currently held by the Haqqani Network in Pakistan.

‘Nothing in it for Afghans’

While the upcoming release of the long-time captive teachers was welcomed by Afghans, many also expressed deep concerns over the release of Haqqani, who is responsible for many attacks across Afghanistan. “Anas Haqqani is a criminal of the Afghan people and he should have been punished for the crimes he committed. This exchange is a deal between the U.S. and Pakistan, and results in two foreign citizens, one of whom is American [being freed]. What do we Afghans get in return?” questioned Idrees Stanikzai, a political activist and leader of the Youth

Trend Movement, a grass-roots political organisation. Mr. Stanikzai, who is an Afghan government loyalist and an otherwise strong supporter of Mr. Ghani’s re-election bid, said he was disappointed with the news of Haqqani’s release. “This is an achievement for President Trump ahead of their 2020 election. Not for Afghans,” he pointed out.

The National Directorate of Security, the Afghan intelligence agency, has accused the Haqqani Network of many major attacks, including the May 2017 truck bomb in the heart of the city that claimed over 150 lives. Just last month, a government spokesperson had declared the release of Anas Haqqani as a “red line” for the Afghan government. The recent deal has also raised questions from observers like Mr. Stanikzai on how rigid these ‘red lines’ are. “Deals such as these affect the trust people have in the government and the judiciary. How can people have faith that the other ‘red lines’ drawn by the Afghan government, such as

freedom of speech and women’s rights, will be upheld?” he said.

However, some Afghan analysts see this deal as a strategic move on part of the Afghan President to reassert his position as the representative of the Afghans. “There are three messages to this: one, to the Taliban; second, to the Pakistanis; and third, to the West, particularly to the U.S. And to all of them [President Ghani] wants to convey that he is ready for a deal with them,” said Omar Sadr, Afghan analyst. “He is telling the Taliban that I can sit with you and even give you such concessions from my part. Similarly, to the Pakistanis and to the West, the message seeks different consequences; like from the U.S., he might expect support over the election outcome [due in the coming weeks]. But also, to seek inclusion of his government in the ongoing talks,” he explained.

Mr. Sadr, like many Afghan academics, also hoped that there is more to the deal than has been shared publicly. “Haqqani was an im-



portant leverage that the government had, and such leverages are very limited. To what extent the government used this in an efficient manner to get maximum gains in exchange needs to be seen,” he added.

The Afghan government hasn’t re-

vealed the entire nature of the deal, nor have the American and Australian governments shared any further details. However, a government spokesperson did clarify to the local media in Kabul that they have sought assurances to ensure that the released terrorists do not return or harm Afghan interest. “International partners have assured us that Anas Haqqani, Haji Mali Khan and Hafiz Rashid will not return to the battlefield and will go to Qatar and remain there,” Firoz Bashar, head of the Government Media and Information Center in Kabul, said on Wednesday.

Mr. Stanikzai also urged the U.S. government to crack down on insurgent forces in Pakistan, where the hostages are believed to be held currently. “Instead of pushing the Afghan government, they could have pressured the Pakistani government, where the Haqqani network is actually based. The Americans are pouring millions of dollars into Pakistan even when these terrorists are being sheltered there,” he accused.



Ruchi Kumar is a journalist based in Kabul

China powers Africa’s digital dreams

In many African countries, the e-commerce ecosystem is beginning to take root

BEIJING



From Kenya on the east coast to Uganda and landlocked Rwanda a digital revolution, inspired by Chinese icons such as e-commerce giant Alibaba, is in the works. In Kenya’s capital Nairobi, the e-commerce ecosystem, powered by the Internet is beginning to take root. *The Global Times*, a tabloid from the stable of *People’s Daily* – the flagship of the Communist Party of China (CPC) – reported success stories from Kenya, where Alibaba’s former head, Jack Ma, has played his hand.

The report pointed to Sarai Afrique Fashion House, an online platform, from where buyers can pick women’s clothes bearing the label of a leading global brand.

The successful ecommerce platform owes much of its achievement to the two-week “eFounders Fellowship” programme offered at Alibaba’s headquarters in Hangzhou, China. In June 2018, Caroline Kuria, the founder and CEO of Sarai Afrique, participated in the course, which was co-sponsored by the Alibaba Group and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Training entrepreneurs

The aim of the initiative was to help fulfill Mr. Jack Ma’s dream – to incubate 1,000 entrepreneurs in developing countries in the next five years. One-fifth of these would come from Africa alone.

Ms. Kuria’s success did not come without hitting speed bumps on the way, despite the valuable experience that she had gained at Hangzhou.



“There are many concerns from customers in Kenya. They cannot easily trust e-commerce websites. But if there is a physical store, you cannot disappear the next day. Alibaba also has offline stores. That’s exactly what I learned from Alibaba,” she

said. But the Sarai Afrique online brand has now taken off. In turn, ecommerce companies in Kenya are also spinning jobs in the courier industry. Mobile payments are also helping African companies ride the digital wave. There are 280 million mobile money accounts in Sub-Saharan Africa, exceeding the number of bank accounts in the region, said *Global Times*.

The miracle of the digital economy is also permeating into neighbouring Uganda. Akello Banker has emerged as a Ugandan fintech company, which is geared to provide loans to poor farmers. Many farmers are now able to buy tractors, better quality seeds and medical services through loans offered by Akello Banker, which combines user data and technology to make its decisions. “The course during the eFounders Fellowship made me more aware of the mission of our company. Alibaba has so many different products and services, but almost every product or service has risen to

the challenge, rather than being emotionally driven,” Jean Anthony Onyait, founder of Akello Banker has been quoted as saying. Mr. Onyait’s enterprise is especially relevant as more than 80% of Ugandans rely on agriculture for their living. But less than 10% of them can benefit from bank credit.

In neighbouring Rwanda, Nkurunziza Mufuth, founder and CEO of Guez Show, was another beneficiary of the eFounders Fellowship. He established Guez Show, a 3D animation and graphics company. The entrepreneur also wants to pioneer training for the gaming industry in his country.

Mr. Mufuth dreams of expanding the Guez Group by adding two subsidiary businesses to it. He hopes that a Guez Show and Guez Agent will provide B2C and B2B services in the not so distant future.

“Africa today has tremendous opportunities. Africa, like China 19 years ago, has no good infrastructure, but with the opportunity of dig-

italisation, Africa will be the most profitable land around the world,” said Mr. Jack Ma.

The green shoots of an economic turnaround with roots in China can be traced to Beijing’s special focus on Africa. Last year, China pledged a \$60 billion fund to bolster industry in Africa, counter hunger, and enhance security in the continent.

In his omnibus inaugural address at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Chinese President Xi Jinping was emphatic in declaring that Beijing had become the locomotive of Africa’s all-round progress. He listed eight focal areas of funding. Mr. Xi stressed that out of the \$60 billion that were on offer, \$15 billion would be disbursed as aid, interest-free loans and concessional loans. A \$20 billion credit line would be established, while another \$10 billion would be channelled into a special fund for China-Africa development. Another \$5 billion would be earmarked as special fund only for African imports.



Atul Aneja is The Hindu’s Beijing correspondent

Rampant India surges to a massive innings win in quick time

Pace trio of Ishant, Umesh and Shami leads the host's charge as Bangladesh capitulates yet again; Ashwin takes three

AMOL KARHADKAR
INDORE

The moment India declared overnight, thanks to a late flourish on the second evening, it was always going to be a matter of when, rather than if, Bangladesh would collapse. The visitor's primary objective was to bat the day out, leave alone save the match or make India bat again by wiping off a whopping 343-run deficit.

The Bangladesh batsmen did put up a slightly better show than the first essay, but failed to stop the Indian juggernaut at the Holkar Stadium on Saturday. It took the host a little over five hours to terminate Bangladesh's second innings at 213 and register yet another emphatic win – by an innings and 130 runs. India thus gave itself two additional days of pink-ball practice ahead of next week's day-night face-off in Kolkata.

If Bangladesh had to stretch the game into the fourth day, it had to safely negotiate India's pace trio. But Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav and Mohammed Shami – just like the first morning – were literally unplayable. Such was their skill and energy levels even a stronger opponent would have struggled against them. No wonder that the Bangladesh batting unit was exposed for the second time in three days.

Jagging inswingers

Imrul Kayes caressed a full-length delivery from Umesh early on, but the pacer got the first ball of his third over to jag back in, beat Kayes' defence and crash into the stumps. In the next over, Ishant managed to move in from



No clue: Imrul Kayes is done in by a beauty from Umesh Yadav. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

around the stumps, leaving the other left-handed opener Shadman Islam clueless.

Though the openers were back in the pavilion and the pacers were on a roll, the Bangladesh batsmen adopted a positive approach and drove at anything that was pitched up. However, Shami took just five deliveries to trap skipper Mominul Haque in front, thanks to the DRS after umpire Rod Tucker had turned the appeal down.

Mohammad Mithun was too late on a pull in Shami's next over, offering Mayank Agarwal a simple catch at

short mid-wicket. At 44 for four, Bangladesh was in danger of folding up quickly. Had Rohit Sharma not dropped Mushfiquir Rahim off Shami in the next over, the 13,000-plus locals who turned up on Saturday could well have returned home early.

Making amends

Mushfiquir and Mahmudullah went on to survive till the break. But soon after resumption, the latter poked at a Shami delivery and Rohit made no mistake this time. Mushfiquir found an able ally in wicket-keeper Liton Das,

the duo showing its prowess against spin during a 63-run association.

While Liton drove with finesse, Mushfiquir caressed R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja square of the wicket for boundaries. He even employed the reverse sweep off Jadeja. Ashwin broke the partnership, luring Liton into charging down the wicket. The batsman, realising that he wasn't up to the pitch of the ball, just pushed the ball back to the bowler who held a sharp catch. Despite Mushfiquir crossing his half-century and Mehidy Hasan getting

a quickfire 38, the home bowlers came into their own after tea. Cheteshwar Pujara and Umesh pounced well-judged catches in the deep, the latter's effort to dismiss last-man Ebadot Hossain giving Ashwin his third scalp and India a victory within three days.

Eden Test

■ The second Test, a day-night affair, will be held at Eden Gardens (Kolkata) from November 22 to 26. Play will begin at 1 p.m.

STAT SPHERE

3 The victory over Bangladesh was India's third successive innings win, having recorded triumphs over South Africa in the second and third Tests last month

7 The win was India's seventh consecutive at home

10 Number of innings victories under Kohli, the most by an Indian captain. Dhoni is second with nine while Azharuddin is third with eight. Ganguly is fourth with seven

13 India's unbeaten record in home Tests after the victory over Bangladesh

23 Number of overs bowled by India's pacers in the second innings before a spinner was brought on, the longest all-pace opening spell in the second essay of a home Test since 2001

32 Number of Test victories for captain Kohli in 52 games, the joint fifth-highest alongside Border (32 in 93 matches). Graeme Smith tops the list with 53 (109 matches) while Ponting is second (48 from 77), followed by Steve Waugh (41, 57) and Clive Lloyd (36, 74)

38 All-outs effected by India in Tests since the start of 2018, the most by any team. England is second with 30



SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH – 1ST INNINGS
150.

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS
493/6 decl.

BANGLADESH – 2ND INNINGS
Shadman Islam b Ishant 6 (24b), Imrul Kayes b Umesh 6 (13b, 1x4), Mominul Haque lbw b Shami 7 (20b, 1x4), Mohammad Mithun c Mayank b Shami 18 (26b, 4x4), Mushfiquir Rahim c Pujara b Ashwin 64 (150b, 7x4), Mahmudullah c Rohit b Shami

15 (35b, 2x4), Liton Das c&b Ashwin 35 (39b, 6x4), Mehidy Hasan Miraz b Umesh 38 (55b, 5x4, 1x6), Taijul Islam c Saha b Shami 6 (43b, 1x4), Abu Jayed (not out) 4 (9b, 1x4), Ebadat Hossain c Umesh b Ashwin 1 (3b); Extras (b-2, lb-9, w-1, nb-1): 13; Total (in 69.2 overs): 213.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-10 (Kayes, 5.1 overs), 2-16 (Shadman, 6.6), 3-37 (Mominul,

12.5), 4-44 (Mithun, 14.1), 5-72 (Mahmudullah, 26.3), 6-135 (Liton, 39.2), 7-194 (Mehidy, 54.5), 8-208 (Taijul, 66.3), 9-208 (Mushfiquir, 67.5).

INDIA BOWLING

Ishant 11-3-31-1, Umesh 14-1-51-2, Shami 16-7-31-4, Jadeja 14-2-47-0, Ashwin 14.2-6-42-3.

Man-of-the-match: Mayank Agarwal.
India won by an innings and 130 runs to lead series 1-0.



Turning it around: For Ishant Sharma, bowling sessions with B. Arun and Ravi Shastri have worked wonders. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Practice pays off for Ishant Sharma

AMOL KARHADKAR
INDORE

Seldom do we see members of the playing XI bowl during a break on match-day. But Ishant Sharma ran in at full speed during tea on Day 2, with bowling coach B. Arun and head coach Ravi Shastri closely monitoring his run-up and release. It appeared that he was trying out a new variation.

On the third morning, the moment he bowled Shadman Islam, it was clear that the lanky bowler had added a new weapon to his armoury.

"Actually he started working on that variation from yesterday [Friday]. So if you look at the way he signalled after he got the wicket, he was very happy that he could do that. Each time you try to explore new avenues in your bowling, you constantly look

to improve. And this would give him the much needed filip to experiment more," Arun said.

Workload management

With Umesh Yadav making the most of his opportunities, India hasn't really felt the absence of Jasprit Bumrah in the last two series. Arun stressed that with a battery of pacers at the team management's disposal, their workload can be managed in the next couple of years.

"Umesh showed a lot of character in coming back. But then that's also an embarrassment of riches. You have five fast bowlers who are ready to play for the country.

"Over a period of time, if you can manage the workloads well, we can ensure that each one is fresh for ev-

ery game that we play," he said.

Smooth transition

Batting coach Vikram Rathour couldn't have asked for a better start to his tenure than the double hundreds he witnessed in each of his first four Tests in charge. He revealed that knowing the players closely, thanks to his stints with the developmental squad and as a selector, made his transition into the dressing room smoother.

"The experience has been wonderful so far. This is something I love to do, it's great fun. And the way the team is doing at the moment, there's nothing to complain about. The roadmap is to keep growing, to keep getting better. That's what we've been pushing everybody to do. That culture is already there."

⚡ We have to play a lot of Test matches. If you see in the last seven months, we have played only two Tests. We don't play Tests like other teams. I think it is the main difference

⚡ I am not too worried about how my captaincy started. It is part of life

⚡ They (India's pacers) were threatening, but we also failed as a batting unit. They are the No. 1 bowling attack in the world. We couldn't latch on to our chances also.

MOMINUL HAQUE
Bangladesh captain

Duckworth passes the Ramkumar test



Well prepared: James Duckworth did his homework before taking on Ramkumar Ramanathan. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CHALLENGER

NANDAKUMAR MARAR
PUNE

James Duckworth, the second seed, staked a claim for the title in impressive fashion, getting past sixth seed Ramkumar Ramanathan 7-6 (8), 6-2 in the semifinal of the KPIT MSLTA Pune Challenger tennis tournament at the MSLTA School of Tennis courts, Balewadi sports complex, here on Saturday.

Ramkumar, however, clinched a berth in the doubles final in the company of Purav Raja. The two will meet another Indian pair of Saketh Myneni and Arjun Kadhe.

Adjusting quickly

Competing for the first time on the faster hard courts, Duckworth quickly adjusted to the conditions and was rewarded with a summit clash against fifth-seeded Jay Clark.

Duckworth, who had overcome Sasi Kumar Mukund in a tough quarterfinal, was well-equipped to handle the weapons in Ramkumar's armoury. "I watched his matches before and knew about the big serve and vol-

ley," revealed the Australian. Duckworth dropped serve at the start, broke back in the sixth to make it 3-3 and came into his own in the tie-breaker. His touch-play was effective and his volleying stood out as he repeatedly passed Ramkumar.

Shining in patches

Though Ramkumar shone in patches during the first set, with aces and solid passing shots, he was not able to repeat the ruthless serve-and-volleying game which had doused Sumit Nagal's fight-back in the quarterfinals.

In the other semifinal, Clark faced little resistance from Spaniard Roberto Ortega Olmedo, losing just five games in all. However, given the form Duckworth is in, the Brit has a big task on his hands.

The results (semifinals): Jay Clark (GBR) bt Roberto Ortega Olmedo (Esp) 6-3, 6-2; James Duckworth (Aus) bt Ramkumar Ramanathan 7-6(8), 6-2.

Doubles: Arjun Kadhe & Saketh Myneni bt Vishnu Vardhan & Toshide Matsui (Jpn) 5-7, 7-6 (1), 10-4; Purav Raja & Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Brydan Klein & Vijay Sundar Prashanth 6-4, 7-5.

Srikanth out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HONG KONG

K. Srikanth was knocked out of the \$400,000 Hong Kong Open after a semifinal defeat to local player Lee Cheuk Yiu on Saturday. Yiu won 21-9, 23-25 as the Indian squandered six game points in the second.

It was his first semifinal appearance since the India Open Super 500, where he finished runner-up.

Srikanth fell back early in the opening game as Lee opened up a 6-1 lead. In the second, Srikanth took an early 5-1 lead. However, Lee soon restored parity. Though Srikanth surged ahead, he lost momentum and eventually conceded the match.

Srikanth had beaten Lee at India Open last year in their only career meeting.



K. Srikanth. ■ AP

QUICK SINGLES



Armaan's knock goes in vain for India u-23

SAVAR (BANGLADESH)

Soumya Sarkar and Najmul Hossain starred with the bat as Bangladesh defeated India Under-23 by six wickets in the ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup (under-23) on Saturday. Earlier, Armaan Jaffer led India's charge with a fine 105 off 98 balls but found little support. India, which had defeated Nepal in its opening match, will play Hong Kong on Monday.

Grand debut for Ritu

BEIJING

Ritu Phogat made a successful mixed martial arts and ONE Championship debut, putting up a dominant performance on way to a technical knockout victory over South Korea's Kim Nam-Hee on Saturday. Asked about her future plans, she said, "I want to become the first Indian MMA World champion." PTI



Col case against Ganguly dismissed

NEW DELHI

BCCI ethics officer D.K. Jain has dismissed the Conflict of Interest (Col) complaint against board president and former India captain Sourav Ganguly. According to Jain, once Ganguly took charge as president, he resigned from his CAB position, clearing him of any conflict. PTI

Janat rips through WI, Afghanistan pulls level

LUCKNOW

Medium-pacer Karim Janat (five for 11) bowled Afghanistan to a series-levelling 41-run victory over West Indies in the second T20I on Saturday. The third match will be played on Sunday.

The scores: Afghanistan 147/7 in 20 overs (Hazratullah Zazai 26, Karim Janat 26, Jason Holder 2/23, Kesrick Williams 3/23, Keemo Paul 2/28) bt West Indies 106/8 in 20 overs (Karim Janat 5/11).

Toss: Afghanistan; **Man-of-the-Match:** Karim Janat.

Federer follows Nadal home



On fire: Stefanos Tsitsipas belied his years with a performance full of confidence and grit to beat Roger Federer. ■ AFP

ATP FINALS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Stefanos Tsitsipas shocked six-time champion Roger Federer 6-3, 6-4 to reach the final of the ATP Finals in his tournament debut on Saturday.

The Greek sixth seed, 17 years younger than his opponent, beat the Swiss at the Australian Open but had fallen to him twice since then.

Federer was unrecognisable from the player who

dominated Novak Djokovic in his final round-robin match, struggling on serve and hitting a total of 26 unforced errors compared with just five against the Serbian.

But Tsitsipas belied his years with a performance full of confidence and grit, saving 11 out of 12 break points during the match.

Great performance

"I'm so proud of myself today, a great performance and once again the people were great," he said.

Earlier on Friday, Rafael Nadal headed home after defending champion Alexander Zverev's win against Daniil Medvedev confirmed the Spaniard's exit from the season-ending tournament.

Zverev's 6-4, 7-6(4) win meant he qualified for the semifinals from Group Andre Agassi.

The results: Semifinal: Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Roger Federer 6-3, 6-4.

Group Andre Agassi: Alexander Zverev bt Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 7-6(4).

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m. & 9 a.m.
Mushtaq Ali Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m.
T10 League: Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD) & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5, 7.10 & 9.30 p.m.
Hong Kong Open badminton: Star Sports 3, 11.30 a.m.
Afghanistan vs West Indies: Third T20I, SS Select 1 (SD & HD); 6.40 p.m.
Euro 2020 Qualifiers: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 7.30; Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD) 10.30 p.m.
Brazilian GP: Star Sports Select 2 (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m.
ATP Finals: Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Harden crosses 40 for fourth time

LOS ANGELES
James Harden scored 44 points and had eight rebounds as Houston Rockets beat Indiana Pacers 111-102 on Friday to stretch its winning streak to six games. Harden scored 40-plus points for the fourth time in six games.

The results: Charlotte Hornets 109 bt Detroit Pistons 106; Orlando Magic 111 bt San Antonio Spurs 109; Houston Rockets 111 bt Indiana Pacers 102; Memphis Grizzlies 107 bt Utah Jazz 106; Washington Wizards 137 bt Minnesota Timberwolves 116; Oklahoma City Thunder 127 bt Philadelphia 76ers 119; Boston Celtics 105 bt Golden State Warriors 100; LA Lakers 99 bt Sacramento Kings 97.

Messi strike sinks Brazil

RIYADH
Lionel Messi struck on his return to international duty on Friday following a three-month ban as Argentina defeated fierce rival Brazil 1-0 in a friendly here. Messi netted the only goal of the game at the King Saud University Stadium on 13 minutes, tapping home the rebound after his penalty was saved by Brazil goalkeeper Alison.

Abhishek Gaur triumphs

GUJRAT
Top seed Abhishek Gaur of Navy beat second seed Ajay Malik 6-4, 6-4 in the final of the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament.
The results (final): Abhishek Gaur bt Ajay Malik 6-4, 6-4; **Semifinals:** Abhishek bt Rakshit Rishi 6-2, 1-6, 7-6(5); Ajay bt Ominder Baisoya 6-4, 7-5.

Manu Bhaker fires her way to two gold medals

Lakshay Sheoran wins trap and double trap

SHOOTING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
Manu Bhaker won the women's air pistol and sports pistol gold medals for Delhi University in the all India inter-University shooting championship organised by the Manav Rachna University at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range. Manu was bang on target in winning the 10-metre event with a score of 583, three points ahead of Yashaswini Singh Deswal.

Lakshay Sheoran, the Asian Games silver medalist, won the trap and double trap gold medals for Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar.

Nivetha Nenthirasisigamani won the women's trap gold for Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu, two points ahead of Kirti Gupta of University of Delhi.

The results: Men: 10m air pistol: 1. Vikash Kumar 582; 2. Arjun Singh Cheema 581; 3. Sharvan Kumar 581. **Team:** 1. Punjab University, Chandigarh 1728; 2. Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak 1723; 3. Delhi 1707.

25m rapid fire pistol: 1. Udhayveer Sidhu 584; 2. Adarsh Singh 577; 3. Japtyesh Singh 576. **Team:** 1. Punjab University, Chandigarh 1737; 2. GNDU, Amritsar 1616; 3. MDU, Rohtak 1611.

25m standard pistol: 1. Udhayveer Sidhu 573; 2. Mitesh Gohil 569; 3. Vijayveer Sidhu 568. **Team:** 1. Punjab University,

Kapur shares lead with two Aussies

Cut at one-under leaves 30 Indians in the fray

PANASONIC OPEN

RAKESH RAO NEW DELHI

In-form Shiv Kapur was with Aussies Adam Blyth and Terry Pilkadaris atop the leaderboard as the \$400,000 Panasonic Open headed for a thrilling finish here.

On a breeze-swept Classic Golf and Country Club course, when the players found it tough to control the ball during the second half of Saturday, early-starter Blyth shot an incredible, bogey-free nine-under 63 – one off the course record – to go 10-under.

Shiv Kapur, involved in a playoff in the Thailand Open last Sunday, again moved into title-contention following a successive 67. After sinking five birdies from around six feet for a 32 on the front-nine, Kapur could only add one birdie on the back-nine.

Pilkadaris shot a 68 to make it a three-man leaders' pack at 134 – two better than Chinese Taipei's Hung Chien-



In title contention: Shiv Kapur came up with yet another 67 in the second round to move into joint lead. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Yao and three-time runner-up Bangladesh's Siddikur Rahman.

Young Kshitij Naveed Kaul, joint leader on reaching under-10 after eight holes, dramatically dropped five shots

on the next 10 holes to finish the second and penultimate round at even-par.

What hurt Kaul's prospects were the two double-bogeys – on the 13th and 18th holes. Effectively, Kaul's front-nine

32 stood undone by the back-nine 40.

The cut came at one-under 143 and left 67 professionals, including 30 Indians. Former champions Chiragh Kumar and Digvijay Singh along with

Arjun Atwal missed the 'cut'.

Leading second-round scores: **134:** Adam Blyth (Aus) (71, 63), Shiv Kapur (67, 67), Terry Pilkadaris (Aus) (66, 68).

136: Hung Chien-Yao (Tpe) (67, 69), Siddikur Rahman (Ban) (69, 67); **137:** Teemu Putkonen (Fin) (70, 67), N. Thangaraj (Sri) (69, 68), Rashid Khan (67, 70), S. Chikkarangappa (69, 68) and Vikrant Chopra (67, 70).

Other Indians who made the cut: **138:** Khalin Joshi (67, 71), Veer Ahlawat (69, 69).

139: Tapy Ghai (71, 68), Kshitij Naveed Kaul (67, 72), Karandeep Kochhar (67, 72); **140:** Aman Raj (68, 72), M. Dharma (67, 73), Pravin Pathare (69, 71), Om Prakash Chouhan (70, 70); **141:** Hendra Gupta (72, 69), Aadil Bedi (69, 72), Shankar Das (67, 74); Arjun Prasad (67, 74), Kapil Kumar (69, 72).

142: Devyanshu Bajaj (72, 70), Sanjay Kumar (68, 74), Sanjeev Kumar (71, 71), Jeev Milkha Singh (70, 72); **143:** Udayan Mane (72, 71), Sunit Chowrasia (72, 71), Amardip Malik (72, 71), Jyoti Randhawa (72, 71), Mukesh Kumar (72, 71), Himmat Rai (71, 72), Viraj Madappa (69, 74) and Gaganjeet Bhullar (71, 72).

Finland enters first major finals

Sweden seals Euro 2020 place; Italy eases past Bosnia

EURO QUALIFIERS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

Finland qualified for the first major tournament in its history with a 3-0 win over Liechtenstein while Sweden sealed its place at the Euro 2020 finals following a victory in Romania.

Norwich City forward Teemu Pukki scored twice in Helsinki and Jasse Tuominen also netted to bring the home crowd pouring onto the pitch at the final whistle as Finland wrapped up second place behind Group J winner Italy on Friday.

Roberto Mancini's Italy registered a record 10th straight win as they eased past Bosnia and Herzegovina 3-0 in Zenica.

Francesco Acerbi, Lorenzo Insigne and Andrea Belotti scored for Italy, which has bounced back impressively after failing to qualify for last year's World Cup year for the first time since 1958.

"Mancini has done a great job, he has given us clear ideas in a short period of



Two-goal hero: Teemu Pukki's, left, rich vein of scoring continued in the win over Liechtenstein. •REUTERS

time. We are proud of the record of ten consecutive wins but our objectives and our dreams are honestly others," said Belotti.

Bosnia is guaranteed a place in the play-offs after finishing top of its UEFA Nations League group last year.

Sweden qualified for a sixth straight European Championships after a 2-0 success in Bucharest that eliminated Romania from contention.

Marcus Berg and Robin

MUSHTAQ ALI TROPHY

Sunday's matches

Group A: Bihar v Uttarakhand; Goa v Karnataka; Andhra v Services.

Group B: Kerala v Uttar Pradesh; Rajasthan v Tripura; Tamil Nadu v Vidarbha.

Group C: Arunachal Pradesh v Chandigarh; Chhattisgarh v Hy-

derabad.

Group D: Bengal v Pondicherry; Assam v Mumbai; Haryana v Madhya Pradesh; Mizoram v Meghalaya.

Group E: Gujarat v Jharkhand; Delhi v Sikkim; Jammu & Kashmir v Saurashtra; Nagaland v Odisha.

Sarita in AIBA athletes commission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Veteran Indian boxer L. Sarita Devi has been elected unopposed to the International Boxing Association's (AIBA) first-ever athletes commission to represent the Asian bloc.

Sarita was in the running as sole candidate from the region. The commission features one male and a female boxer from each of the five regional confederations (Asia, Oceania, Europe, Americas and Europe).

The 37-year-old is an eight-time Asian Championships medallist – five of them gold – and is currently



Sarita Devi. •FILE PHOTO

an athlete representative in the executive committee of the Boxing Federation of India, which nominated her for the position in the world body as well.

54.5, 10. Flamboyant Lady (5) Nakhat Singh 52.5 and 11. Her Legacy (8) N. Rawal 52.

1. PRINCE VALIANT,
2. GALLOPING GANGSTER,
3. FLAMBOYANT LADY.

7. GHULAM AHMED MEMORIAL CUP (1,600m), 3-y-o & over (Cat. I), 4-15: 1. Highly Acclaimed (5) Surya Prakash 54.5, 2. Phenomenal Cruise (2) A.A. Vikrant 53.5, 3. Ace Ace Ace (1) Akshay Kumar 52, 4. Air Strike (6) Irvan Singh 52, 5. Isabella (3) Robbie Downey 52 and 6. Be Sure (4) Nakhat Singh 50.5.

1. ACE ACE ACE,
2. ISABELLA.

8. GRACE HANOVER PLATE (1,400m), 3-y-o & over, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 4-45: 1. Mind Reader (13) Jitendra Singh 60, 2. Handsome Duo (2) Ajeeth Kumar 58, 3. Red Snapper (6) Akshay Kumar 57, 4. Star Racer (7) Rohit Kumar 57, 5. Beyond Limits (3) Robbie Downey 55.5, 6. Ashwa Calvari (8) G. Naresh 54, 7. Farmville (12) Kuldeep Singh 53.5, 8. Vijays Maestro (10) Gopal Singh 53, 9. New Corner (4) C.P. Bopanna 52.5, 10. Smarty (9) Ashad Asbar 52.5, 11. Wood Bridge (1) Surya Prakash 52, 12. Agilis (11) Rafique Sk. 51.5 and 13. Khan Sahib (5) Gaddam 51.5.

1. MIND READER,
2. RED SNAPPER,
3. STAR RACER.

Day's best: **PRINCE VALIANT.**
Double: **ASTERIA – MIND READER.**

Jkt: 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8; Mini Jkt: 5, 6, 7 & 8; Tr (i): 1, 2 & 3; (ii): 3, 4 & 5; (iii): 6, 7 & 8; Tla: all races.

Sowjanya falls in semifinals

SPORTS BUREAU Gwalior

Qualifier Sowjanya Bavisetti's fine run came to an end as she lost 6-4, 6-3 to Sofia Shapatava of Georgia in the semifinals of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament at the City Centre Tennis Complex on Saturday.

Sowjanya, the reigning National champion, saved five of nine break points and converted the only one that she forced. She collected 19 WTA points, including one for qualification, apart from \$1,162.

In the other semifinal, top seed Jia-Jing Lu of China recovered after losing the first set to beat Berfu Cengiz of Turkey.

The results:
Singles (semifinals): Jia-Jing Lu (Chn) bt Berfu Cengiz (Tur) 6-7(4), 6-3, 6-1; Sofia Shapatava (Geo) bt Sowjanya Bavisetti 6-4, 6-3.

Doubles (final): Mana Kawamura & Funa Kozaki (Jpn) bt Petia Arshnikova & Gergana Topalova (Bul) 6-4, 6-1.

Seller shines

NEW DELHI: Phil Seller top scored with three goals as 61st Cavalry beat Army Service Corps (ASC) Col. Girdhari Singh team in the final of the Baria Cup 4-goal polo tournament at the Army Equestrian Centre, Delhi Cantonment, on Saturday.

The result (final): 61st Cavalry 5 (Phil Seller 3, Vishal Chauhan 2) bt ASC Col. Girdhari Singh 2 (Naveen Singh, GS Pandher).

Best Indian shooters for WC Finals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The top four Indian women's air rifle shooters will be competing in the World Cup Finals to be staged in Putian, China, from November 19 to 22.

While Anjum Moudgil will be competing as the World Championship silver medalist in the event, the other three Apurvi Chandela, Elavenil Valarivan and Mehuli Ghosh had placed first, eighth and 10th, based on the performances in the four World Cups.

Anjum will also compete in the rifle 3-position event. Apurvi had won two gold medals.

India will be represented in all the events of the rifle and pistol competition.

Manu Bhaker will compete in the air pistol and sports pistol events, apart from the mixed air pistol competition. Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Rahi Sarnobat will be competing in the air pistol and sports pistol events respectively.

Saurabh Chaudhary and Abhishek Verma who had

swept two gold medals each in the four World Cups in Delhi, Beijing, Munich and Rio will take part in air pistol apart from Shahzar Rizvi.

In men's 25-metre rapid fire pistol, Anish Bhanwala will be the only Indian.

In men's air rifle, it will be Divyansh Singh Panwar while Akhil Sheoran and Sanjeev Rajput will compete in the rifle 3-position event.

After the pre-event training on Monday, competition will start with the rifle 3-position event for men and women on Tuesday.

'I still have the thrill of competing'

Narain is upbeat about X1 Racing League

S. DIPAK RAGAV CHENNAI

At 42, Narain Karthikeyan's passion for a life on the fast lane continues unabated. Narain is currently competing in the Super GT series in Japan and will be seen in action in India later this month.

He once again dons the owner's hat with his NK Racing Team in the upcoming X1 Racing League, a franchise-based motorsport series that will kick-off later this month at the Budd International Circuit in New Delhi before a round in Chennai, where he will also be the lead driver of his team.

Will improve profile
Speaking to *The Hindu*, Narain, who made his F1 debut in 2005 with Jordan before two years at Hispania Racing



Narain Karthikeyan. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

sporting league off the ground, especially motor-sports.

"It will be a good start to have some big international drivers and it should be a good TV product. The aim is to take the sport to the masses," said Narain.

"What Formula One couldn't do for India this could potentially do, which is developing and nurturing young driver. It could help the entire ecosystem and I am Gung-ho about it and greater things are to come," he added.

Narain's team includes Alice Powell (woman driver), Frankie Cheng, Arjun Bali and Yash Aradhyia.

"And I still have the thrill of competing and being on the podium. Also thankfully I have not had many injuries in my career," he added.

Balaji-Jeevan duo bows out

SPORTS BUREAU HOUSTON

Sriram Balaji and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan were beaten 6-2, 7-6(4) by top seeds Jonathan Erlich and Santiago Gonzalez in the quarter-finals of the \$162,480 Challenger tennis tournament in Houston.

The Indian pair collected 25 ATP points and \$1,920.

The results:
\$162,480 Challenger, Houston, USA: Doubles (quarter-finals): Jonathan Erlich (Isr) & Santiago Gonzalez (Mex) bt Sriram Balaji & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan 6-2, 7-6(4).
\$15,000 ITF women, Cancun, Mexico: Singles (pre-quarter-finals): Viktoriya Morvayova (Svk) bt Ramya Natarajan 6-2, 2-6, 6-3; **First round:** Ramya bt Delisha Guttikonda (US) 6-1, 6-0.

Vettel leads Ferrari 1-2 in practice

REUTERS SAO PAULO

Sebastian Vettel led a Ferrari one-two in practice for the Brazilian Formula One Grand Prix on Friday, with Red Bull's Max Verstappen third fastest on an incident-filled afternoon at a damp Interlagos.

Vettel lapped in one minute 09.217 seconds on soft tyres with Monegasque teammate Charles Leclerc, who has a 10-place grid penalty for an engine change, 0.021 slower.

Magazine



BIG SCREEN

Yoga teacher, millionaire, alleged sexual predator: a new film chronicles Bikram Choudhury's rise and fall **p4**



WIDE ANGLE

Toda embroidery is printed and Banaras silks machine woven. How powerlooms are bleeding the handloom sector **p6**



FRAMED

Pilgrims are coming to Ayodhya in their hundreds after the Supreme Court verdict allows a new temple **p11**



LITERARY REVIEW

Lucy Ellmann's brilliant Booker shortlisted novel goes on for 1,000 pages, practically all in one sentence, and yet you don't want it to stop **p8**

COVER

My name is Karim

Muslim children in schools today are being taunted and isolated, as the poison enters classrooms **p3**

From BharatMatrimony

100% Personal & Confidential matchmaking service for the elite

BharatMatrimony pioneered EliteMatrimony in India 10 years ago. It's a personalised service delivered to you by trained Relationship Managers. Your personal info is 100% safe and secure. No one can see your personal data as we don't store any information online. Our exclusive database of over 1.5 lakh elites includes businessmen, bureaucrats, CEOs, celebrities, HNIs & NRIs. With more than 100 trained Relationship Managers and years of experience in matchmaking, we provide you unmatched service.

Over 1.5 lakh Exclusive Elite Profiles

100% Discreet & Confidential Service

Thousands of Success Stories

Call for Free Consultation at Your Home

99629 76000

www.elitematrimony.com

Guilty pleasures on a DENUDED EARTH

Is the generation that grew up enjoying the fruits of over-exploitation of nature ready to take the blame?

C.N. Pillai

During my school days in rural Kerala in the 1940s, life was spartan and luxuries we take for granted today were unknown. My village had an agricultural community. There was no electricity in my house or anywhere else. We used to walk to school barefoot, though it was more than 5 km away.

Small shops sold bare essentials, things which were not locally produced. For buying other commodities, we had to travel to faraway towns. New clothes, the bare minimum required, were bought only once a year during the festival season.

If somebody got sick, only local remedies were at hand. Modern medical facilities were available in towns where one went only if absolutely necessary. Transport facilities were limited.

In my childhood, epidemics such as cholera and small-pox were not unusual, and when they happened, they ran their course taking many lives. Viral and bacterial diseases which we today take in our stride, were often fatal. Lifestyle and age-related diseases were less common than today, probably because only the fittest lived to a ripe old age. “Old age” then was young by today’s standards.

Were we “poor”? My family and those at that economic level did not consider ourselves poor mainly because our needs were limited. We had enough food, clothing and shelter. Medical and recreational facilities were considered adequate. Family ties were strong. Our parents were able to provide us basic education and in some cases, even higher education. Agriculture provided a livelihood if one was ready to do hard work, and salaried jobs were available for the privileged few.

Omnipresent poverty

This happy state of affairs was enjoyed by only a few. The majority of the populace lived below the poverty line, drawn well below “acceptable” standards.

Poverty was there all around me. People suffering from hunger and diseases, high infant mortality and children dying or stunted by malnutrition and life in squa-

lour and poor hygiene too were all around me. My generation grew up witnessing a new technological revolution, into privileges and lifestyle changes which took place at a bewildering pace, mind-boggling compared with the range of advances that my parents experienced during their lifetime. I am fully conscious that people like me are enjoying the benefits of advancements brought about mainly by the developed nations at a considerable cost to natural resources and by causing environmental degradation. The people of the less developed world are certainly not trying to slow down in this race towards progress, but are trying to fast catch up. Development experts and environmental activists assure us that unless drastic action is taken, earth is fast

moving towards destruction, be it due to global warming, climate change, resource depletion or other disasters.

Do I feel guilty about it? The answer is, “yes” and “no”. “No”, because the suffering and deprivations that I have experienced during the early days of

my life are fresh in my mind.

Just as the world of more than two centuries ago accepted and enjoyed the fruits of the Industrial Revolution without a thought for the negative side of the changes, people of my generation accept the upward spiral of lifestyle changes as our right without guilt. It has always been like that, the onward march with the slogan “Excelsior”. The weak may fall by the wayside, the earth may change irreversibly, there is no stopping progress. Did you ask, “How dare you? We are on the brink of a mass extinction and all we can talk about is material comforts and eternal economic growth”, to borrow Greta Thunberg’s words. In my deep conscience, such questions raise their heads. I have learnt to close my mind to such inconvenient thoughts. Yes, in my heart, I feel guilty.

(The author is a retired Professor of IIT-Madras.)

narayanapillai@hotmail.com

ILLUSTRATION:
J.A. PREMKUMAR

When life begins after retirement

Here are two women who live confidently on their own terms, paying attention to their health and staying connected with the world

Vijaya Bharat

When I retired at the age of 65, my family and friends were concerned about my “post-career” life. Well-meaning advice ranged from “Keep yourself fully occupied” to “You have worked enough, relax now”. Add to them gentle warnings about missing the 9-to-5 routine and 24x7 responsibility.

An average Indian woman can now expect to live well into her 70s. Hoping not to be an exception, I reflected upon how a few elderly women I know are living their lives well. The life of two of them in their mid-80s appeared to be worth emulating. I spoke to them and observed them closely to understand their mantra.

A busy day

The first is my mother who had only studied up to middle school in a small village, but has acquired a lot of wisdom from life. She told me to work for a few hours every day so that my experience benefits the needy, spend more time with family, and pursue interests that had been buried under the demands of a career.

I observed her daily routine of finishing her morning chores, dressing well, and sitting comfortably with the newspapers. She uses a walker and is careful to avoid a fall. Having heard about the dangers of straining, she includes bananas in her frugal diet. She has had hand grips fixed in the toilet and does not lock the door from the inside. She takes her medicines regularly and arranges the tablets in her weekly pill box.

In the evenings, she watches her favourite TV shows and news. Weekends are meant for making phone calls to her extended family, and she is the first to wish them on their special days. Mother’s only demand is to have the tele-



phone and TV in working condition so that she stays connected with the world. Any upcoming event in the family, such as a marriage, birth, transfer or new job, keeps her looking forward with hope. Her non-critical, tolerant attitude and undemanding nature creates peace that transmits to everyone around her.

The second lady, Madam M, is a former colleague with an impressive education. Though she has no living close relatives, she leads an active social life and travels all over the world. When I asked for tips to age like her, she said, “If anyone invites you, accept it and don’t stay alone, especially in the evenings. I live alone but I am not lonely.”

I observed her daily routine. A morning walk for nearly an hour, dressing well, driving a car, consultation for a few hours, attending professional meetings, and shaking a leg at social get-togethers. On free evenings, she would read in the club library.

These two remarkable women with vastly different lifestyles live without grudges and with positivity. Attention to health and safety, staying connected, and having the confidence to live on their own terms, despite the inevitable losses and setbacks in a long life, seem to be their mantra. Fit or frail, I have got my “post-career” counselling.

vijayacardio@gmail.com

To whomsoever it may concern, there is no life sans certificates

We live in a world where even a known truth is not accepted unless a ‘competent authority’ issues a certificate

Madan Mohan Mathur

A long time ago, as a student of literature in college, I dreamt of becoming a famous writer and made bold to send my first story to a popular magazine. I was thrilled when the publication, after a long wait, sent a printed memo of acceptance of my work. But the devil was in the detail.

The letter asked me to send a signed certificate confirming that the work was original and unpublished. My youthful ego felt so hurt and humiliated by what I then perceived to be a questioning of my integrity that I did not send the certificate.

As a result, instead of becoming a writer, I ended up as a bureaucrat. Pretty soon, I discovered that we live in a world where even a known truth is not accepted unless “certified” by a “competent authority”.

First, you will need a certificate to prove that you are born to your parents on your date and place of birth. Your parents need a certificate to prove that they are married. And when you die, someone will have to certify that you are, well, dead.

Living to tell the tale

Through phases of life from birth to death, this requirement for certificates arises several times. If a pensioner, you need to produce a “life certificate” at least once a year to prove that you are alive.

Only a “responsible” person like your bank manager, a gazetted officer, a legislator or other such “competent authority” can issue it. Every November, you will find pensioners queuing up at bank counters, fumbling with pen



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

and paper, to submit the certificate.

Another vital document much in demand is the medical certificate. It’s perhaps the simplest way of earning your wages without doing any work. If you need a holiday and your boss is not willing to give you leave, all you need is a medical certificate. It does not matter if the boss sees you picnicking or shopping with your wife. The old saying “seeing is believing” does not hold good here.

As long as the certificate says you are sick, you are presumed to be sick, at least for official purposes. But mind you, once you have been certified as sick, you can’t just get up one morning and go to work saying you are back in good health. You will need to submit a fitness certificate from the doctor who issued the medical certificate.

Of all certificates, one that bruises ego and self-respect is

the “character certificate”, essential for any job or admission to an educational institution. Again a “competent authority” like a gazetted officer or an MP or MLA (even if some criminal cases may be pending against him!) has to issue the certificate. If you do not know any such exalted person and fail to get the certificate, you are presumed unfit for employment or higher studies. Perhaps then the only option is to join a political party, become a lawmaker and issue all kinds of certificates to your buddies!

Though I have survived 88 years of a life full of sundry certificates, I regret that I was unable to become a writer by not issuing myself a simple certificate. Nevertheless, as I am approaching the end of my journey, I fear that Lord Yama may demand some certificate to take me to heaven.

madanmathur@gmail.com

FEEDBACK

Letters to *Magazine* can be e-mailed separately to mag.letters@thehindu.co.in

Cover story

The concept of single motherhood is a wonderful one (‘Rekhaba’s Choice’, Nov. 10) as long as the woman adopts an orphaned child. However, where motherhood is through other choices like IVF or a “suitable person,” it will be nothing but imposing a “non-normal” life on the child, something the child has to grapple with throughout childhood and adolescence. The mother may try to explain the special situation, but the child will never fully understand why her friends have a father and she doesn’t. Life without a father will be incomplete and may impact personality development. One may argue that single parent families are already on the rise due to dysfunctional or broken nuclear families, but that is due to circumstance and not by “deliberate choice”.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI

■ Kudos to the women who choose to be single parents. It reflects the changing scenario of the modern woman’s outlook towards life. In this super-fast world, the bond between marital partners often gets brittle. Divorce has become common in the modern urban family. Under such circumstances, the readiness of some women to be ‘choice mothers’ is certainly heartening.

PRABHAKARAN VALLATH

■ Single parenting is not impossible but certainly difficult. There is nothing immoral about women having children without marriage by using IVF with donor sperm as long as the women are financially independent and can take on the role of the single parent responsibly.

DIHARAMVIR VERMA

■ “More importantly, the women have supportive families,” the article says. Yes, and it is this that they are denying the children. Parenting alone is not impossible but I think shared responsibilities makes it easier. It is also a sort of safety net. If one parent passes away, at least the other would be there. People who are taking these decisions are forcing the decision on children who have no say.

SIVA



■ I could not understand the purpose behind the article. Was it meant to remove the sacredness of the marriage institution? What about the psychological needs of the child that such mothers bring into the world without its permission or will?

M.R. CHANDRASEKARAN

Horsing about

Under the garb of writing humour, G. Sampath in his column (‘The real story behind Pegasus’, Nov. 10) has banteringly ridiculed the elephant god Ganesha. Could he have written anything about Christ or Allah and gotten away with it? If a Hindu writes against Hindu gods, he becomes secular in our country.

K. PRADEEP

■ Brilliant, Mr. Sampath! AIB had a line in their introduction song, ‘Tragedy Mein Comedy’, and that is what we have come to expect from you.

DIPANWAY MAITRA

■ G. Sampath finds humour in Ganesha and Venkateshwara. But he has excluded the most recent winged horse, the one that carried the messenger of peace from a mosque in Jerusalem to the heavens. The writer knows which horse is off limits.

DEEPAK BUTANI

Sea change

The photographs were pleasing but one should not forget that Mamallapuram is a heritage site, and not just another tourist spot (Photo essay, ‘A Xi change’, Nov. 10). I wonder if this revamp with its bright lights, fireworks, and ten-fold increase in tourist influx is going to affect the soul of the place. I suggest that you do a follow-up story six months or a year from now, looking at this angle.

H.S. MANJUNATHA



More on the Web
thehindu.com/opinion/open-page



The peregrine on a smoggy afternoon

Yes, Delhi has its birds, even falcons that fly at 350 kmph

SUNIL RAJAGOPAL

Of sound mind and well-being

Government should make sure that people with mental illnesses live with dignity

SHAHNAWAZ MUSHTAQ BHAT

Make every day special for elderly

Old age is not about material possessions, but about being wrapped in the love of family and friends

RAJESH KRISHAN

This page consists of reader submissions. Contributions of up to a length of 700 words may be e-mailed to openpage@thehindu.co.in. Please provide a postal address and a brief background of the writer. The mail must certify that it is original writing, exclusive to this page. The Hindu views plagiarism as a serious offence. Given the large volume of submissions, we regret that we are unable to acknowledge receipt or entertain queries about submissions. If a piece is not published for eight weeks please consider that it is not being used. The publication of a piece on this page is not to be considered an endorsement by The Hindu of the views contained therein.



PLAY AND PREJUDICE

The other boy in class

Are you Pakistani? Are you a terrorist? Muslim children in schools are increasingly facing such questions as the country's divisive politics begins to enter classrooms

Archana Nathan

Nine-year-old Zoya* found herself answering a rather confounding question at her Delhi school recently: does her father make bombs at home?

What led to the question? The classmate had seen a picture of Zoya's father in her school diary, in which he has a beard.

Things slowly got worse. Zoya's classmates would often refuse to sit with her during lunch because they assumed that she was eating meat. "As if dal and chapatti don't exist in a Muslim's diet," says her father Irfan Ahmed, a journalist. "This is such a stupid stereotype, that Muslims are always gorging on beef or mutton or whatever." As these instances became more common, Ahmed taught his daughters to stand up to the bullying and not back down.

Fathima still remembers the day her 11-year-old son Abdul came back from school and asked if being a Muslim was a 'bad thing'. "He said he did not want to go back to school. He was in tears," says Fathima. "When I tried to find the reason, he asked me why Muslims were called 'terrorists'. I was stumped."

Fathima slowly discovered that for nearly two years, Abdul had been bullied in his up-scale school in Bengaluru by a group of boys in class. "My son was told that as a Muslim he had no place in India and that he should move to Pakistan," says Fathima. "He was also repeatedly told that all Muslims were terrorists. He just couldn't handle it anymore."

Fathima then complained to the school, which eventually intervened, disciplined and counselled the bullies, who apologised to

Fathima and Abdul. "But it happened only when I said I would file a police complaint," says Fathima. "My son went through harassment only because he was Muslim." By then, Abdul had been diagnosed with clinical depression.

Abdul had been bullied the previous year as well. "A boy on his school bus kept calling Abdul a Pakistani. "He first tried to ignore it but when he couldn't take it anymore, he told me," says Fathima, who then confronted the teacher in charge of the bus before the harassment finally stopped.

Polarising stereotypes

Stories like Zoya's and Abdul's are far from uncommon in the country today.

Stereotypes about the Muslim community have entered into classrooms and playgrounds, seeping in from the polarising rhetoric prevailing in the larger world of politics, society, mass media and social media.

"There is an anti-Pakistan, anti-Kashmir, anti-Bangladesh narrative that is endorsed by mainstream news television and is unfortunately also championed by the state and our leaders," says Natasha Badhwar, writer and activist. "So a Muslim today is seen as a threat to the nation and does not belong to this country by default. This has certainly made a huge impact on a whole generation of children."

Badhwar's husband is a Muslim and her daughter

ers have often had to deal with uncomfortable questions directed at their part-Muslim identity. "In my experience, almost every Muslim in this country will tell you about instances in their childhood where they were singled out," says Badhwar. "There are memories of being bullied, but there are also memories of being supported and included. Unfortunately, today the dominant narrative seems to champion the exclusion of Muslims, and that's what my daughters heard in their schools all the time."

Nazia Erum, the author of the book *Mothering a Muslim*, says that the media is a prime example of how things have gone from bad to worse for the average Muslim in India. "Every single day, news channels in their debates circle back to something negative about Muslims – whether it is about the national flag, Pakistan or Vande Mataram. You cannot protect your children from this any more, you cannot keep these narratives away from them."

Children after all imitate adults, and they do this in their interactions with their Muslim classmates too. "Initially, it is often a very innocent question from children where they will express surprise or shock that one of their peers is a Muslim. Where they're coming from is that, being a Muslim is 'bad' or 'wrong,' so how come you are that," Badhwar explains, articulating her children's experience.

Badhwar's daughter Sahar was in Class II when she was asked by one of her classmates if she was Pakistani. Sahar, who has cousins in Karachi, says she

"thought it was a strange question because we had all gone to the same school since nursery. It did not even occur to me that it was an insult." Sahar says, "I am not sure if even my classmates understood what they were asking me. They were just repeating what they had heard at home or on the news."

Fear and alienation

Sahar, now 16, believes that the way news channels deal with Pakistan is strange. "The media talks about them [Pakistanis] as if they are aliens. That there is something so different about them that it is difficult for us to understand them. So, naturally, for my classmates, it was quite crazy that a girl sitting in their classroom for so many years had cousins in Pakistan, and was therefore so close to that alien world."

This anti-Pakistan, anti-Muslim narrative does not only impact Muslim children. Nupur D. Paiva, a child psychologist in Delhi, came across a 10-year-old who wanted to encourage her classmates to discuss the situation in Kashmir. She is not Muslim. "She made these little chits and wrote 'Kashmir' on each of them and threw them around so that children would be prompted to think about what's happening there," says Paiva.

A few days later, she began to have nightmares, dreams in which she was being attacked. That's when she was brought to me and we talked about where this fear could be coming from. She told me about the chits and asked me if it was an illegal thing to do. Somewhere, she had picked up the message that it was a dangerous thing to do, and the fear was manifesting in her dreams."

It also doesn't help that histo-



Alienating Divisions among children in schools are increasing.

• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK, R.V. MOORTHY & VIJAY SONEJI



ry is being re-written in school textbooks. In Karnataka, for instance, the Bharatiya Janata Party is contemplating removing chapters on Tipu Sultan from school textbooks based on a recommendation by BJP MLA Appachu Ranjan, who described the 18th-century ruler as a religious bigot.

"It is very hard on teachers because nobody wants to be seen as standing up to the state," says Badhwar. "When textbooks are being changed in Rajasthan to glorify Hindu kings, and Savarkar and Godse are being celebrated in public life, adults are responding to it with a kind of silence which they feel is their only safety. Nobody wants to be targeted. Even teachers who feel that this is wrong don't really know which platform they can speak on. It is in their interest to play safe."

Presenting prejudice

A Muslim teacher in a South Delhi school recalls asking a Class XII student in oration class to pick a topic to speak on. The boy started to speak on Muslims being terrorists and how their religion teaches them to kill. "I'm not sure if he knew I was Muslim and I felt there was no point in bringing my identity into this. I didn't stop him but I tried to reason with him and asked him about perpetrators of violence from other religions and if they too would be called terrorists. What can a teacher do apart from reasoning with students?"

Divisions among children are increasing, says Paiva. "Religion is not the only dividing line – socio-economic class is also a factor, increasing after schools began to accommodate students under the Right to Education Act. What is lacking is the sense of a community at school and an ability to co-exist, empathise and embrace differences."

As a country, we have a lot of unaddressed intergenerational trauma and hate, especially related to Partition, adds Paiva. "If one looks at the emotional and psychological work done by Germany post-war, it is of an admirable level," says Paiva. "Groups came together to reflect on the trauma and went through years and years of processing guilt, anger and loss. That is when they were finally able to come together as a community and apologise. We have taken a very practical approach of 'get over it and get on with it'. But what we needed to do was hear about the losses and pain from both sides of the border, digest them, and then give ourselves time to heal."

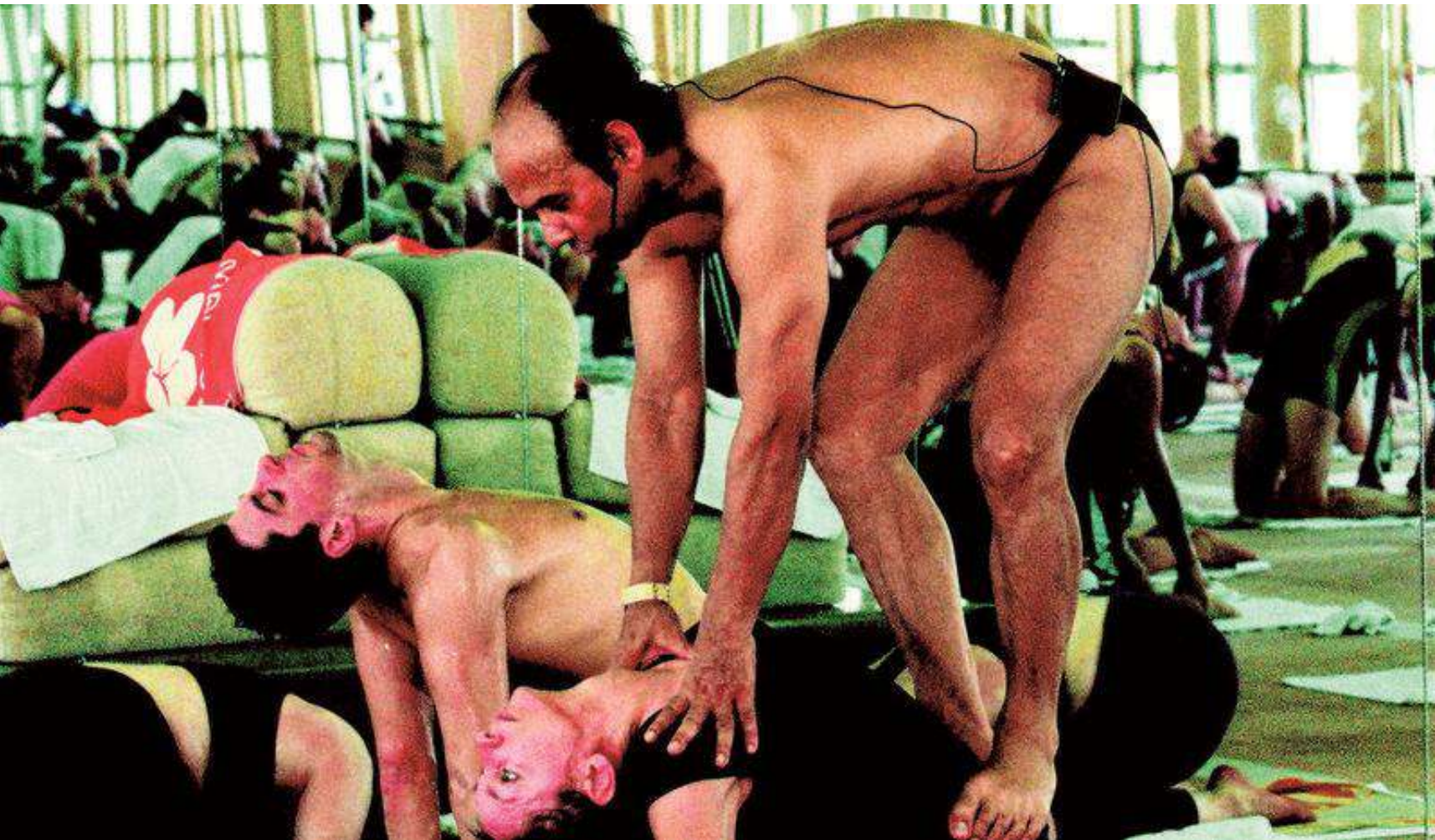
Meanwhile, what can we do to help our children today? "People who believe in the pluralist ethos of the country have to speak up," says Ahmed. "We have a shared past. Today, if you are silent, you are guilty of abetting." Then he adds as an afterthought. "Oh and try not to watch those news channels for a while."

*Some names changed to protect identity.

The writer is an independent journalist based in Bengaluru.



'I am not sure if my classmates understood what they were asking me. They were just repeating what they had heard at home or on the news,' says Sahar



BIG SCREEN

Biography of a ‘yogi’

A new film investigates yoga guru Bikram Choudhury’s alleged history as a sexual predator

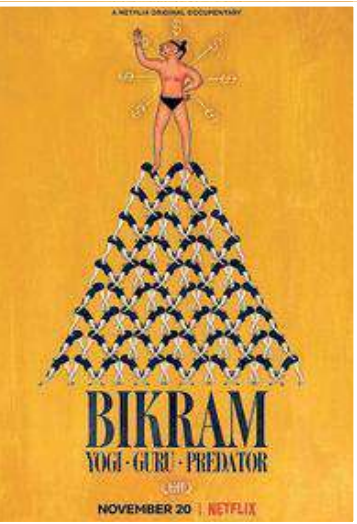
Namrata Joshi

A “pre #MeToo story in a post #MeToo world” is how filmmaker Eva Orner described *Bikram: Yogi, Guru, Predator* in a Q&A session after the film’s premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). The film, which comes to Netflix on November 20, chronicles the rape and sexual harassment charges against Bikram Choudhury, the Indian immigrant who set up base in Beverly Hills to popularise his brand of yoga in the U.S. Choudhury, who was endorsed by celebrities like Madonna, and counted among his followers Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand, ran a successful global franchise called Bikram Yoga studios.

Orner tracks the “criminal” yogi’s rise to fame in the 70s, the mansion and the many Rolls-Royces and Bentleys he came to possess, his rapid fall when assault charges came to light in 2013, and his eventual flight from the U.S. in 2017 to evade prosecution. Even as he remains fugitive, his business continues to thrive across the world.

In fact, what got Orner interested in the project was that Choudhury seemed to have gotten away with it all. “#MeToo happened during the production period [of the film] and with it came the outing and reckoning of so many powerful men... [So] the fact that Bikram got away with his crimes was even more relevant and chilling,” she says in an email interview.

Orner puts together archival footage, detailed testimonies and inter-



views to tell a comprehensive tale. In the interaction with her first-ever audience at TIFF she pointed out that the young women had shown admirable courage in speaking to her on

camera at a pre #MeToo time when the world was not quite as supportive or sensitised. “They were threatened, vilified... They lost employment and their community... And they got nothing... The settlements were not big,” she said.

Close to the bone

It feels chillingly close to the bone in the post #MeToo scenario as well. Men, despite being called out for abuse, continue to thrive, while women face retribution for taking on powerful men.

Many of the women who came out to accuse Choudhury were in denial and it took them years to come to terms with it. There was the fear of losing jobs, there was the pressure to not speak up. In the film, the women look back at their own behaviour in disbelief: one of them bade Choudhury “good night, sir” when she left after the incident; another kissed his forehead as he watched a kitschy Bollywood film in his hotel suite.

“Historically, women have often been too terrified and traumatised to speak out about sexual assault. They wouldn’t confide in friends or family because of the shame associated with it. They didn’t report the assaults to police, because, as we see in the film, when Larissa went to the LAPD to report Bikram raping her, they asked her questions like ‘Were you drunk, what were you wearing,’” says Orner.

The film begins on a light note, showing the dazzling, dodgy world of Choudhury – more performer

than yogi – flashy, pompous, wallowing in his own presumed greatness. He claimed to have arrived in the U.S. in 1973 to cure President Richard Nixon of phlebitis and was gifted a green card in return. Dressed in a black Speedo, a Rolex on his wrist, mixing coarse language with songs, he makes for a rough bully of a teacher. His strategy is ostensibly about getting people healthy the hard way, through 26 postures and two breathing techniques, all the while scolding and humiliating them. Everyone must obey, never question. The faith of his followers seems misplaced, blind and delusional.

“We tried to portray Bikram as somewhat appealing and charismatic in the first act as it is important to show why people were drawn to him and the yoga. But once we hit about the 30-minute mark of the film, we paint a very bleak picture of him as a predator, rapist, liar and criminal. I have no objectivity about him. I think he is a terrible man and a fugitive who should be tried criminally in the U.S.,” says Orner.

Ugly revelations

Nonetheless, she follows a linear, investigative approach that puts the whole story out there. Right down to the fact that the techniques Choudhury claims as his own have in fact been stolen from his own hatha yoga guru Bishnu Charan Ghosh. The most revealing are the clips from his deposition on the lawsuits where he claims it was the women who had forced themselves on him. The ugliest moment is when he is asked about the three things he dislikes, to which he adds a fourth: “Cold food, cold weather, cold heart, and cold p***y”.

Orner has a lot to thank her archival researcher and assistant editor for, as they dug out the material. “I think the most important thing about searching for archival material is never giving up. We found a cache of unseen footage four weeks before we locked the picture; it took us about a year to find it.” Among the women she interviewed, three have seen the film so far. “I don’t want to speak on their behalf, but I think they were all very pleased they had shared their stories... It’s somewhat cathartic and provides some closure that their stories will be seen globally and Bikram will be exposed for who he truly is,” she says.

The filmmaker tried to interview Choudhury but it never happened. “I knew I could make the film without an interview as he had talked to the press so much over the years, I knew we could build a full character with the archives,” she says.

Orner hopes her film will encourage women to come out about harassment. She would also like to put the ball in the men’s court: “One of the many great achievements of #MeToo is that it has empowered women to speak out and not feel shame. And to support each other. It’s vital that men speak up and support women as well.”

Speedo man Stills and poster of *Bikram: Yogi, Guru, Predator*.
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ONE MOMENT PLEASE

The hot pot movie

Mix tears with laughs, throw in a fight, top with fresh cream

In season six, episode nine of the massively popular sitcom *Friends*, the once-mollycoddled Rachel (Jennifer Aniston), not known for her culinary prowess, decides to make an English Trifle for Thanksgiving dinner. But when two of the pages in the cookbook get glued together, she ends up mixing recipes and producing a satanic concoction of shepherd’s pie and dessert: the layers include jam, beef with peas and onions, bananas and ladyfingers. In short, many things that are perfectly good in their own right, but which no sane eater would think go well together.

But is “sanity” all that it’s made out to be?

The evening wears on, the dish is served, everyone in the room gasps and wheezes and finds ways of disposing of their plate without hurting Rachel’s feelings. “It tastes like FEET!” says Ross. But there is one person – a true food lover, friend to any blundering chef – who genuinely enjoys the dish. “I like it,” Joey announces between mouthfuls. “What’s not to like? Jam – good. Custard – good. Meat – goooddd!”

If you know the old Boris Karloff *Frankenstein* films, you might be reminded of the scene in the 1935 *Bride of Frankenstein* where the Monster, befriended by a blind hermit, grunts, “Good! Good!” in childlike delight as he experiences a glass of wine, bread and a cigarette for the first time. Here is a barely sentient creature putting things in his mouth, responding with his senses, not with sophisticated preconceptions about taste.

Egalitarian display

There is something pure and enviable about this, and I feel similarly about what Joey does in that *Friends* episode. Within the given context, we are meant to see him as a gluttonous philistine, but I also view the scene as a display of egalitarianism, coming from a boundless love for a particular thing or activity (in this case, food or eating). It weirdly reminds me of the Sanskrit word ‘*sahridaya*’, which has different layers of meaning but has often been used to describe the ideal reader, “of one heart” with an author: someone fully responsive to a creative work and engaging with it at all the levels the artist might wish for.

With apologies to my gourmet friends, there is an off-kilter logic in Joey’s caveman grunts of appreciation: he is treating each ingredient on its own terms, focusing on the component parts instead of worrying about how consistent or organic the whole dish is. This also reminds me of some of the conversations around the “masala” film, which constantly mixes and mashes tropes. This sort of movie – championed by Jonathan Gil Harris in his recent book *Masala Shakespeare*, and also defended by a small minority of film critics who still have an appetite for the form – is easily denigrated today. Understatement and psychological realism have become vital to Hindi cinema, writers and directors are telling personal stories rather than following old boilerplates. Which is a welcome development, but it also leads to an often thoughtless putting down of earlier modes of expression where many tones and genres could co-exist.

The masala brain

Perhaps appreciating masala cinema involves a certain brain type, one that can compartmentalise elements and assess each separately. This, by the way, is not the same thing as lack of discernment: a viewer of a masala film can still make thoughtful judgements about whether the comedy track, or the drama track, or the musical track, is well-done. Joey wouldn’t care for the trifle if the beef was overcooked or the bananas were raw!

There is always the question: do lines still need to be drawn – is it possible that some things simply aren’t compatible? Hard to say. There have been terrific films that combined genres you wouldn’t think could go together – horror and goofy comedy, for example, or noir and musical. It gets trickier when you combine more than two – for that, you probably have to look at something like the mainstream Hindi film as it once was, shifting from weepy drama to comic interlude to song-and-dance to *dishoom dishoom*.

I love that sort of cinema, but I also understand why it can annoy or exhaust people. And though I experiment a lot with food, I did feel my gorge rising once when someone showed me a photo of banana pieces on a pizza. Most of us have breaking points; few of us can be as open-hearted as Joey.

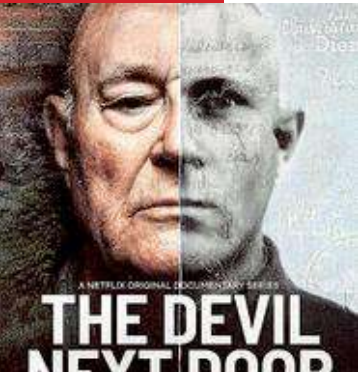


Jai Arjun Singh is a Delhi-based writer and film critic who finds it easier to concentrate on specific scenes as he grows older.

Choudhury claimed to have arrived in the U.S. in 1973 to cure President Nixon of phlebitis and was gifted a green card in return. Dressed in a black Speedo, with a Rolex on his wrist, he was a rough teacher

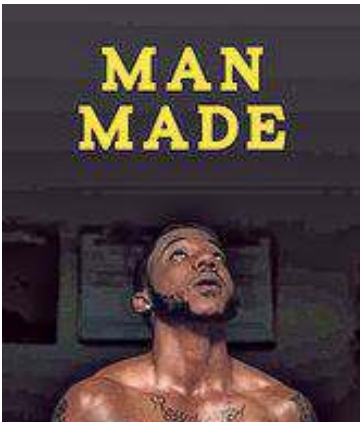


SCANNER



Nazi on trial

The Devil Next Door is a Netflix mini-series about John Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian-American who in the 1980s was accused of having been a notorious Nazi death camp guard nicknamed ‘Ivan the Terrible’. His trials dragged on due to doubts about his identity, until he was deported to Germany and convicted in 2011.



Trans strength

This documentary is centred around the 2016 edition of the Atlanta-based Trans FitCon, the world’s only all-transgender bodybuilding competition – open to any trans person who identifies as male. Directed by T. Cooper, *Man Made* follows a diverse array of competitors and traces their personal struggles.



Theatre festival

The 10-day Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Festival is being held in Hyderabad until November 24. There are performances and works by artists including festival founder Mohammad Ali Baig, Mohan Agashe and Jeff Goldberg. A play about the last Nizam and one about the Falklands War by an Argentinian group are among the highlights.



MAN VS. MACHINE

Cheap mechanised imitations of handloom designs are bleeding the traditional weaving communities

Cookie-cutter Kanjeevaram



Real deal (Clockwise from left) Silk weaving in progress; silk threads being prepared on a handloom in Bhoodan Pochampally; a page from John Forbes Watson's *The Textile Manufactures of India* (1866); and a Toda woman with the unique 'pohor' embroidered shawl. • WIKI COMMONS, AFP & M. SATHYAMOORTHY

Pradesh are copied on powerlooms in Nagari town in Chittoor district. The renowned Banarasi handloom silk saris are copied by the powerlooms of Surat. These are just a couple of instances of a widespread phenomenon of appropriation. Such replication goes unchecked, shrinks the market for genuine handwoven textiles, and takes the life out of weaving communities. Powerlooms fitted with electronically controlled jacquards are now able to copy even intricate and complex handloom designs.

Full circle

The government's textile policy, which has fully supported the explosive growth of powerlooms, has always paid only lip service to the handloom industry. A series of policy documents created down the years reiterated that the weaving of intricate luxury fabrics would be the preserve of the handloom industry. Now, however, even luxury saris and fabrics are produced by jacquard powerlooms, including those that were once handwoven in famous centres such as Varanasi, Kota, Pochampally and Kanchipuram. As a result, handloom weavers are finally losing out in the luxury market as well. "This last bastion of the handloom sector has also fallen," says handloom expert D. Narasimha Reddy.

The proliferation of powerlooms might be a feature of independent India, but the imitation of the enduring designs of Indian handlooms actually has a much longer history. It is well recognised that Indian cotton was the kingpin of world trade from 1500 onwards. While Europeans were accomplished in wool and linen textile manufacture, they did not know how to work with cotton. Europeans acquired sophisticated knowledge of cotton products, markets and craft techniques from India in the 17th and 18th centuries. This knowledge was central to the ascendancy of England in the global cotton textile trade. And it was able to displace India from its dominant position only after a gradual and extended process of borrowing craft techniques and designs from the subcontinent.

A case in point is John Forbes Watson's celebrated 1866 work *The Textile Manufactures of India*, which catalogued 700 specimens of Indian textiles in 18 volumes. It was this that enabled Europeans to compete with Indian cottons, finally leading up to the large-scale import of readymade textiles and the crushing of the Indian handloom industry.

Fast forward a century-and-a-half later to the present, when computer-aided designs and smartphones have made it even easier for our own powerlooms to produce ersatz versions of our handlooms. For the embattled weaver, life has indeed come full circle.

The writer is working on a book on the human and environmental story of cotton in contemporary India.

Neeta Deshpande

The geometrical, red-and-black patterns on white cotton cloth are unmistakable. Intricately worked on shawls and stoles, quilts and jackets, this beautiful, traditional hand embroidery known as pohor is unique to the Toda community that lives in the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu. The design appears woven and the fabric is reversible.

But a few months ago, People's Archive of Rural India and a business newspaper reported that a popular fashion label and an e-commerce portal were selling cheap printed or machine-embroidered imitations of the Toda embroidery. This violated the GI tag for pohor that had been granted by the government in 2013.

At the time of writing this, at least one fashion portal was still selling a pohor imitation product on its website. "It is not possible for vulnerable communities like the Todas to legally take on the might of large corporations that appropriate their craft designs," says Mathew John, founder-director of Keystone Foundation, one of the organisations that worked to get the GI certification for the Todas.

Copy cat

This instance of copying is reminiscent of another high-profile case last year, when French luxury brand Christian Dior plagiarised a block print created by designer Orijit Sen, who works with Indian artisans on



reviving traditional crafts. Dior reached an out-of-court settlement with Sen.

Such high profile cases might make it into media reports, but the more routine and rampant appropriation of traditional designs, which impacts artisans in very substantial ways, often goes unnoticed. The widespread malpractice naturally affects the handloom economy – the country's most important craft sector that, according to the latest

official figures, enables 43 lakh people to make a living.

After Independence, several textile products were reserved exclusively for the handloom sector in order to protect the craftspeople. Then came the 1985 Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, which set aside 22 textile items for the handloom sector. But a little over 10 years later, this Act was further diluted and the number of reserved articles was reduced to just 11. And

now, even this small margin of official protection has been flagrantly violated by powerlooms that copy handloom designs across the textile map of the country.

Every job created in the powerloom sector, which floods the market with cheap imitations of handloom weaves, displaces 14 traditional weavers. Advanced powerlooms cause even greater displacement. In several markets, machine-made textiles are passed off as



handwoven to unsuspecting consumers, as the administration and bureaucracy look the other way. Thus, for instance, in 2010-11, the number of convictions for such imitations were as low as nine. The Handloom Mark initiative to help customers identify genuine handwoven fabric has largely failed. Moreover, protection for distinctive handloom fabrics from different centres under the GI Act, to which the Todas have also taken legal recourse, has proven ineffective in practice.

Visit any well-known handloom centre in the country, and weavers will tell you about a powerloom centre that is widely known to openly, and illegally, copy their traditional designs. For instance, the famous zari-bordered handloom designs of Mangalagiri town in coastal Andhra

GREEN HUMOUR BY ROHAN CHAKRAVARTY



People on the so-called 'good side' may also be assailed by a drop in courage or bouts of bad judgement, leading them to aid and abet the agenda of the corrupt regime

PASSING BITE

The cost of cowardice

■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



There's no such thing as a free exercise of power. Every act generates a bill that must be paid one day

As human beings, our first instinct is to try and survive in any given situation. Staying alive comes first; then comes the effort to minimise physical damage to ourselves and our near and dear ones; following that is the hard-wiring that makes us do whatever necessary to protect our general well-being, our property, finances and future.

It's only after all this is reasonably secure that most of us turn to examine the right and wrong of any act we might have been forced to do in order to achieve this safety. If we know that doing something morally wrong, or illegal, has gained us protection from damage, and if we know we can get away with it again, then most of us will find a post-facto justification for our act and even an equivocal route to repeating that action in the future, should we need to.

Corrupt people get to power by recog-

nising and using these vulnerabilities or this corruption programming in others. They either leech on to people who are already compromised and encourage them to go deeper down the hole, or they find weak targets and make them pliant first-timers in wrongdoing. When the corrupt and power-hungry come up against resistance, they make a quick division in their minds: A) that segment of the opposition which is itself compromised by venality to a greater or lesser degree and B) the segment – usually much smaller – that is harder or almost impossible to seduce or browbeat.

Carrot and stick

With group A, they speak in the mutually understood language of threats and cajolements, they put up visible sticks on the edge of one hill and equally visible carrots on the other and they begin negotiations. With group B, they try to isolate

individuals, atomise strong groupings, and then bring out every dirty trick in the book to besmirch reputations, destroy trust between allies, attack resource bases, and sow doubt, fear and a sense of helplessness.

Once a corrupt, amoral regime has achieved power and got its hands on the levers of state, it proceeds both nakedly and surreptitiously to misuse these, to wreak whatever havoc it can among those who are resisting the regime, while gathering into its fold whoever breaks off from both A and B.

All this is well known to anyone who studies history.

The interesting thing is how different people interact and manage the exchange with a seemingly all-powerful, corrupt regime. We must never make the mistake of imagining that a person we think of as completely evil will always stay so – there may be a limit to the wavering and change

someone is capable of, but a small pulsation in one person or a group in a direction away from gross criminality may have a knock-on effect on others who are, let's say, closer to the middle in the scale of bad-to-good. That, in turn, may lead to bits of relief, perhaps temporary, being provided to victims of the corrupt regime.

All is not lost

Equally, however, we must never take for granted that seemingly ethical and incorruptible people, groups or institutions will always remain so – consistently doing the right thing at whatever high cost to themselves. People on the so-called 'good side' may also be assailed by a drop in courage or bouts of bad judgement, leading them to consciously or unconsciously aid and abet the agenda of the corrupt regime.

As the regime tightens its grip on this or that rampart of the state, you could, for instance, have a group of brave and responsible public servants come out in an unprecedented public protest at what is going on. This might give you hope that not all is lost. A while later, a couple of members of the same group might participate in a critically important public rendering of their duties, where they fail miserably, showing shameful pusillanimity and offering disastrously wrong-headed appeasement to the forces that are bent on destroying our society. Should we see this happen, we should try and not lose heart. Groups or lone individuals will find different ways of negotiating and parlaying with the onslaught of ill-used power; the same people may find different ways at different times. Things may look solid and immobile, but the political and social atoms are always on the move.

French philosopher Michel Foucault said that every exercise of power comes with a cost to the parties exercising that power. Likewise, every dishonest, unethical or cowardly compromise with power also has a cost. Every such act generates a bill that both the compromisers and the ones who have extracted that compromise will have to pay sooner or later.



Ruchir Joshi is a filmmaker and columnist.

Literary Review



Best Fiction at Atta Galatta

Blue Is Like Blue by Vinod Kumar Shukla, translated from Hindi by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and Sara Rai, has won Atta Galatta Bangalore Literature Festival Book Prize 2019 for Best Fiction (English). This is the second time that a Harper Perennial title has won.



Goldsmiths prize

Lucy Ellmann's novel, *Ducks, Newburyport*, has won the £10,000 Goldsmiths prize after missing the Booker. The judges have hailed it as a "masterpiece". The Goldsmiths prize is awarded to fiction "that breaks the mould or extends the possibilities of the novel form".



Full Fat Collection Competition

Sanjeev Sethi's poetry book, *Wrappings in Bespoke*, has won the Full Fat Collection Competition-Deux organised by Hedgehog Poetry Press. Ali Jones is the co-winner. Mumbai-based Sethi has published over 1,200 poems in more than 25 countries.

THE LEAD

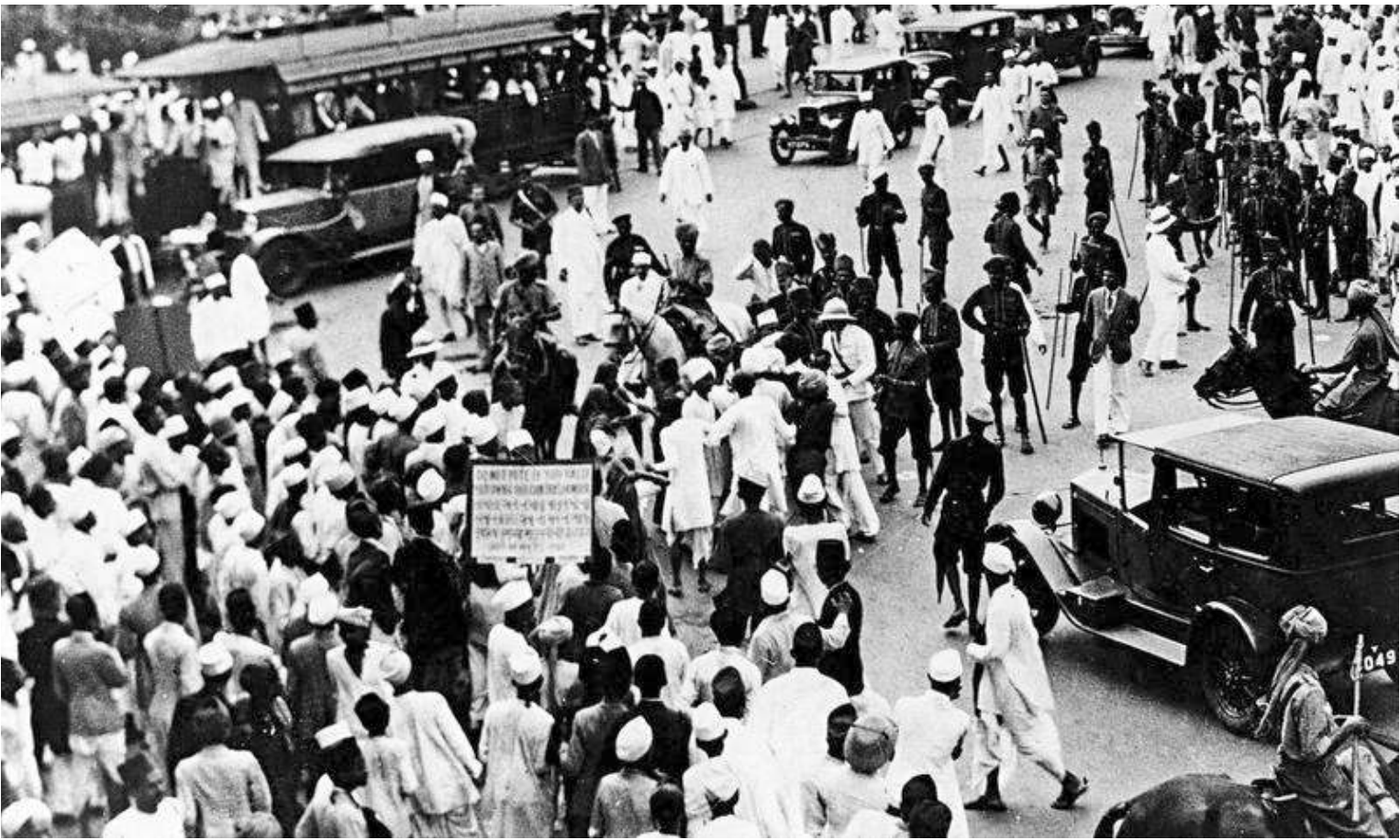
The salt line

The contours of Bombay are redrawn, with Indians pouring into the European quarters, as Gandhian nationalism spreads through the city. An extract from a chapter by Robert Rahman Raman in *Bombay Before Mumbai: Essays in Honour of Jim Masselos*

Following the spatial practices of workers' protest that predated the Civil Disobedience Movement in the city, Gandhian nationalism devised a range of rituals to assert its claim over the public spaces of the city and 're-inscribe these arenas as nationalist spaces'. Salt marches, processions, *prabhat pheris*, sit-downs, parades and other such forms of protest actions poured out on to the streets, *maidans* and public spaces situated in the European part of the city, 'transforming them into sites of dramatic confrontation between the colonial administration and the Congress'. Charni Road, Churchgate, Colaba, Esplanade, and other such localities in the British part of town, became the sites of these acts of collective resistance.

To reinforce its claim over these alien and commanding spaces of the colonial city, the political spectacles were combined with what Masselos has termed the 'calendar of commemoration'. The calendar largely consisted of significant events and commemorative rituals either centered around Gandhi's life and teachings or echoing Congress's own distant and immediate past and its aims and objectives... Public gatherings and commemorative meetings were organised in public spaces, and volunteers took to the streets and alleys in processions that often culminated in large public gatherings in Azad Maidan, Chowpatty, or Shivaji Park.

From the very beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement, this 'nationalist makeover' of the city was planned at two distinct levels. A band of carefully handpicked *satyagrahis* from different ward level Congress committees undertook the Salt Satyagraha, *prabhat pheris* and picketing. Apart from these, the Civil Disobedience Movement in the city relied heavily upon a network of volunteer organisations like Hindustan Seva Dal, National Militia and Desh Sevika Sangh. These were organised at the national scale and predated the Civil Disobedience Movement, with branches in every city. They operated alongside volunteer organisations which cropped up in the city as soon as the first batch of volunteers broke the salt laws in



Sites of resistance Demonstrators clash with the police during elections in Bombay in 1930. • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Bombay. These ground level organisations largely consisted of market associations like Mangaldas Market Employees Mandal and Bhuleshwar Cloth Merchants' Mandal, and volunteer organisations such as Chira Bazar Volunteer Corps, or those formed on the basis of caste and religious groupings, like the Jain Swam-sevak Mandal.

These volunteer organisations were assigned specific responsibilities in the city. Hindustan Seva Dal and the National Militia managed procession routes and kept order during the public gatherings and other political spectacles. Women's volunteer organisations like Desh Sevika Sangh and the Gujarati Hindu Stree Mandal collected seawater, manufactured salt, and sold and organised picketing of liquor and foreign cloth stores. Similarly, commercial and occupational associations were the backbone of the movement in

the *bazaars* of the city. They facilitated the enforcement of *hartal* and picketing and the organisation of *prabhat pheris* and public gatherings in the market areas and the adjacent localities. Importantly, the activities of these volunteer organisations overlapped with those of caste and community-based associations.

In turn, this points to the interplay between social identity, spatial location and nationalist mobilisation during the Civil Disobedience Movement. The various localities in the Indian town were often founded on some common aggregating features: a common denomination derived from caste, religion, occupation, region, or language. The social composition of the city was reflected in the organisation of the volunteer groups. Congress workers and their supporters in the Hindu-dominated markets and residential areas of the Indian town (and in some European en-

claves in South Bombay) were mostly Gujarati Hindu and Jain merchants and middle-class Maharashtrians. Importantly, these communities were disproportionately visible in the much publicised and carefully orchestrated political spectacles organised in the city's administrative and commercial district and in the Indian town. The political infrastructure that underpinned the Civil Disobedience Movement in the city thus not only acquired a distinct 'Hindu' character as Masselos has argued, but also remained largely devoid of any working-class component in its initial phase... [The Congress's] reluctance to involve Bombay's diverse working-class population consequently reinforced the movement's distinctive socio-spatial character.

At the same time, in its effort to reterritorialise the social spaces of the Raj and incorporate it within the constructs of its own intended spatial so-

vereignty, the Congress sought to re-imagine the city in its totality. One means of achieving this objective was to extend what Masselos has termed as 'accustomed space', that is to say, a 'perception of urban space derived through accustomed activity and accustomed time'. The Congress began extending this Indian 'accustomed space', which had gradually emerged from the late nineteenth century onwards through the organisation of festivals and other collective activities in public spaces. In particular, its political mobilisation constructed a new nationalist accustomed space. In the process, Congress altered the perceived spatial parameters of the Indian town and made alien and external social spaces of the city familiar to its 'Indian subjects'. In its effort to territorially take over the space of the Raj, the Congress delineated social spaces and demarcated spatial practices for

different communities and occupational classes inhabiting the city. Its leaders and volunteers thereby came to regulate the access of urban social groups to different parts of the city. This can be best understood by exploring the spatial contours of the Congress's political spectacles and the workers' involvement in it.

In the manufacturing of contraband salt, two distinctive spatial practices emerged in the city from the outset. Since the salt marches were organised simultaneously in different wards, access to the beaches and open spaces for manufacturing salt in the southern part of the city inhabited by the British remained mostly limited to the Congress volunteers belonging to the adjacent Gujarati and Maharashtrian neighbourhoods. As we have already noted, Congress House, situated in Girgaum, a neighbourhood largely inhabited by the Maharashtrian middle class, emerged as the centre of contraband salt making. The Congress's focus within the mill districts stayed confined to either selling the contraband salt prepared at the terrace of the Congress House, or making it in pre-assigned public spaces. Congress leaders like Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay and C.K. Narayanswami, deputed to work in the mill areas, either brought the sea water with them in small quantities or it was obtained from access points other than the ones in south Bombay.

On 20 April, simultaneous initiatives to break the salt law were planned in all of the wards. Unlike the processions from the A, B, C and D wards, which approached different access points to the sea in the colonial part of the town, volunteers of G ward went in procession and took sea water from Mahim sea front to their local ward office, where they manufactured salt. Similarly, in E and F wards, fifty-odd volunteers were involved in making and selling contraband salt in the presence of Congress leaders. In the following weeks, a pattern gradually emerged in Bombay whereby manufacturing of the contraband salt remained restricted to the open spaces, beaches and parks situated at the interface of the Indian town and the British-dominated areas, whereas the selling of contraband salt emerged as Congress's main activity in the city's mill areas.

Extracted from *Bombay Before Mumbai: Essays in Honour of Jim Masselos*, ed. by Prashant Kidambi, Manjiri Kamat, Rachel Dwyer (Penguin Random House).

The political infrastructure that underpinned the Civil Disobedience Movement in the city thus not only acquired a distinct 'Hindu' character as Masselos has argued, but also remained largely devoid of any working-class component in its initial phase

KAFKAESQUE

I am Gregor Samsa

The bed is undone, the desk messy, and you are a monstrous insect in this 360° VR experience of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*

Arunima Mazumdar

Prague, November 1912. Franz Kafka sat on the bed of his room locked from inside, writing letters to his fiancé. He wrote non-stop while his family gathered outside for breakfast.

The story of Gregor Samsa was probably also taking shape in his mind around this time – the story of the salesman who woke up late for work only to find himself transformed into a monstrous vermin – *The Metamorphosis*.

You're metamorphosed

"Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is about transformation; it's something you cannot come back from. Metamorphosis VR or VRWandlung – the first ever virtual reality (VR) adaptation of the classic novella – is similar. You find yourself locked inside Samsa's room and you're transformed into him. There's no escape until you exit the room, in this case, the VR



Enter (Clockwise from top left) Model of Samsa's insect body; details from Samsa's bedroom recreated in 3D; and Russian model Katia Shapirova. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

world," says film director Mika Johnson, who, along with 30 artists and support from Goethe-Institut Prague, has created this project.

More than a 100 years have passed since the publishing of *The Metamorphosis*. It has been adapted into multiple mediums – radio, television, film, animated movie, play, video game, even comic books. But it continues to evoke interest.

"In Prague, Franz Kafka is a business. You'll find him on chocolate bars, such is the fandom. But most of

it is just business. We wanted to treat this project like a piece of art," says Johnson, speaking to me after the show at Goethe-Institut, Delhi, in September.

Wandlung in German means transformation and the VRWandlung (metamorphosis virtual reality) adaptation of Kafka's classic may change the way you have experienced it so far.

VRWandlung uses a technology called HTC Vive, which allows you to completely immerse yourself in the

space of the protagonist. What sets it apart from other VRs is "room-scale", which, in layman terminology, means that you have 360 degree access to the space you're in.

So, not only can you become Gregor Samsa, but you can also walk around the room, peep outside the window, listen to the "raindrops hitting against the metal window ledge", hear the door banging and Samsa's father and sister yelling from outside the room, look into the mirror and encounter your grotes-



que insect-self. All you need to do is enter the dark room surrounded by gauze, put on the VR hardware (helmet with glasses and headphones, gloves, and slippers) and wait to wake up as Samsa.

The bed is undone, the desk is messy, and the alarm clock is ticking away on the chest of drawers. The floor creaks with each movement and you hear the sounds that an insect would hear.

Keeping the beat

Music/ sound is central to the experience. When the VR begins, you're able to hear a human heartbeat, but as it progresses, the heartbeat becomes rapid, representing that of an insect. The music too becomes intense, contributing to the anxious mood.

Czech voice actors were brought in to act out the roles of Samsa's mother, father, sister and Mr. Manager from an adaptation of Kafka's text. Martin Švarc, who performed the voice of Samsa's father, used a specific accent in German that Kafka's father, Hermann Kafka, originally from Osek, a Jewish village in southern Bohemia, probably had too.

Model Katia Shapirova was made to pose as the girl in the "pretty gilt frame," the sole image on Samsa's wall: she was photographed by Emily Rogers and Mika Johnson on medium format film to represent the symbolic image in the book's introductory scene: "[The picture] showed a lady done up in a fur hat and a fur boa, sitting upright and raising up against the viewer a heavy fur muff in which her whole forearm had disappeared."

"Five years ago when I came to Prague, I started working on a feature film called *Kafka's Son*, which was based on a footnote in Max

Brod's biography of Kafka in which he claimed that the author had a son he didn't know about. While researching for the film, I came across Reiner Stach's books on Kafka – in one of them he had reproduced Kafka's room. It was uncannily similar to Samsa's room in *The Metamorphosis* and that's when I realised that Kafka hid his own room, his own self inside the character of Samsa. That got me interested," explains Johnson.

Once the idea took seed, Johnson put together teams of artists and sound technicians to bring the project to life. Instead of using digital textures and importing them, he hired two Czech animators who worked in the classical style to construct Samsa's room in miniature. They reconstructed by hand every small detail inside the room – the bed, the pillows, the desk, the open notebook on his desk, the wallpaper, the floor, all of Samsa's possessions. A group of 3D artists was hired to scan the room in 360 degrees, which meant taking thousands of photographs and stitching them together.

"Kafka would roll in his grave seeing what we've done to his text. But when you have a great work of art, when you have a great story, each new medium gives birth to a new interpretation of that story. It doesn't take away from what you imagined or experienced when you first read *The Metamorphosis*, rather it's meant to give you a new perspective," says Johnson.

After holding shows in Kolkata and Delhi in September and October, Johnson will be back in India early next year to present his marvel at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2020.

The independent writer is Delhi-based.

Czech voice actors were brought in to act out the roles of Samsa's mother, father, sister and Mr. Manager from an adaptation of Kafka's text



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Chickens, pies and the mountain lion

Lucy Ellmann’s excellent new Booker-shortlisted stream-of-consciousness novel reviewed here in the same style



Ducks, Newburyport
Lucy Ellmann
Picador India
₹999

...she still misses her mother all the time, so these two forces pull her in two directions, the loss of her mother and the growing distrust in her daughter, which she doesn’t know how to overcome...

Latha Anantharaman

How often do you read a story that goes on for 1,000 pages, practically all in one sentence, and yet when it’s over you don’t heave a sigh of relief, and instead want to keep listening to the narrator to find out what happened, did the kids get over their fright, did the sulky teenager get on better with her mother afterwards, did the mother gain a bit of weight and energy and become famous because of what happened and sell more pies and raise more free-range chickens and did they make enough extra money to fix the rotting windows and put a stronger lock on the door so that such a thing would never happen again, not that this stream of consciousness narrative by an Ohio housewife, married to a rather sweet professor who specialises in bridge engineering, is in any way a self-indulgent domestic rant about pies and chickens and kitchens and dropping off children and picking them up, because for one thing there is more of the history of the atrocities committed by the white man against the Native American tribes than you would study in 12 years of American schooling, and you wonder, though rather happily, why all that is in there, is it because the narrator’s first husband was partly or wholly Native American, and Stacey, the sulky daughter, is herself exploring how far she is white and how far she is not, all the while the middle two children worry more about whether their preoccupied and forgetful mom will remember their birthdays, and the youngest,

the happy Jake, runs around topless at the supermarket, and for another, like all rational human beings, especially human beings raising their young, she is appalled at the way anyone at all has the right to walk around with a gun in Ohio, and in most of the U.S. for that matter, and the level of industrial contamination in water bodies and soil bothers her no end, especially since so much of it is done on purpose, and in the meantime she worries about a mountain lion that has been sighted here and there, and whether it’s safe to leave their new rescue dog chained outside where he might get eaten, but what else can she do, since the dog won’t submit to life indoors, whereas she would like never to go out at all, having been shy much of her life, and rather fearful, as what rational human being wouldn’t be, given the dangers outside, though her own insecurities began when she was a teenager and just about to get sulky and rebellious herself, when her mother suffered a stroke and had to have an operation on her brain and was never quite the same again, and she still misses her mother all the time, so these two forces pull her in two directions, the loss of her mother and the growing distrust in her daughter, which she doesn’t know how to overcome, and she grieves that she has been an inadequate mother even to little Jake because when he was a baby, she had cancer and couldn’t cuddle him the way he ought to have been cuddled, though he seems fine, and yet you wonder how she can tell, she seems to be unable to locate him half the time, her mind wandering in and out of the works of Laura Ingalls Wilder, maybe because of

the chickens and the pies and the mountain lion, and Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, and black-and-white movies starring Bette Davis, and musicals like *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* that have a plot that especially a woman would view very differently today, and it turns out that musicals and scary boys are bothering Stacey more than the inadequacies of her mother, though all that is stirred up in family therapy, as it should be, and through all this are woven rich allusions that you spot immediately (“expletive deleted”) and ones that you half-remember from somewhere (“picnic, lightning”) and every 100 pages or so, the human mother’s narrative is interrupted by the life of the mountain lion, actually a lioness, who is raising her three little cubs until one day, while she’s out capturing their family dinner, a pair of do-gooders find the “abandoned” cubs and take them away in a car, leaving the lioness frantic, and she wanders all over Ohio and into the margins of Pennsylvania and whatever that state is on the other side of Ohio looking for them, and you know as you’re reading all this that the trajectories of the lioness and the Ohio mother must converge at some point, the vanishing point you might call it, since you never quite reach it, but before that point an entirely different thing happens that has been foreshadowed all along, so brilliantly, that Ellmann, in this compassionate and moving and funny crumb quilt of a novel, keeps you enchanted till the very last word and full stop.

The writer is author of *Three Seasons: Notes from a Country Year*.

REALISM/ FANTASY

The house of utmost justice

While the realism is mostly authentic, the magic needs to be taken with a largish pinch of salt



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

The goddess Ganga never sprouted a tail, as Choudhury claims she did. The iconography of this river goddess mounted on the *makara* is well-known

Soumitra Das

Several novelists of the Indian subcontinent writing in English – both big names and lesser known ones – have often fallen back on magic realism to spur their creativity. However, that is not a guarantee of outpourings of a high quality.

Magic realism was introduced to us mainly by two of the Latin American founders of this genre, Márquez and Borges. The Latin Americans probably made a great impact because South Asians could not be closer to them temperamentally (volatile), geographically (tropical) and politically (venal).

All those frills

So it should not come as a surprise that Numair Atif Choudhury, the late Dhaka-based author, chose to infuse an element of the fabulous and the incredible in the novel (his one and only) under review even as he recounted the mundane life and times of the activist-idealist politician, the eponymous Babu Bangladesh, played out against the backdrop of the Liberation War and the sanguinary birth of the tiny nation that fought for its mother tongue. All these frills notwithstanding, and in spite of Choudhury’s elaborate and occasionally tiresome confabulations, the novel fails to stir the reader’s imagination. The novelist doesn’t stint on realism via prosaic details of the protagonist’s milieu, but the leap of imagination necessary to deliver the novel to the realm of magic is beyond him.



Babu Bangladesh
Numair Atif Choudhury
Fourth Estate
₹599

Not for lack of trying. For Choudhury has endeavoured to introduce magic practically from the beginning, as he ushers in the edifice of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban or National Parliament House of Bangladesh in Dhaka. Designed by the celebrated American architect, Louis I. Kahn, the magnificent edifice is invested with mysterious and miraculous properties, bordering on the spooky, that ensure wrongdoers get their just deserts within its hallowed precincts.

Familiar ploys

The alleged association of this architectural wonder with theurgy allows Choudhury to connect it with secret societies and unusual natural phenomena that form the pith of the novel. This acts as the background against

which he traces Babu’s childhood and career and mysterious disappearance, a story that unfolds in the form of a diary that the “author” (the novel is written in first person singular) fortuitously gets hold of in a Bangladesh market – a familiar ploy.

As is the wont of many a novelist in this subcontinent, Choudhury sprinkles his sentences with words of Bangladeshi-Bengali origin – particularly ones associated with the flora and fauna and myths and legends peculiar to the region with its network of rivers and waterbodies – to add local colour.

He often chooses to use off-beat, learned and bookish words where their straightforward counterparts

would have done very well. These big words contribute little to the book’s intellectual weight.

The “mythical” elements are not always faithful to the originals. Sampler: the goddess Ganga never sprouted a tail, as Choudhury claims she did. The iconography of this river goddess mounted on the *makara* is well-known. The word *daini* does not denote monster. It means ‘witch’.

Choudhury does not mind wearing his environmental concerns on his sleeve, and this turns out to be one of the main strands of this narrative. This, along with the novelist’s secular sympathies and the important role that student politics plays in shaping the novel’s form and content, give the work an undeniable topicality. However, while his accounts of the Bangladesh Liberation War, of the appalling atrocities that the civilian population, both Hindus and Muslims, had to suffer, and the bravery of those who resisted are historically correct, his ‘magic’ needs to be taken with a pinch of salt.

The networker is an organic part of the ecosystem that Bengali novelist Tarashankar Bandopadhyay evoked in his epic novel, *Hansuli Banker Upakatha* (‘Folk Tales of the River Bend’). In *Babu Bangladesh*, the tree that the Pakistani generals could not kill, the island that wasn’t, the pseudo-science, and other mumbo jumbo are as believable as the cheap CGI used in films today. Choudhury tries to conjure up “the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces... the great globe itself” but we end up in a dull sublimary world.

The writer’s latest book is *Calcutta 1940-1970: In the Photographs of Jayant Patel*.

HISTORICAL FICTION

Love, revolution and all that

The novel dramatises the war-torn Ethiopia of the 80s, but the emotional connect is lost in a jungle of details

Stanly Johny

The lure of historical fiction is its delicate blend of facts and imagination. It’s about reconstructing the past through real and imaginary characters and events. It’s writing history with feelings. In *Money, Blood and Conscience*, David Steinman, who describes himself as an “international revolutionary”, is trying to do just that.

Moral battle

The country he’s picked for his debut novel is Ethiopia, Africa’s second most populous nation where Steinman served as a foreign adviser to its democracy movement in 2004-05. The period he’s chosen for the novel is perhaps the most interesting and happening time in the country’s post-war history – from the late 1980s when Ethiopia was under a Marxist dictatorship to the death of its first post-Marxist leader, Meles Zenawi. During his period, Ethiopia, like most other African

countries, had gone through several crises – civil war, fall of the Derg, the Marxist military regime, rise of Zenawi as a new strongman, systemic violence against the Amharas and Oromos, etc. It’s this historical setting that makes the book interesting even before one starts reading it.

Buddy Schwartz, an idealistic American television producer who’s in a moral battle with himself, is Steinman’s main protagonist. The story unfolds in a simple, linear narrative. Buddy wants to do something more than his popular television programme. This restlessness leads him to Ethiopia in the 1980s to make a documentary. The impoverished country is ruled by Mengistu Haile Mariam’s Derg with support from the Soviet Union. The Derg is also fighting civil uprisings in several parts of the country and its most dominant enemy is the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), led by the young, charismatic Meles Zenawi.

In the hunger-stricken, war-ravaged villages of northern Ethiopian highlands, Bud-



Interesting times Oromo people in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, celebrating their thanksgiving festival. • AFP

dy meets Zenawi and his 22-year-old propaganda officer, Hanna Ashete. Shaken by what he saw in the TPLF-held territories, Buddy founds a charity, Help Ethiopia, with the goal of feeding its poor. The TPLF becomes his host, and after the rebels capture power in 1991, Buddy expands his operations in the country with the blessings of the Zenawi government.

It’s complicated

In essence, *Money, Blood and Conscience* is

the story of three people – Buddy the charity businessman, Hanna the rebel and Zenawi the ruler. Their relationship is complex. Buddy, though he took the plunge out of moral concerns, emerges as someone who doesn’t risk his operations in Ethiopia for political criticisms. Buddy knows what’s happening in the country. He saw, in his own words, “the burned villages in Oromia” and “demonstrators with bullet holes in their head”. But he continues to endorse Prime Minister Zenawi. On the other side, Zenawi is the new

Mengistu. His Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front is the new Derg.

But the controversial former Ethiopian Prime Minister is unapologetic throughout the novel. Even in their last meeting, he tells Buddy he does things that are required to run a country like Ethiopia. “Extreme problems require extreme remedies”.

Hanna is the most interesting character. She’s a revolutionary whose father was killed by the Mengistu regime. She’s driven by the passion to do something for Ethiopia. She falls in love with Buddy, marries him, moves to the U.S. But the rebel within Hanna can’t rest. Hanna represents Ethiopia’s hope and resistance – both blossoming and fading in the novel.

For a novice to Ethiopian political history, *Money, Blood and Conscience* is at least an introduction. But it neither goes deeper into Ethiopia’s complexities nor builds strong characters and relationships that could move the reader.

There are long descriptions of historical events such as the controversial 2005 election, but those details are already reported. What’s lost amid a jungle of information and repeated travel details is a strong emotional connect. Conversations are mostly lame, characters are ambivalent with lack of moral clarity, and the reader is left unconvinced. At the end, what’s Ethiopia’s problem? Ethnic tensions? The political system? Or just one man, Prime Minister Zenawi? You don’t know!



Money, Blood and Conscience
David Steinman
Free Planet Publishing
₹1,894

Buddy knows what’s happening in Ethiopia. But he continues to endorse Prime Minister Zenawi

BROWSER

Not Just Another Story

Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey
Aleph
₹399

A journalist tracking down a sex-worker, Lakshmi, finds that out she has become an escort. Lakshmi’s journey from Kolkata’s Sonagachi to posh Salt Lake is at the centre of this novel, which is also about three generations of sex-workers.



Blue Moon

Lee Child
Penguin Random House
₹599

Jack Reacher is back in this thriller. In an unnamed city, two rival criminal gangs are competing for control. Till Jack Reacher lands up on the scene and starts setting things right. He comes to the aid of an elderly couple, and thereby confronts his most dangerous opponents.



Stand by Me

Sudeep Nagarkar
Westland
₹169

This is a thriller with a difference – about the bond between siblings, breakdowns and friendship. When Ruhi is found dead in her room, everybody but her brother, Kartik, thinks it’s suicide. Can Kartik stand his ground when everyone, including himself, is a suspect?



Ninth House

Leigh Bardugo
Flatiron Books
₹699

Alex Stern is trying to start anew at Yale’s after having survived a horrific crime. She is tasked with monitoring Yale’s secret societies, which have yielded some of the most famous people in the world. But there is something sinister going on there – and Alex has to uncover the truth.



SPORT

The romantics in the game

Tracing the history of spin bowling in India, and its heroes from Palwankar Baloo to Ravichandran Ashwin



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

P.K. Ajith Kumar

Twenty-six years have passed since Shane Warne caused that stunned expression on Mike Gatting’s face at Old Trafford on a Saturday afternoon in early English summer. Only the blond Australian could have conjured up a ball like that. The leg-break turned prodigiously to beat Gatting comprehensively before hitting the off stump. With his ‘Ball of the Century’, Warne made the world fall in love with spin bowling all over again. There is indeed something magical, artistic and romantic about spin.

Slow men

Anindya Dutta’s third book is not about Warne, though. It is about Indian spinners, many of whom had caused considerable headaches to batsmen around the globe, long before the Aussie wizard made an unsuccessful Test debut against India in 1992 at Sydney. *Wizards: The Story of Indian Spin Bowling* is a comprehensive history of the country’s slow men.



Wizards: The Story of Indian Spin Bowling
Anindya Dutta
Westland Sport
₹599

It traces, at some length, the fascinating journey of Indian spin over a century. It begins with Palwankar Baloo, who was an ‘untouchable’, not just socially. Few spinners in the early 20th century could reach the level of his left-arm bowling. A man of political conviction, he contested an election against fellow-Dalit B.R. Ambedkar, who was one of the organisers of a reception after his successful tour of England in 1911. He took 75 wickets in 14 First Class matches.

It would be a while before India would find a true successor to Baloo’s legacy – Vinoo Mankad. He was one of cricket’s greatest all-rounders, though he may be more familiar to the present generation because of a dismissal named after him. Dutta, in the chapter on the gifted Mumbai cricketer, heaves a sigh of relief that the ICC has amended the rules and that the dismissal will no longer be termed Mankading. But, in the scoreboard of the recent Vijay Hazare Trophy match between Bengal and Railways at Jaipur, the BCCI’s official website recorded that Agniv Pan was Mankaded.

Among the present crop of spinners, not surprisingly, Ravichandran Ashwin, who Mankaded Jos Buttler at the last IPL, features prominently in the book. So does his spin twin, Ravindra Jadeja. More space is devoted to their predecessor and India’s greatest match-winner Anil Kumble as well as the legendary spin quartet of Bishan Singh Bedi, E.A.S. Prasanna, B.S. Chandrasekhar and S. Venkataraghavan.

For an avid follower of India’s cricket history, some of the tales described in the book may sound familiar, but the author’s conversations with the likes of Prasanna, Bedi, Syed Kirmani and Kapil Dev are enlightening and insightful. Repetition of facts and phrases could have been edited out, though.

In the same paragraph about the ‘Kumble Test’ at New Delhi in 1999, in which the leg-spinner took all the 10 wickets in Pakistan’s second innings, we are told about skipper Mohammed Azharuddin making 67 and Sourav Ganguly playing a ‘captain’s knock’ of 62.

This labour of love from Dutta, a self-confessed fan of spin bowling, is still a welcome edition to the growing volume of writing on Indian cricket.

ENVIRONMENT

Can nature survive the onslaught by humans?

A collection of essays tries to understand why institutions and policies are largely failing to protect the environment

Sujatha Byravan

There were protests recently in Mumbai’s Aarey Forest over the felling of thousands of trees to make way for a Metro car shed. The situation succinctly captures the crux of many dilemmas in today’s India – the clash of divided interests over conservation, development and democracy.

Local communities, the government and the courts are confronting each other in a forested area within one of the world’s most densely populated cities. It leads many to throw up their hands in despair and ask whether the country is formulating the right laws and policies on conservation.

Nature Conservation in the New Economy is a collection of essays that focuses on the period post-liberalisation. Interestingly, the 20 years before liberalisation saw the creation of a “strong legal and regulatory framework appropriate to local, regional and national needs for environmental conservation” along with the setting up of “protected areas” (PAs) as national parks and sanctuaries.

This book is really a search for answers at a time when we realise that institutions are largely failing us because of gaps in the law, an inability to implement policies fully or penalise those who break the law, all occurring over a phase when the state in cahoots with the rich and powerful is leaving behind the needs of much of the populace.

The essays are written without compromising complexities by authors who have a clear understanding of the field of conservation. Each essay emphasises a distinct aspect of the subject in India. The chapters offer case studies and in-depth analyses of debates and deliberations on development, conservation and the law. The examples are from across the country.

Regulatory problems

For instance, the coexistence of forests and people in central India, management of forests and wildlife in Delhi, wetlands and their use and abuse, problems with coastal regulation and so on. With nine chapters, written by those experienced in their fields, the book is meant for

graduate students and scholars in ecology, conservation, wilderness studies and biodiversity, but not really for the general reader.

In their essay, A. Bali and K. Shanker take a close look at the Western Ghats and coffee plantations. They reveal that most plantation owners cut, trim, burn or destroy native trees even though these are protected under the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act (KPTA).

Growing silver oak, which is remunerative but non-native, bypasses the intent of the law, which is to protect native trees. Killing wild animals on Schedules I to IV is banned, but most plantation owners are unaware of the implications of the Wildlife Protection Act for the management of their lands and their way of life.

Since PAs are fragmented, areas surrounding them, as in farms and plantations, become essential for conservation. Therefore, involving people who live in these areas in decision-making and implementation is paramount, but the forest department has poor capacity, and the laws have been developed in a top-down manner.

India has a 7,500 km coastline that has several wetland ecosystems which house a large number of species. The coastline also has 13 major and many minor ports, power plants, special economic zones, other industries, 5-star hotels and houses. The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) provides the legal framework for regulating this space. With each of its several iterations, the CRZ has

opened the coast further for construction, access and thereby the destruction of coastal ecosystems. In their chapter on the coast, K. Kohli and M. Menon are still hopeful that there are unique opportunities for “participatory models of marine conservation.”

The book has a well-written introduction that lays out the context and the challenges – the enormous pressure on land, the urban imperative and the effects of intensifying wealth and power inequities on decision-making. Economic liberalisation has increased stress on habitats and natural resources and led to the monetising of the natural world and conservation.

A brief epilogue tying together the cases and offering lessons would perhaps have been helpful. Nevertheless, for specialists and students of conservation, this book is a tremendously valuable contribution.

The writer studies science, technology and development policy.



Nature Conservation in the New Economy: People, Wildlife and the Law in India
Edited by Ghazala Shahabuddin, K. Sivaramakrishnan
Orient BlackSwan
₹895

HISTORY

A man of the world

In a lovingly developed biography, the historical figure Dara Shukoh, who lost the war of succession to Aurangzeb, makes appearances, but the mythical persona dominates

Manu S. Pillai

In his epilogue in *Dara Shukoh: The Man Who Would Be King*, Avik Chanda quotes a stranger he encountered in Delhi. They were at Humayun’s Tomb, where sits a grave purportedly belonging to the tragic Mughal prince, Dara Shukoh. Shahjahan’s intended heir and Aurangzeb’s nemesis, this Darius towers over popular imagination, projected as a superior, “secular” alternative to a wicked, villainous sibling. Dara lost the war of succession, but as the stranger declares, “To one whom history has given refuge, what harm can an [Aurangzeb] cause?”

Dara was a fascinating man, his story provoking to this day speculation on how the Mughals might have fared had he, not Aurangzeb, prevailed. “Paradise is where no mullah exists,” he wrote, and under his patronage Sanskrit texts were translated into Persian, later reaching Eu-

rope. Like Akbar, Dara too conferred with thinkers beyond the pale, seeking a universalism underpinning every religion. He was not the first to initiate this effort, but his urbanity led Abraham Eraly to suggest that he was perhaps far too civilised for his age.

Universal appeal

Chanda approaches Dara with a large measure of admiration and romance. His language is excellent, and now and then there are sentences which stand out.

The sources he cites pass muster, and the attractive pace at which the story is told, means it is no surprise that the book has won much praise, including from scholars like Richard Eaton. Chanda keeps his focus on Dara, steering clear of today’s politics (after all, even the Rashtriya Swayamsevak



Dara Shukoh: The Man Who Would Be King
Avik Chanda
HarperCollins
₹699

Sangh approves of this Mughal) and of demonising Aurangzeb. The sum is that the book will appeal to many, who will also appreciate the author’s considerable effort.

But there are also jarring moments and weaknesses in Chanda’s approach. Often fictional dialogues pepper the book’s pages, which may engage some but quite aggravated this reader. So we have Shahjahan declare: “That damn Shah has his sights on Qandahar again! He must now be taught a lesson!” When Shahjahan rebels against his father, a scene shows him with “matted hair” – an unlikely proposition given that Mughal camps

were well appointed with luxuries, making them far from a stint in the wilderness.

Factual errors also appear. We read that Mughal princesses were forbidden from marrying – an inaccuracy. Certainly, women like Dara’s sibling Jahanara, who wielded great power, did not marry. But the daughters of Babur, Humayun, Akbar and Jahangir were married, sometimes twice. Similarly, when Aurangzeb harasses Bijapur in the 1650s, its ruler, the Adil Shah, appeals to Dara for relief. Chanda calls this sultan Adil Shah II, whereas he was the eighth of the Adil Shahs – the confusion perhaps emerging from his name, Ali II.

Exalted narrative

Minor errors, however, plague all books, so these do not inflict extraordinary damage. What is, however, puzzling is how the myth of Dara as an otherworldly prince is perpetuated in the first half of the book, only to be jettisoned in the next. During durbar proceedings, we read, “Dara’s mind would wander to a verse he had read that morning, a painting, or some lingering question of philosophy... After two hours, he was in a realm far away”. So too: “Dreamy and distant, the prince sat beside his father, gradually becoming oblivious to the proceedings”. Chanda’s Dara despises brutality, abhors men of war, and constantly exalts spirituality.

Dara was certainly inclined to mysticism, but this was linked more to his own expected kingly self-image, and less as a divorce from reality. As Chanda himself shows, he feuded with courtiers on very political questions, used his influence to thwart Aurangzeb, and showed himself more than capable of ambition.

His verses, as with historical writings generally, must be read critically. Even Jahanara was a Sufi, described as a *fakira*. That did not mean she eschewed imperial prerogatives: she enjoyed formidable revenues from the port of Surat, and when Shivaji was arrested, Jahanara was among those demanding punishment. The *fakira* was furious with the Maratha hero for sacking Surat, causing her loss of money and prestige.

So too, Dara was a poet and intellectual, but he was also a man of the world. It is true he was an incompetent general, a terrible judge of character, and profoundly unlucky. In other respects he soared above his contemporaries. But by no means was he the dreamy prince of popular imagination.

This, then, becomes the principal flaw in a lovingly developed biography: the author’s difficulty in fully separating romance from critical analysis. For while the historical Dara makes appearances, the mythical Dara ultimately dominates.

The writer won the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar for *The Ivory Throne* (2015). His latest book is *The Courtesan, the Mahatma and the Italian Brahmin*.

Resurgent Asia: Diversity in Development

Deepak Nayyar
Oxford University Press
₹895

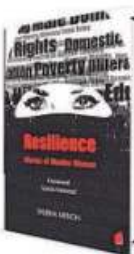
This volume provides an analytical narrative of Asia’s incredible economic development, situated in the wider context of historical, political and social factors. It also focuses on the critical issues in the process of development.



Resilience: Stories of Muslim Women

Shubha Menon
Om Publications
₹295

The lives of 10 Muslim girls are transformed by an unconventional style of education at social activist Shabnam Hashmi’s Seher Adult Education Centre in Nizamuddin Basti. The stories begin from the early 80s.



Black November: Writings on the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath

Edited by Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry
Speaking Tiger Books
₹499

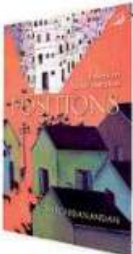
Following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, thousands of Sikh men, women and children were lynched by organised mobs. Through interviews and poetry, the violence and denial of justice are recounted.



Positions: Essays on Indian Literature

K. Satchidanandan
Niyogi Books
₹795

A selection from K. Satchidanandan’s essays on Indian literature, written over the past 25 years. The essays look for paradigms based on Indian textual practices and reading traditions, while drawing freely on Indian and Western critical concepts.



Notes from Riga

Tulsi Badrinath

From the time of Homer, time immemorial really, amber has been coveted. *There came a man, well versed in guile, to my father's house with a necklace of gold, and with amber beads was it strung between. This the maidens in the hall, and my honored mother were handling, and were gazing on it, and were offering him their price...*

Wandering around the medieval core of Riga, capital of Latvia, one comes upon stall after stall, set up Indian-style by the side of the road, selling Baltic amber. Fair-weather apparitions, they pop up with the sun and disappear on rainy days.

Rosaries, key-rings, bracelets, wire plants with amber leaves, teething necklaces, one is seduced by the choice and the rich colours that promise a fiery piece of the sun on a cold, windy morning. Are they genuine or made of plastic?

The regular brick-and-mortar shops offer reassurance. There, amber, considered to bring good luck and good health, is almost like

resinous gold in terms of price. Some of the boutiques have giant, egg-sized beads of amber strung into necklaces that cost several lakhs at the very least. The older the amber and the more perfectly round the bead, the higher the price, I learn. But the asymmetrical chunks used as single pendants have a charm of their own. I was shown one with a fossilised mosquito and, most amused, I replied that we nourished live specimens at home.

Curving streets
Vecriga, or the Old Town, is a maze of curving streets that run into each other at odd angles. Narrow, cobblestoned, with twists that obscure their true length, they are delightful to dawdle on. Maps faithfully display the shortest of these streets. However, the order imposed on them by a map is erased when seen from above. The stunning view from the top of St Peter's Church renders the sequence of build-

ings into a jumble of red roofs, decorated façades, gleaming domes, all jammed in an arc around the silent Daugava river. If lost, one only has to spot one of the many distinctive spires to orient oneself.

Art Nouveau architecture
Getting lost might be a good thing, though, for one can scan the façades of buildings to spot the Art Nouveau architecture the city is famous for.

On Audēju Iela, the elegantly rendered apple tree on the very first such building built in 1899 is relatively restrained compared to the screaming women, fierce mascarons or flamboyant griffins that came later, as in Mikhail Eisenstein's oeuvre. Some say that the moody expressions of the women who feature on his buildings may stem from his own unhappy experience of marital life.

Having spent the better part of the morning in the company of chimera, caryatids, grotesques and other fantastic elements, I thought there could be nothing better than Riga's own noir beverage, Riga Black Balsam, to quench my thirst.

As the name suggests, it is a dark, bold concoction, made of at least 24 herbs and roots. I imagined the master brewer muttering incantations – 'sweet of linden blossom and heat of ginger, power of pepper, root of valerian, shade of night and swamp birch-bud, *combine!*' – before pouring it into a special clay bottle, which is considered the sealing ingredient.

First brewed in 1752, the herbal potion saved the Russian Empress Catherine the Great, while travelling in Riga, from a potentially fatal stomach infection. The recipe, closely guarded, was lost during World War II, after which surviving employees pieced together their knowledge to recreate it.

Phases of the moon and a special source of water are among the many specific elements that distinguish the process of infusion.

I tasted it, bitter, sweet, bitter, bitter, and my face, unbidden, contorted into an open-mouthed grimace, not unlike the ones I had seen all day on ornamented walls.

The Chennai-based writer is also a dancer and the author of four books.



GOREN BRIDGE

From disappointment to triumph

NORTH	
▲ A Q 10 4	
♡ 8 5 2	
♦ A 6 5	
♠ A Q 8	
WEST	
▲ 8 7 5	
♡ K Q J 10 7	
♦ Q 10 2	
♠ K J	
EAST	
▲ K 2	
♡ 3	
♦ 9 8 7 3	
♠ 9 7 6 4 3 2	
SOUTH	
▲ 19 6 3	
♡ A 9 6 4	
♦ K J 4	
♠ 10 5	
The bidding:	
WEST	NORTH
1♣	1♦
Pass	2♠
Opening lead: King of ♣	

East-West vulnerable,
West deals



Bob Jones

North had poor distribution for a takeout double, but his extra high cards made it the right call. South's jump response was routine and so was North's jump to game.

South won the opening heart lead with the ace and ran the nine of spades. He was disappointed when East won this with the king and shifted to the nine of diamonds. West's opening bid meant there was no chance that East held any of the oth-

er missing high cards, so South went up with his king of diamonds. He led a club to the queen, cashed the ace of clubs, and ruffed a club with the jack of spades as West discarded a heart.

Declarer led a trump to dummy's ace and cashed

the queen of spades, drawing the outstanding trumps. West was known to have started with three spades, five hearts for his opening bid, and two clubs – therefore three diamonds. Declarer cashed dummy's last trump, shedding a heart from his hand as West also discarded a heart. South exited with a heart from dummy to West. West could cash another heart, but then had to lead a diamond away from his queen and South took the last two tricks to bring home his contract. Nicely played!

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

‘There is a hidden message in every waterfall. It says, if you are flexible, falling will not hurt you.’

Berty Ashley

On November 17, 1855, this English missionary became the first European to see the Mosi-oa-Tunya in the jungles of Africa. This was a massive waterfall on Zambezi river whose African name meant ‘the smoke that thunders’. He went on to name it after the reigning queen of that time. Who was this explorer missionary and how better do we know this waterfall?

The Boyoma Falls are a system of waterfalls along Lualaba river in Congo. The tallest of these is no more than 16 feet tall and together they have a drop of 200 feet. With an average annual flow rate of 17,000 m³/s it holds the record as the largest waterfall by volume of annual flow rate. This falls is known by another name that refers to the Welsh journalist who, on meeting the missionary in the previous question, uttered an iconic line. What is the name of the falls and what is the statement he made?

The Iguazú Falls is the largest waterfall system in the world. Legend has it that a god planned to marry a beautiful woman who fled with her lover on a canoe. In a rage, the god sliced the Iguazú and created this waterfall which stretches over 2.7 km. The waterfall forms a natural border between the two largest countries in South America. Which two countries do these spectacular falls split?

The Bridal Veil is the smallest of three waterfalls that make up an iconic waterfall system named after the river they occur in. The other two falls are named after the two



Natural boundary The spectacular Iguazú Falls in South America separates two large countries. Which ones are they? • WIKI COMMONS

countries in which they fall. One of them is also known as the Horseshoe Falls due to its characteristic shape and about 90% of the water flows through it. What are these two falls and what is the collective name for all three?

The Cascata delle Marmore in Umbria, Italy, with a total height of 165 metres is the tallest of its kind in the world. For more than two centuries, Velino river proved to be troublesome to the cities of Rieti and Terni. After intervention by two popes, Pope Gregory XII and Pope Pius VI, the waterfalls became what it is now. Due to this interesting history, of what type is this waterfall the tallest?

This waterfall is so tall that during summer the water turns into mist before it reaches the pool below. With an uninterrupted fall of 979 metres, it towers above all other falls. Visitors have known to have felt

water droplets almost a kilometre away. Unlike many other natural wonders, this one was discovered very recently – in 1935 when a pilot crashed his plane nearby. Which falls is this that is named after that pilot and not after some deity because of its towering height?

This is a waterfall system on Chitar river in the Western Ghats. A total of nine falls exist and are a major tourist attraction between July and September. The falls have a reputation as a ‘medical spa’ due to the presence of multiple minerals and dissolved salts in it. According to Hindu legend, sage Agastya set this place as his abode. What is the name of this waterfall system?

This is a waterfall on Columbia river in Oregon, USA. The falls has a name which refers to how it looks. The water falls has a stream between two rounded rock faces and at the bottom it is frayed. The

name is also used to refer to any waterfall that has similar features. What is the name of the falls which should remind you of plants from the ‘Equisetum’ family?

Vrtiglavica (Slovenian for ‘vertical-go’) in the Alps has a waterfall with a height of 1400 ft, making it the tallest in a special category of waterfalls. This was discovered in 1996 by a Slovenian-Italian expedition of speleologists. The unusual area of this massive falls came about, thanks to ancient glacial activity. Otherwise known as ‘subterranean falls’, what is Vrtiglavica the tallest of its kind?

This waterfall in Yosemite National Park in California falls on the eastern side of a huge granite monolith. In the second week of February the setting sun hits the waterfalls at just the right angle making it glow a bright orange-ish red during sunset. By what name is this brilliant natural phenomenon known as, which seems to be the polar opposite of what it really is?

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called ‘Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion’. @bertyashley

- Answers**
- David Livingstone, ‘Victoria Falls’
 - Stanley, ‘Dr. Livingstone I presume?’
 - Brazil and Argentina
 - Canadian Falls, American Falls — Niagara Falls
 - Man-made waterfall
 - Angel Falls
 - Courtalian or Kudrallian Falls
 - Horse Tail Falls
 - Cave Waterfalls (Underground waterfalls)
 - Firefalls (Do a Google Image search and enjoy)

LETTER FROM A CONCERNED READER

Dancer or diplomat?

Respected Madam/ Sir,

So morning itself phone call came from laundry fellow. Kamalam picked up the phone. Laundry fellow Wilfred said, “Madam, one small problem is there.”

Kamalam immediately said, “Wilfred, friendship means friendship, Christmas cake and all you are giving every year, all ok, but if even one centimetre of sari is burnt means I will come to your shop and demolish everything.”

He said, “No no no Madam, no no never. Your sari I am taking care more than I am taking care of my own family, problem is with Mathrubootham sir trousers.”

Kamalam said, “What nonsense you are taking tension Wilfred. Ha ha ha ha. If you want, you can destroy all his trousers. Sir is wearing same items since maybe Raja Raja Chola period. You please don’t worry, how is the family? Kindly convey regards. Whether Christmas preparations have started or no?”

Madam/ Sir, snake should marry snake, human should marry human. But look at my situation, gentle human has married poisonous viper.

After breakfast I went to Wilfred’s shop. I said, “Wilfred what happened?” He said, “Uncle total confusion, one million apologies, by mistake your trousers went into wrong batch. Everything shrinking.”

I said, “Oh my god, I purchased these trousers in Bangalore when I was working in Jayanagar branch. How can you do this to me?”

He said, “Uncle, thousand times sorry, you please tell the price of the trousers I will give you?” I told him the price. Wilfred looked as if electric shocked. He said, “Uncle, when did you buy trousers? Before or after Mangal Pandey events of 1857? Please take double money.”

After that I decided trousers is not there means whether life can stop? I will buy new trousers.

Wilfred said, “Uncle one new shop has opened nearby.”

Madam/ sir, I went to the shop.



• GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK

Immediately salesman came to help. I said, “Please give trousers for respectable retired man, no jeans type, no baggy, no trouser with pocket outside, and not one single hole should be there.”

He said, “Very good sir,” and then asked me whether I am wanting Cowboy fit, Dancer fit, Diplomat fit, or Holiday fit. I thought joke but his face was serious.

This is why tomorrow if China is invading India I will stand at the border and say please come, all

buffoons and idiots in the country, feel free.

I told salesman, “Thambi please don’t waste my time.”

He said, “Uncle it is like this. Cowboy is tight, Dancer is slim, Diplomat is medium, and Holiday is relaxed fit.”

I said, “Ok you bring Diplomat, please.” Then he said, “Uncle whether you want low-rise, high-rise or medium-rise

Diplomat.” I said, “Thambi have you seen superhit Mammooty film *Oru CBI Diary Kurippu*?”

He said, “Uncle, what is a mammooty?”

I said, “In that movie also Mammooty did not ask murderer so many questions. Anyway, medium-rise, please urgently bring two or three samples.”

He said, “Uncle final question, you want wrinkle-free or classic?” Immediately I came back to house.

I told Kamalam, “No more purchasing trousers. Two are there no? When both are getting holes then I will sit at home and never put one step outside the house.”

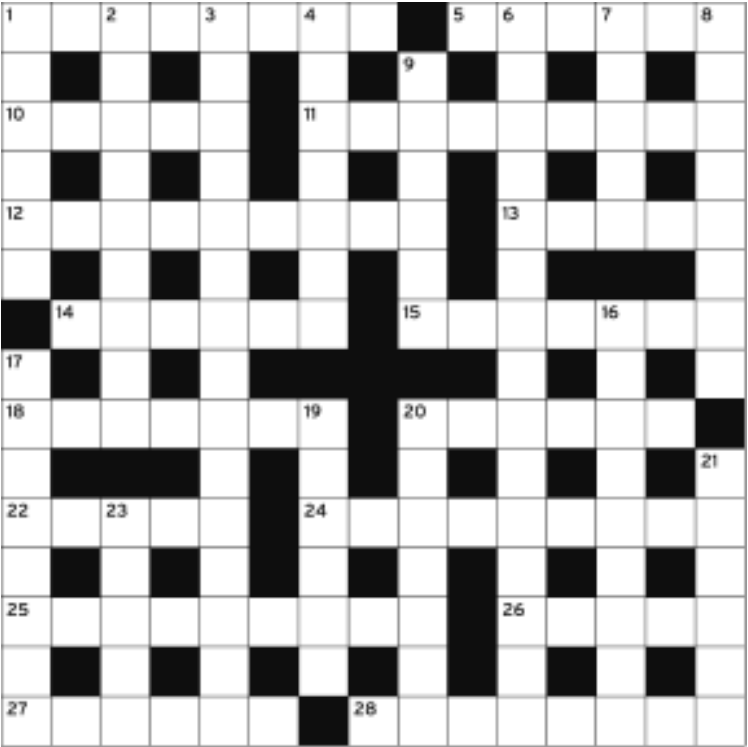
She said, “Old man, don’t say this even as joke, I will do something.”

Madam/ Sir, tomorrow tailor who is doing blouse and sari fall for Kamalam is coming to house. She asked him, “Hello, can you make gents trousers also?” He said, “I can try. Last time I made in 1985, since then lady specialisation.”

Both of us said, “100% perfect, you are appointed for making trousers.”

*Yours in satisfaction,
J. Mathrubootham*

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3074



Across

- Dullest dullard overwhelmed by exam (8)
- Impudence. Boy on Sabbath's clothing: comfy shoes (4-3)
- Observe horny suitor fumbling: 'Cool it!' (4,4,5,2)
- Every so often, third yawl finds a kind of large wave (5)
- Naughty, vandalising cars with mate (8)
- Workers' groups' stewards initially rising to show agreement (6)
- Energy lost from dodgy rear heater's element (4,5)
- 'Happy, Sir?' (Man, unfortunately, is furious) (2,2,4)
- Second-rate clump has to return prize (3-3)
- Endless acrimony with development for island (7)
- Hindu creator's not a creator of music (6)
- Following agreement, I'm reversing position (3-2)

Down

- Soften, harden (6)
- Telling off about part of Bible having been ripped off (3-6)
- 'Back off: yes? No?': Europe to U.K.,

confused (4,4,4,3)

- Impudence. Boy on Sabbath's clothing: comfy shoes (4-3)
- Observe horny suitor fumbling: 'Cool it!' (4,4,5,2)
- Every so often, third yawl finds a kind of large wave (5)
- Naughty, vandalising cars with mate (8)
- Workers' groups' stewards initially rising to show agreement (6)
- Energy lost from dodgy rear heater's element (4,5)
- 'Happy, Sir?' (Man, unfortunately, is furious) (2,2,4)
- Second-rate clump has to return prize (3-3)
- Endless acrimony with development for island (7)
- Hindu creator's not a creator of music (6)
- Following agreement, I'm reversing position (3-2)

Solution No. 3073



60 MINUTES WITH ARUNDHATI NAG

‘The magic of this space continues to baffle me’

As Ranga Shankara, the avant-garde theatre in Bengaluru, celebrates its 15th year, its founder reiterates the need for theatre to stand its ground against political, religious and market forces

Giridhar Narayan

Ranga Shankara, the state-of-the-art theatre space in Bengaluru, has turned 15. Over the years, it has emerged as a vibrant cultural hub in the fast-developing city. Arundhati Nag, thespian and multi-lingual actor, built the theatre to realise the long-cherished dream of her husband, the late Shankar Nag, talented theatre and film personality. In a freewheeling conversation, Nag, managing trustee and artistic advisor of the nonprofit Sanket Trust, which runs Ranga Shankara, spoke about the theatre’s journey, the influence it has had on theatre in Bengaluru and beyond, and her plans for it in the coming years. Excerpts:

You have crossed a major milestone. How has the journey been in the last 15 years?

■ Even today, I can’t believe that it’s done. When I sit here and look at the size of this building, I wonder, when did it get completed? Who did this? There is this sense of awe at the result... There was a kind of *zid* [stubbornness] when we started, but if the community had not embraced it the way it has, I would not have been able to do over 6,000 performances on this stage in 15 years. It’s been a lesson in humility. There are forces putting wind in your sails every time. The magic of this space continues to baffle me. People ask me to write a book. But I don’t know if I can write a book because I didn’t have a plan. I was just singing the same song for many years. Persistently chasing people, chasing the dream.

Any highs and lows that you can recall?

■ No lows. The highs are standing in

Frankfurt airport and having somebody from out there waving and saying, “Ranga Shankara? It’s fantastic”; or a person sitting next to you on a flight to Germany saying, “My grandchildren go to watch plays there.” It’s the recognition of the space. It’s the recognition of what this space does to lives. I have seen women come here and say they can’t take the stress at home, but this is the place they can come to without any luggage. You see a change. It’s a kind of reiteration for us that something is going right.

How was this idea of a dedicated space for theatre conceived?

■ Every theatre person wants to build a theatre or wants to be part of the theatre-building process. When Shankar and I came to Bangalore from Bombay [in the late 1970s], he was part of the Chhabildas theatre movement and I was part of several theatre movements because I was doing plays in many languages. There was nothing on my horizon except theatre. Shankar came here to do films. After doing a couple of films, however, he realised that he needed theatre for sanity and started a theatre group called Sanket.

At that time, there was only Ravindra Kalakshetra [the State-owned auditorium] and everyone could perform there. We knew that we wanted our own small place. It took us so long. The dream was constantly there, but Shankar wasn’t there by the time Ranga Shankara happened [He died in a road accident in 1990].

When Shankar and I came to Bangalore from Bombay in the 70s... there was nothing on my horizon except theatre



■ ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

This, however, hasn’t affected Ranga Shankara.

Have you seen a change in the way roles are scripted and scenes performed and also in the audience profile over the years?

■ We haven’t done a systematic study of our audience. But we have seen that the audience profile is the same as that of the people who used to watch plays at Kalakshetra, say, a generation ago. A completely different crowd comes to watch Hindi plays, mostly from the IT/ BT sector, which is reassuring. English plays draw a mixed crowd. Kannada plays mostly have a Kannada-speaking audience. Also, of late, Kannada theatre has not produced a magnum opus play that people speaking other languages would also want to see. And yet we have had such cult plays as *Jokumaraswamy* and *Tughlaq*. So we have to look inwards.

In the 1970s, the theatre was regarded as a ‘movement’ because of its direct connection to social movements. Is that phase over now?

■ It’s not over but it has changed. There are people like Abhishek Majumdar who write plays that dare to hit out at the powers that be. There are urban voices sensitive to grass-roots issues – they need to be nurtured and presented to city audiences. Theatre’s association with social movements should continue, otherwise you will be doing what movies and television are doing – pampering people to believe that they are very intelligent. I would like Ranga Shankara to speak about issues with the community.

How would you like to take Ranga Shankara forward from here?

■ As an institution, we need to provide training. But unless there is a livelihood at the end of the training, no one is going to come. So we hope to create sustainability for artists. We have done workshops for youngsters who wanted to be directors and in this 15th year, we are doing more. Jean-Guy Lecat, theatre consultant who designed sets for Peter Brook, will be doing a workshop on scene designing in January. Andrea Grone-meyer, artistic director of Schauburg Theatre, Munich, will be conducting a workshop for young directors in December. We also hope to start an international incubation centre for pondering over the kind of art that is being created for the generations to come. Ranga Shankara dares to exist without political and religious leanings, and without having sold out to market forces. The city needs to celebrate this. It is the city’s responsibility to ensure this continues.

I wanted to build it on the site Shankar was allotted by the government. One of our friends advised us against building a theatre in a residential area and asked me to apply for a civic amenities site. So we formed Sanket Trust and applied for one in J.P. Nagar. We were like any other theatre group dealing with the loss of a very dear friend, Shankar, who was like a fulcrum, and suddenly we became a trust. We knew we wanted to be a nonprofit trust.

It was quite a struggle for you after that.

■ It gave a purpose to my life. With Shankar suddenly disappearing, I had no reason to stay back in Karnataka. But life had other, larger plans... The opportunity of greatness was offered to me. Many people helped me along. I started with the

zid that if nobody comes to perform, I will stand on stage and read a play. But people came, and I didn’t have to do that except once when a show was cancelled suddenly and we theatre friends got together and read Pablo Neruda’s poems.

Bengaluru’s theatre scene is divided into English and Kannada, with almost no interaction between them. Has Ranga Shankara become a bridge connecting the two worlds?

■ Absolutely. In our country, language is a dividing factor and there has always been a chasm between the host language of the State and English. It was only after Ranga Shankara came that English and Kannada plays have been performed at the same place.

When we opened Ranga Shankara, we consciously kept 60% of the programme dates for Kannada and the rest for other languages – English and Hindi. But we have observed that English and Hindi theatres are not producing plays with such regularity as Kannada theatre is. So now, we have 70% of the plays in Kannada.

In the last decade or so, Bengaluru has seen the emergence of many other venues such as Jagriti, Shoonya, K.H. Kala Soudha, KEA Prabhath Rangamandira and Vyoma Artspace. How do you view this development?

■ More the merrier, considering the city’s population growth in the last 15 years and the pathetic condition of public transport and our roads.



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

NOSTALGIA

Learning with dad

I particularly remember his account of the spicy green chilli, ginger and garlic chutney he ate in Burma, with, I think, roast duck

Vasundhara Chauhan

Some 20 years ago, we went on a picnic with my father. Food being of equal importance as location, we packed a stack of soft parathas, a box of salad ingredients: whole cucumbers, lettuce leaves, tomatoes and a few limes and green chillies, and a large plastic box with a tight-fitting lid, filled to the brim with mutton shaami kababs. For my father, there was a bottle of *gur* cubes, for the mandatory *munh meetha*. There were Anita and her visiting cousin Michu, Attri, my pre-teen two, and me.

My father was driving his camper

and so the picnic had to be held as far as possible, and we had to take full advantage of the amenities in the camper. So the salad wasn’t cut at home (“nothing like freshly cut tomatoes!”) and the kababs were shaped into patties but not yet fried. Because there was a gas burner in the little galley, and it must be utilised. Picnics should only be attempted in good weather. This was in the summer vacation, and we stopped as close as we could get to a pleasant altitude without having to drive all day: the Morni hills.

We found a corner around which to safely park the juggernaut, and had just started noticing the flora: no cedars, firs or even pines; it was

mainly curry leaf trees. It was not unbearably hot, but cool only in the shade. While the rest of us got our bearings, hearing the calls of the occasional black partridge and the ticking of the engine cooling, my father was off, leaping up a rocky hill, my son naturally in tow.

They returned, holding up branches of curry patta for chutney. Because my father wanted fresh chutney with his kababs. So, while Anita and I heated up a pan with oil and began to fry the kababs, Daddy found two stones, washed the “equipment”, and began to grind the curry leaves to a coarse paste. For tartness he smashed in a couple of tomatoes. Then. On the way back,

he developed in detail a concept he thought would be a commercial success: curry patta paste in a tube, like toothpaste.

The reason I’ve gone to such detail is that this was my first exposure to my father’s culinary prowess. Till then it had been limited to detailed, evocative descriptions of foods he ate on his travels. He would tell us how it looked, smelt and tasted, with whatever detail he had observed of the process.

I particularly remember his account of the spicy green chilli, ginger and garlic chutney he ate in Burma, with, I think, roast duck. After he told us, my mother made it, replacing the duck fat in the chutney with oil, and he said it tasted just like the original. I don’t know whether his descriptions were bang on or her cooking very clever, but this was the flavour of my childhood.

Taste & smell

He would bring the destination to life and describe a street-side stall or restaurant and the food he ate there, so that we could almost smell the brazier on a Beirut street and taste the döner kabab with carrot greens and pickled turnips. And my mother would produce it.

She was an original, creative, efficient cook, whose *shalgam gosht* was as good as her Bavarian creams. While she had a scientific approach, open to the latest dietary recommendations, carefully considered new gadgets and new techniques, she was also the Annapurna and the Good Wife. I know that my father never entered the kitchen, and that he wouldn’t even know that a gas cylinder had a control lever switched off at night or where the tea leaves were kept.

And now he runs a home that has house guests and dinner guests more often than mine; anyone is welcome at any time: he and his Bhagwan Singh are Annapurna.

Every morning we chat on the phone and, among other things, he tells me what his menu plan for the day is. Sometimes it defies logic – or at least convention. The first time he mentioned his dislike for *besan ka pakoda* in *besan ki kadhi*, I didn’t react. Then he asked the cook to

SUNDAY RECIPE



SHAAMI KABAB

From a friend, who wishes to remain anonymous
Makes about 25 two-inch kababs

Ingredients

500g mutton mince
2 medium onions, chopped
2 inch ginger, chopped
1/2 cup chana dal, washed
1 green cardamom
1 clove
2 black cardamom (optional)
2 dry red chillies
1 tsp peppercorns
1 tsp cumin seed
Salt to taste
Roast separately on a dry tawa: 2 tsp poppy seed 1 1/2 tsp grated coconut

Method

1. Assemble all the ingredients in pressure cooker. Add 1 cup water.
2. Cook till chana dal is tender, about 10 minutes after full pressure is reached. Dry off any remaining water.
3. Grind to a smooth paste on a sil batta (an electric mixer-grinder does the job, but changes the texture.) Shape into round patties.
4. Fry in a flat, shallow pan, like alu tikki, on low heat, with less oil.
5. Freeze remaining ground *qeema* paste.

simmer *qeema* koftas in the *kadhi* instead. And reminded me that what I had thought of as commonplace all my life had actually been his innovation: whole or chopped spinach leaves cooked in *kadhi*. That’s quite a fine dish, and I think I prefer it to the *pakoda* programme too.

Yesterday he said he had harvested a small crop of a new variety of *karela*, longer, slimmer and less bitter. He had asked the cook to stew them in *kadhi*, but to “steam the *karela* first, otherwise they’d stay hard

in the sour yoghurt”. I suggested that he fry them crisp with a sprinkling of *besan* and eat them as a side dish, but he wanted to experiment.

Fruit variations

Some of the variations really work. All seasonal fruit is bought in bulk, and fresh ways to serve them are devised. Stewed fruit is common, but a delightful addition is orange peel. When carrots are red and juicy, after the pale orange carrots of summer have gone, big fat chunks are stewed, sweetened, and slivers of finely cut orange peel mixed in. Vast bowls are refrigerated. But then my father loves his dessert. If nothing else, brown *shakkar* is stirred into smooth, beaten yoghurt, and purple and green grapes halved and mixed in.

I’m not much for sweets, and, in any case, there’s little room left after dining with full *maika* indulgence. The variations reflect his taste and the logic of easy-to-eat sizes. Chicken is always served as boneless wedges, in smooth orange-yellow curries. Minced mutton koftas are fried and then cooked in aromatic, spicy, coarsely ground green spinach. The table always has a jar of scarlet home-grown cherry tomatoes pickled whole, juicy and tart, in cider vinegar. The veggies are sweet because they’re freshly plucked, and when I’m on my way to visit, I cover much of the highway anticipating my first lunch.

I visited him recently and carried some frozen *qeema* paste, spiced, boiled, ground and ready to be fried into kababs. The next week he called and asked for the recipe because mine had been so much softer than Bhagwan Singh’s. And then reported that the new shaami kababs had been absolutely the tenderest he had ever eaten, who would have known that egg wasn’t necessary for binding, and that my friend always gave me the best recipes!

I hope that I will still be learning, when I’m 97.

From the once-forbidden joy of eggs to the ingratitude of guests, the writer reflects on every association with food.
vasundharachauhan9@gmail.com

My father loves his dessert. If nothing else, brown *shakkar* is stirred into smooth, beaten yoghurt, and purple and green grapes halved and mixed in